Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Accountability and Support Committee

Wednesday, May 20, 2026
450 Columbus Blvd
Plaza North, Hearing Room B
Hartford, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes
Approved on: September 16, 2026

I. Call to Order

Pursuant to the notice filed with the Secretary of the State, Committee Chairperson Erin D. Benham, called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m.

Committee Members Present:

Erin D. Benham
Donald F. Harris Jr.
Dr. Seth D. Zimmerman

Committee Members Absent:

Kristen A. Record

CSDE Staff Present:

Dr. Melissa Jenkins
Dr. Charles Hewes
Jennifer Webb
Anika Matin
Shakira Jacobs-Vazquez
Leslie Navarrete
Ruby Rodriguez

Guests Present:

- Dr. Troy A. Monroe, Chief Executive Officer/Superintendent, Jumoke Academy Charter School, Hartford
- Dr. Marie Gordon Hall, Chief Academic Officer, Jumoke Academy Charter School, Hartford
- Anthony DiGennaro, Dean of Academics, Thelma Ellis Dickerson Jumoke Academy Elementary School (TED), Hartford
- Kashay Green, Principal, Jumoke Academy Honors Science, Math, and Research Technology Middle School (SMaRT), Jumoke Academy Charter School, Hartford
- Ana Marcil, Human Resources Manager, Jumoke Academy Charter School, Hartford
- Sharron Solomon-McCarthy, Director of Student Support Services, Jumoke Academy Charter School, Hartford
- Collette Fearon, Interim Director, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport
- Heidi Barker, Culture and Climate Administrator, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport
- Catherine Nguyen-Ho, Chief Academic Officer, Math, Science, and Information Technology, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport
- Twana Shirden, Chief Academic Officer, Humanities, New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport

II. Approval of Minutes

Harris Jr. moved, and Zimmerman seconded, that the Committee approve the minutes of the April 28, 2026, Accountability and Support Committee meeting.

Vote:

In Favor:	Harris Jr., Zimmerman, and Benham
Abstained:	0
Opposed:	0
Absent:	Record

III. Charter Schools Renewal Corrective Action Update:

Jumoke Academy, Hartford

Chairperson Benham recognized the meeting agenda item and opened the discussion to Dr. Melissa Jenkins, Chief Turnaround Officer, CSDE. Dr. Jenkins provided introductory remarks regarding Jumoke Academy (Jumoke), Hartford's charter renewal corrective action plan, including the school's identified corrective action areas related to chronic absenteeism, English language arts (ELA) and mathematics performance, and teacher certification compliance. Dr. Jenkins welcomed Dr. Troy A. Monroe, Chief Executive Officer/Superintendent, Jumoke Academy; Dr. Marie Gordon Hall, Chief Academic Officer; Anthony DiGennaro, Dean of Academics, Thelma Ellis Dickerson Jumoke Academy Elementary School (TED); Kashay Green, Principal, Jumoke Academy Honors Science, Math, and Research Technology Middle School (SMaRT); Ana Marcil, Human Resources Manager; and Sharron Solomon-McCarthy, Director of Student Support Services, to provide a progress update regarding implementation of Jumoke's corrective action plan.

Jumoke shared updates regarding academic performance and instructional improvement efforts. Jumoke highlighted growth trends in ELA and mathematics, including benchmark gains in Grades 1, 3, and 4, implementation of DIBELS assessments in K through Grade 3, and preliminary spring benchmark data demonstrating that at least 50 percent of students in K through Grade 3 were performing at or above end-of-year benchmark expectations. Jumoke further discussed targeted

instructional adjustments implemented in response to benchmark and progress monitoring data, including expanded coaching supports for K through Grade 2 teachers, increased reading intervention push-in services, targeted small-group instruction, strengthened mathematics instructional supports, and targeted intervention planning aligned to identified student learning needs. The charter school discussed middle school academic performance trends and acknowledged continued instructional challenges impacting Grades 5 and 6 during the school year due to staffing transitions and instructional instability. The charter school reported that revised scheduling structures, strengthened Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) systems, targeted classroom management supports, expanded professional learning community collaboration opportunities, increased utilization of instructional coaches, and data-informed intervention planning were implemented to stabilize instruction and support scholar academic growth.

Jumoke discussed the implementation of districtwide professional development aligned to the charter school's instructional framework focused on "Explore, Engage, and Elevate;" the continued implementation of AVID instructional strategies centered on writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading; expanded professional learning communities (PLCs); increased vertical and content-area collaboration; student work analysis protocols; walkthrough cycles; and targeted instructional planning informed by benchmark and progress monitoring data to strengthen instructional consistency and support student academic growth across the charter school's campuses. The charter school additionally reported to the Committee on the increased utilization of instructional coaches, restructuring of coaching schedules to provide greater support at the middle school level, expanded opportunities for collaborative lesson planning and student work analysis, and implementation of targeted intervention and small-group instructional supports aligned to identified student learning needs. The charter school further stated that these efforts contributed to stronger instructional oversight, increased collaboration among teachers, and promising scholar growth trends reflected in benchmark and progress monitoring data.

Regarding chronic absenteeism and school climate, Jumoke discussed the implementation of attendance campaigns aligned to the State's "School is Better with You" initiative, parent outreach efforts, home visits, wraparound support services, attendance intervention planning, and intentional efforts to strengthen school culture and family engagement. Jumoke reported on the implementation of attendance incentives, attendance-focused family activities, father engagement initiatives, interdisciplinary attendance supports, and partnerships with community-based organizations to support scholar wellness and attendance. Jumoke further discussed the implementation of Tier 2 attendance intervention strategies, including scheduling parent meetings, conducting home visits, identifying individual root causes contributing to absenteeism, and developing individualized attendance plans for scholars identified as chronically absent or at risk of chronic absenteeism.

Jumoke reported declines in chronic absenteeism rates during the months of October, December, and January compared to the prior school year (2024-25) and stated that March 2026 attendance data reflected an approximate 9 to 10 percent decline in chronic absenteeism compared to the prior year. In addition, Jumoke reported to the Committee that transportation limitations, particularly on half days designated for professional development, increases in the number of students experiencing homelessness, anxiety-related attendance concerns, and extended out-of-country travel among families continued to significantly impact chronic absenteeism rates and the implementation of Tier 2 attendance interventions, noting that several of these factors remain outside of the charter school's direct control. The charter school further discussed efforts to coordinate transportation alternatives, connect families to wraparound services, and support scholars experiencing attendance-related barriers through Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and school-based intervention supports.

Jumoke provided an update regarding teacher certification compliance, staffing retention efforts, and long-term teacher pipeline development initiatives. Jumoke reported improvement from approximately 88 percent teacher certification compliance at the beginning of the school year to approximately 94 percent compliance by April 2026 and discussed the charter school's continued efforts to increase the number of fully certified teachers across grade levels and content areas.

The charter school discussed ongoing recruitment, onboarding, mentorship, and teacher development efforts designed to support staffing stability and strengthen long-term instructional capacity across the charter school's campuses. The charter school further reported that approximately 47 percent of teachers currently hold between one and three years of teaching experience and discussed the charter school's continued utilization of non-traditional certification pathways, including flexible charter school authorization pathways, to address staffing needs and teacher shortages.

Jumoke went on to discuss the implementation of mentorship structures, instructional coaching supports, professional learning opportunities, and individualized teacher development supports designed to strengthen teacher practice, retention, and instructional consistency. Jumoke highlighted continued implementation of "Grow Your Own" teacher pipeline initiatives in partnership with Central Connecticut State University (CCSU), located in New Britain, Connecticut, including educator preparation partnerships and support structures intended to develop and retain future certified teachers within the charter school community. Jumoke further acknowledged ongoing staffing and retention challenges impacting the broader educator workforce and discussed continued efforts to balance staffing capacity, certification compliance requirements, leadership continuity, and instructional supports to sustain implementation of the charter school's corrective action plan and support student academic outcomes.

Chairperson Benham opened the floor for comments and questions from the Committee. Committee members further inquired regarding staffing stability and continuity across grade levels, specifically referencing prior concerns raised during earlier Accountability and Support Committee meetings regarding instructional staffing and academic performance in Grade 4. Committee members noted concern regarding the charter school's continued academic challenges in Grades 5 and 6 and questioned whether the current student cohort reflected lingering impacts from prior staffing instability and certification concerns identified during the previous school year.

Jumoke acknowledged that staffing transitions within the middle school grades impacted instructional consistency earlier in the school year, particularly within Grades 5 and 6. Jumoke reported that instructional restructuring, revised scheduling models, increased coaching supports, strengthened PBIS systems, and targeted classroom management support were implemented in response to these challenges to stabilize instruction and support academic growth.

Committee members further inquired regarding principal representation and leadership continuity across the charter school's campuses, referencing the Committee's prior request during earlier Accountability and Support Committee meetings for school principals to participate directly in the presentation and discussion. Committee members noted concern regarding continued leadership transitions and questioned the absence of certain school-based principals during the meeting. Jumoke clarified current leadership assignments and reported that one campus principal position was currently in transition while other charter school leaders and instructional administrators were present to provide continuity regarding implementation of the charter school's corrective action efforts and academic programming. Committee members emphasized the importance of consistent school-based leadership presence and continuity across all campuses.

The Committee asked whether Jumoke anticipated improved staffing stability for the 2026–27 school year. Jumoke reported that the charter school employs approximately 111 staff members, including administrators, and that intent-to-return forms and contract renewals were distributed earlier in the spring. There was inquiry about staffing structures, leadership continuity, and how and whether staff had received renewal or separation notices. The school also noted that approximately 17 to 18 staff members had been informed that their contracts would not continue into the upcoming year, explaining that some staffing changes were driven by operational and budgetary needs. Final staffing retention figures will not be confirmed until the start of the 2026–27 school year.

Committee members reiterated concerns about staffing turnover and emphasized the importance of consistent leadership, experienced instructional staff, and stable school-based supports to sustain long-term academic progress and carry out the charter school's corrective action plan.

New Beginnings Family Academy, Bridgeport

Chairperson Benham recognized the meeting agenda item and opened the discussion to Dr. Melissa Jenkins, Chief Turnaround Officer, CSDE. Dr. Jenkins provided introductory remarks regarding New Beginnings Family Academy (NBFA), Bridgeport's charter renewal corrective action plan areas related to chronic absenteeism, English language arts (ELA), and mathematics performance. Dr. Jenkins further provided an overview of recent leadership transitions and organizational restructuring efforts occurring since the charter school's previous Accountability and Support Committee presentation in December 2025. Dr. Jenkins welcomed Collette Fearon, Interim Director, New Beginnings Family Academy; Heidi Barker, Culture and Climate Administrator; Catherine Nguyen-Ho, Chief Academic Officer, Math, Science, and Information Technology; and Twana Shirden, Chief Academic Officer, Humanities, to provide a progress update regarding implementation of the charter school's corrective action plan.

NBFA reported on the implementation of corrective action strategies related to ELA and mathematics performance, and chronic absenteeism. NBFA stated that corrective action strategies were developed following a root cause analysis process that identified inconsistent implementation of differentiated Tier I instruction, limited intervention structures, pacing inconsistencies, and attendance system gaps as key barriers impacting student achievement and attendance outcomes.

Regarding ELA performance, NBFA discussed the implementation of differentiated instructional practices, embedded coaching structures, professional learning community collaboration, and evidence-based literacy instruction aligned to the University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt into Reading (HMH) literacy frameworks. The charter school reported benchmark assessment outcomes utilizing DIBELS assessments and stated that several grade levels, including kindergarten, Grade 4, and Grade 6, met or approached midyear benchmark targets. The charter school further reported that approximately 25 percent of students met or exceeded ELA benchmark expectations schoolwide and stated that benchmark performance among students with disabilities exceeded established midyear targets by approximately three percentage points.

NBFA acknowledged continued academic concerns among several grade levels, specifically Grades 1, 3, and 5, and discussed instructional instability and staffing transitions earlier in the school year that impacted continuity of instruction and implementation fidelity. NBFA stated that targeted staffing stabilization efforts were implemented to reduce instructional disruption and improve consistency of classroom instruction.

The charter school further discussed ongoing collaboration with TNTP consultants to strengthen instructional practices through embedded coaching cycles, PLC facilitation, walkthrough feedback structures, and targeted professional development designed to build teacher instructional capacity. NBFA went on to discuss the implementation of instructional practices focused on explicit instruction, learning intention alignment, success criteria, systematic phonics instruction, differentiated intervention supports, and strengthened alignment between core instruction and specialized instruction for students with disabilities. NBFA stated that school leadership continues to prioritize instructional calibration, lesson internalization, and teacher facilitation practices to strengthen student engagement and instructional effectiveness.

Regarding mathematics performance, NBFA reported that although the charter school did not meet its established midyear mathematics proficiency targets, benchmark and intervention data reflected measurable student growth among several student populations, including students receiving intervention services and English language learners/multilingual learners (EL/MLs). The charter school reported that approximately 40 percent of intervention students advanced at least one performance level and approximately 17 percent of ELs/MLs demonstrated growth across benchmark assessments.

NBFA acknowledged significant decline in mathematics proficiency among Grades 3 and 5 and attributed these outcomes, in part, to pacing challenges, foundational skill gaps, staffing transitions, and classroom management concerns involving first-year teachers assigned to those grade levels. NBFA shared that instructional time during the first half of the school year was heavily dedicated to remediation of unfinished learning and foundational skill development, limiting exposure to grade-level content prior to benchmark assessments. NBFA further discussed recalibration of mathematics pacing guides, implementation of targeted instructional coaching, increased focus on unpacking grade-level standards, differentiated instructional supports, small-group intervention practices, and expansion of teacher professional learning related to evidence-based mathematics instruction. The charter school additionally discussed ongoing partnerships with external consultants to strengthen mathematics instructional leadership, improve instructional coherence, and build teacher content knowledge and instructional capacity across Grades 2 through 6.

Regarding chronic absenteeism, NBFA reported that as of March 2026, approximately 29.4 percent of students were identified as chronically absent, reflecting an approximate 14.1 percentage point improvement compared to the prior school year (2024-25). The charter school went on to report that chronic absenteeism trends stabilized between January and February 2026 and slightly decreased again during March 2026, positioning the charter school to potentially meet its stated chronic absenteeism target of 30 percent by the end of the school year.

NBFA discussed the grade-level attendance improvements, specifically highlighting reductions in chronic absenteeism among K and Grade 5 students. The charter school stated that implementation of interdisciplinary attendance teams, a comprehensive tiered attendance framework, proactive attendance monitoring systems, individualized family outreach, and evidence-based attendance interventions contributed to improvements in attendance outcomes.

The charter school additionally discussed implementation of coordinated attendance response systems involving multiple stakeholder groups, including administrators, teachers, and support staff, to support early identification of attendance concerns and individualized intervention planning. NBFA stated that the charter school intends to continue refining attendance systems and intervention practices during the upcoming school year.

NBFA discussed school leadership's evaluation of instructional technology usage within literacy instruction and reported concerns regarding overreliance on technology-based instructional delivery within the HMH literacy curriculum. The charter school stated that walkthrough observations and instructional monitoring identified instances in which technology tools were functioning as the primary instructional facilitator rather than as supplemental instructional supports. NBFA reported that the charter school intends to strengthen lesson internalization expectations, increase teacher-directed instructional facilitation practices, and reduce unnecessary student device usage within literacy classrooms moving forward.

Chairperson Benham opened the floor for comments and questions from the Committee. Committee members engaged in extensive discussion regarding benchmark assessment trends, instructional pacing concerns, chronic absenteeism interventions, staffing stability, curriculum implementation fidelity, and instructional technology practices.

The Committee inquired regarding the charter school's decision to identify "overreliance on technology" as an instructional practice identified for discontinuation within the literacy program. NBFA explained that although the HMH literacy curriculum includes technology-supported instructional components, classroom observations revealed that some teachers were relying too heavily on digital instructional delivery rather than utilizing the technology platform as a supplemental instructional tool. NBFA further explained that the charter school is working to strengthen teacher lesson internalization practices, instructional facilitation skills, and direct student engagement strategies to improve instructional quality and student learning outcomes.

Committee member Zimmerman further inquired whether the concerns identified by school leadership reflected implementation fidelity issues related to teacher practice or broader concerns regarding the curriculum design itself. NBFA responded that the charter school believes the concerns are primarily related to implementation fidelity and teacher instructional internalization rather than deficiencies within the curriculum itself. NBFA further stated that teachers are continuing to receive professional development and coaching support designed to strengthen lesson delivery, instructional pacing, and effective integration of instructional technology.

Committee members additionally discussed the significant decline in mathematics proficiency observed between Grades 2 and 3 benchmark outcomes and questioned whether benchmark assessments may be measuring substantially different content expectations beginning in Grade 3. NBFA acknowledged that pacing disruptions, staffing transitions, and unfinished learning contributed to the decline and further explained that benchmark assessment administration timing and alignment to curriculum pacing likely impacted student performance results. The charter school noted that certain grade-level standards assessed at the middle-of-year benchmark had not yet been fully instructed due to pacing delays earlier in the school year.

Committee member Zimmerman cautioned against overinterpreting isolated subgroup performance fluctuations within smaller student populations and emphasized the importance of focusing on broader schoolwide performance trends and sustained instructional outcomes rather than isolated gains among smaller sample groups. Committee members stressed the importance of maintaining a long-term focus on instructional stability, consistent implementation practices, and sustainable academic growth.

Committee member Harris Jr., commended NBFA's attendance intervention efforts and acknowledged that chronic absenteeism remains a statewide challenge impacting school districts and charter schools across Connecticut. Committee members encouraged NBFA to continue strengthening attendance intervention systems and family engagement practices to sustain progress and further reduce chronic absenteeism rates moving forward.

Chairperson Benham thanked the New Beginnings Family Academy team for the presentation and participation.

IV. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m. Harris Jr. moved to adjourn, and Zimmerman seconded the motion. The next Accountability and Support Committee meeting will be held on June 17, 2026.

Prepared by: Leslie Navarrete