

IX.B

Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

TO BE PROPOSED:

October 6, 2021

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-66ss of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the August 31, 2021, charter amendment proposal of New Beginnings Family Academy to the extent such proposal seeks modification of its grade configuration to phase out Grades 7 and 8 in June 2023 with a maximum approved enrollment cap of 499, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to Section 10-66ss of the Connecticut General Statutes, approves the August 31, 2021, charter amendment proposal of New Beginnings Family Academy to the extent such proposal seeks to open a new school building, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____, this sixth day of October, Two Thousand Twenty-One.

Signed: _____
Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Secretary
State Board of Education

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education

DATE: October 6, 2021

SUBJECT: Approval of Material Change to New Beginnings Family Academy

Executive Summary

Introduction

New Beginnings Family Academy's (NBFA) charter was approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) in April 1999, opened in August 2002 and has completed its nineteenth year in operation. The school is a state charter school with an approved maximum enrollment of 499 students in Grades PK-8. The charter school's charter was renewed and approved by the SBE on May 2, 2018, for a three-year period. Due to implications of the pandemic, the SBE approved a one-year extension on July 14, 2020, the charter will end June 30, 2022.

NBFA's charter amendment proposal, dated August 31, 2021 asks SBE to consider amending its charter to:

- restructure the school, phasing out Grades 7 and 8 in June 2023.
- open a new building on NBFA's campus to serve as the school's Early Childhood Center Grades PK and Kindergarten for the 2022-23 school year.

NBFA's charter amendment proposal is attached hereto as Attachment A.

Under the proposal, the charter school will reconfigure to a Grade PK-6 model, focused on students' foundational years while maintaining its approved enrollment of 499 students. This will occur by (A) phasing out middle school in June 2023 and (B) designing and implementing a 12-month, Early Childhood Center, to open in school year (SY) 2022-23. The two-year period before the phasing out of Grades 7 and 8 will provide families time to anticipate and make any future educational plans necessitated by the restructuring. Additionally, NBFA will work extensively with these parents and families to transition exiting students. The property proposed to house the Early Childhood Center, is owned by the school and adjacent to the main school building. If approved, renovations to the building will begin in October 2021.

The following Table illustrates projected student enrollment by grade level over the next three school years:

Projected Enrollment by Grade Level											
	PK 3&4	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
2021-22	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	36	31	499
2022-23	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	31	36	499
2023-24	114	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	0	0	499

Background/Process

Connecticut law requires that a charter school governing council that “plans to make a material change in the school’s operations” submit such request to amend its charter to the SBE. The law defines “material change” to be “a change that fundamentally alters a charter school’s mission, organizational structure or educational program,” including, among other things, changing a school’s grade configuration; opening an additional school building; or increasing or decreasing the total student enrollment capacity by 20% or more (Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 10-66ss(a)).

In accordance with C.G.S. Section 10-66ss, the SBE must review the charter school’s amendment proposal, solicit comments from the board of education in which the charter school is located, and vote on the proposal within 60 days of receipt. On July 13, 2021, Administration from NBFA presented its amendment proposal to the SBE Accountability and Support Committee. On September 3, 2021, the CSDE solicited the views of the host district. No written response was received from the solicitation. The Turnaround Office and State Board of Education Accountability and Support Committee visited NBFA on September 23, 2021.

Recommendation with Conditions

The CSDE recommends that the SBE, pursuant to Section 10-66ss, approve NBFA’s request to use the new building space to serve as its Early Childhood Center and phase out Grades 7 and 8 in June 2023, NBFA remaining at the current approved enrollment of 499 students. NBFA will be required to obtain and deliver to the Turnaround Office all necessary local building, fire and health permits and proof of insurance prior to the first day of the 2022-23 school year.

Prepared by: Robert E. Kelly, Charter School Program Manager
Turnaround Office

Approved by: Lisa Lamenzo, Division Director, Turnaround Office



**New Beginnings Family Academy Material Change Proposal
to the Connecticut State Department of Education
August 31, 2021**

With an eye on the formative years, NBFA will increase student learning and development outcomes by designing and implementing an evidence-based, trauma-informed, Early Childhood Center (“ECC”) with measurable, valid and reliable growth indicators. The ECC will serve as the feeder for NBFA elementary school, which uses emotionally responsive practice (Koplow, 2021), an approach best suited for urban children in infancy through grade 6.

To that end, NBFA seeks approval to:

1. Restructure the school, phasing out its secondary grades (7th and 8th) by June 2023.
2. Relocate Pre-K and Kindergarten students into a new, 12-month, play-based Early Childhood Center on NBFA’s campus by September 2022.

Research shows that high-quality, early childhood programs have long-term social, emotional, academic and economic benefits, especially for low-income students. (Heckman, 2021) With highly qualified, certified teachers, New Beginnings Family Academy is poised to help end the cycle of generational poverty in Bridgeport by changing the life trajectories of its students and their families.

Elements of the Change

1. **Form an Early Childhood Center committee.** Members of the NBFA Board of Directors, leaders, parents and community members will collaborate on the development of the Early Childhood Center.
2. **Establish a building committee.** NBFA will explore the feasibility of a two-phase renovation project at 170 Garden Street to build a NAEYC-accredited school that houses up to 170 Pre-K and Kindergarten students.
3. **Design and implement an evidence-based early childhood program.** NBFA’s Early Childhood Committee, including consultants from Cooperative Education Services, will collaborate on the selection of developmentally appropriate curricula and resources; staffing; and ongoing professional development for teachers.
4. **Implement a transition plan to phase out 7th and 8th grades.** In consultation with key stakeholders, including parents, NBFA will implement a transition plan to phase-out 7th and 8th grades in June 2023.

**New Beginnings Family Academy, Inc.
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New Beginnings Family Academy provides students a meaningful, high-quality education through experience-based learning that helps develop essential social, emotional and critical-thinking skills. This gives all children a foundation to achieve their full potential at every stage of life.



5. **Establish a funding mechanism for summer programming.** NBFA will offer year-round programming for its Pre-K students and will work with the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood to develop a sliding fee tuition schedule to subsidize the summer costs to parents.
6. **Pursue accreditation from NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children).** With the support of consultants from Cooperative Educational Services, NBFA will establish a NAEYC accreditation schedule.

Description and Impact of the Change

NBFA's approved enrollment is 499 students in Pre-K through 8th grades. Under this proposal, NBFA will maintain an enrollment of 499 students but will restructure to be more impactful in students' foundational years, grades Pre-K-6.

The 12-month, play-based Early Childhood Program will be situated on a parcel adjacent to its current school building at 184 Garden Street in Bridgeport. The main building and available lot at 170 Garden Street are owned by the NBFA Board of Directors. A ribbon cutting will be planned for September 2022.

NBFA will implement these changes from September 2021 through June 2023. In June 2023, this year's 7th graders will be the last class of 8th grade graduates; 6th graders will graduate as 7th graders; and 5th graders will become NBFA's first class of 6th grade graduates. As has been NBFA's practice, leaders will partner with families to identify receiving schools suitable for their children's learning style and social emotional needs. In addition to Bridgeport district schools, several area charters welcome students in secondary grades. They include Great Oaks, Bridge Academy, Achievement First Bridgeport Academy, and Capitol Prep Upper Harbor School. A number of highly competitive private schools also admit students in the secondary grades, including Hopkins, Greens Farms Academy, Fairfield Country Day, Easton Country Day, St. Luke's and Brunswick. NBFA has helped its students gain acceptance and enroll in all of the aforementioned private schools over the years, sans Brunswick.

The following table illustrates projected enrollment by grade level in the coming years.

(2)

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Funding the Change

Slated to begin in March 2022, phase one of the renovation project at 170 Garden Street will include construction of nine classrooms, offices, bathrooms, library, nurse's station and open space on the first floor. Phase two, slated for summer 2022, will erect second story business offices.

Based on structural assessments conducted in summer 2021, the existing building will need to be demolished and a new one built at a cost of roughly \$1.5-\$2 million. NBFA will use \$500,000 in private donor funds to begin phase one. Immediate availability of these funds will allow the project to get started and give Board members and school leaders time to develop a campaign to finance its completion.

References

1. Koplow, L. (2021). *Emotionally Responsive Practice. A Path for Schools That Heal. Infancy-Grade 6*. Teachers College Press.
2. Heckman, J. (2012, Dec. 7) *Invest in early childhood development: Reduce deficits, strengthen the economy*. The Heckman Equation.
https://heckmanequation.org/www/assets/2013/07/F_HeckmanDeficitPieceCUSTOM-Generic_052714-3-1.pdf

(3)

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