



# Connecticut Charter Schools

## Best Practices Annual Report 2021 – 2022

Charter School Office  
State Department of Education  
450 Columbus Blvd. | Hartford, CT  
Phone: 860-713-6573





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## Connecticut Charter Schools

In 1996, Connecticut’s General Assembly and Governor enacted legislation establishing charter schools in the state and empowering the State Board of Education (SBE) as the sole authorizer of charter schools. As nonsectarian public schools, charter schools represent innovative school models utilizing diverse, research-based educational methods. There are 21 charter schools statewide – 20 state and 1 local. Located in 10 host districts, these schools serve nearly 11,000 students.

Connecticut has both state and local charter schools. A local charter school is a new school or part of a public school that is converted into a charter school and is approved by the local board of education and the SBE. A state charter school is a new public school approved by the SBE. As independent local education agencies, charter schools are granted significant autonomy in exchange for strict accountability and high expectations for school performance.

Every year, charter schools prepare and submit to the Connecticut State Department of Education

(CSDE) annual reports summarizing school progress toward meeting academic and organizational goals. The annual reports include the financial condition of the school, accomplishment of school mission, student body composition, and self-reported best practices that contribute to positive student and school outcomes, including results aligned to the CSDE’s performance framework for charter schools. The CSDE subsequently posts the [annual reports](#) on its website, which include best practices reported by the charter schools as having a positive impact on improving student and school outcomes.



## Charter Schools Statewide

**Amistad Academy**  
New Haven, CT

**Elm City Montessori School**  
New Haven, CT (local charter school)

**New Beginnings Family Academy**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Achievement First Bridgeport Academy**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Explorations Charter School**  
Winsted, CT

**Odyssey Community School**  
Manchester, CT

**Achievement First Hartford Academy**  
Hartford, CT

**Great Oaks Charter School**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Park City Prep Charter School**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Booker T. Washington Academy**  
New Haven, CT

**Highville Charter School**  
New Haven, CT

**Side By Side Charter School**  
Norwalk, CT

**Brass City Charter School**  
Waterbury, CT

**Integrated Day Charter School**  
Norwich, CT

**Stamford Charter School for Excellence**  
Stamford, CT

**Capital Preparatory Harbor School**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Interdistrict School for Arts & Communication**  
New London, CT

**The Bridge Academy**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Common Ground High School**  
New Haven, CT

**Jumoke Academy**  
Hartford, CT

**Elm City College Preparatory School**  
New Haven, CT

## Charter School Performance Standards

The CSDE's charter school performance framework holds charter schools accountable for impact and results in four key areas: school performance; stewardship, governance and management, student population, and legal compliance.

These four performance standards are consistent across all charter school accountability systems

and processes, including the initial application, annual reporting, and charter renewal. The best practices provided in the annual reports represent self-reported promising practices by Connecticut's charter schools in these areas.

The performance standards are clearly defined on pages 4 and 5.



### Standard 1: School Performance

Is the school a successful model resulting in strong student outcomes and a positive school climate?



### Standard 2: Stewardship, Governance, and Management

Is the school financially and organizationally healthy and viable?



### Standard 3: Student Population

Is the school promoting equity by effectively attracting, enrolling, and retaining students, particularly among targeted populations?



### Standard 4: Legal Compliance

Is the school acting in compliance with applicable laws and regulations?



# Performance Standards Definitions

## Standard 1: School Performance

Based on Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System launched in the 2014-15 fiscal year, the accountability system is a broad set of 12 indicators that helps tell the story of how well a school is preparing its students for success in college, career, and life. The system moves beyond test scores and graduation rates, and instead provides a multifactor perspective of performance that will incorporate student growth over time.

## Standard 2: Stewardship, Governance, and Management

**Financial Management** — The school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations relating to financial management and oversight expectations as evidenced by an annual independent audit.

**Financial Reporting and Compliance** — The school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations relating to financial reporting and compliance requirements (e.g., submits reports on time, annual inventory of current assets, and review of appropriate financial controls).

**Financial Viability** — The school demonstrates strong short- and long-term fiscal viability evidenced by the ability to meet enrollment projections, reasonability and certainty of revenue projections and funding sources, margins and cash flow, and debt levels.

**Governance and Management** — The school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations relating to governance by its board, including training related to charter school governing council responsibilities during the term of the charter.

**School Facility** — The school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations relating to the school facilities, grounds, and transportation, including but not limited to viable certificate of occupancy or other required building use authorization, health, safety, and fire code requirements, and maintaining and documenting requisite insurance coverage.

## Standard 3: Student Population

**Recruitment and Enrollment Process** — The school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations relevant to student populations, fair and equitable enrollment and recruitment processes, and transparent and open access.

**Waitlist and Enrollment Data** — The school's enrollment variance equals or exceeds 95 percent in the most recent year.

**Demographic Representation** — The student body reflects the demographics of the targeted population and/or surrounding communities. There is strong evidence of efforts to attract, enroll, and retain special populations.

**Family and Community Support** — The school maintains strong parent satisfaction and community support.

**School Culture and Climate** — The school maintains clear policies and consistent implementation of policies (e.g., ongoing behavior intervention monitoring, low frequency of suspensions and/or expulsions).

## Standard 4: Legal Compliance

**Open Meetings/Information Management** — The school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations relating to the maintaining and handling of information, all governing board meetings are open and accessible to the public, proper and secure maintenance of education records and regulations, proper transference of student records, and proper and secure maintenance of testing material.

**Students with Disabilities** — Consistent with a state charter school’s status as a local education agency (LEA), the school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations, (including but not limited to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section (§) 10-66ee(d)(3), and the school’s policies and procedures governing the education of students with disabilities) relating to the education of students with identified disabilities and those suspected of having a disability. A state charter school is a LEA, except that state law designates the LEA of the child’s residence responsible for the identification of student eligibility for special education services and determination of the special education services to be provided, pursuant to IDEA for students attending a charter school.

**Multilingual learners/English learners (MLs/ELs)** — The school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations, and required policies, including but not limited to Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), U.S. Department of Education authorities, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA) relating to requirements regarding and related to the service of Multilingual learners/English learners (MLs/ELs).

**Rights of Students** — The school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations relating to the rights of students, including but not limited to appropriate handling of student information, due process protections, and state nondiscrimination laws.

**Teacher/Staff Credentials** — The school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations relating to state certification requirements, as modified by any waivers that have been granted. (C.G.S. § 10-66dd, Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program as per C.G.S. § 10-145o, and educator evaluation and support requirements as per C.G.S. § 10-151b. See also Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies C.G.S. § 10-145d-401.)

**Employee Rights** — The school materially complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations relating to employment considerations, including but not limited to the Family Medical Leave Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, employment contracts, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other applicable laws (C.G.S. § 10-66dd).

## Charter School Performance

Connecticut charter schools account for approximately two percent of the state’s public schoolchildren. Many of Connecticut’s charter schools maintain a waitlist of hundreds of students, demonstrating interest for school choice by families and students. In 2021-22, over 5,280 students sought enrollment and were waitlisted.

Connecticut’s Next Generation Accountability System launched in the 2014-15 school year. It is a system developed under the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Flexibility Renewal Act, included as part of Connecticut’s state plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The accountability system is a broad set of 12 indicators that helps tell the story of how well a school is preparing its students for success in college, careers, and life. The system moves beyond test scores and graduation rates, and instead provides a multifactor perspective of performance that incorporates student growth over time.

As part of the Next Generation Accountability System, all public schools including charter schools receive a report that provides a picture of how the school measures on all 12 of the indicators. The data provides a more comprehensive holistic picture of student and school performance.

## Best Practices

[Connecticut General Statutes § 10-66ii](#) requires the CSDE to annually publish a report of all the best practices reported by the charter schools. A goal of sharing the best practices is to help other schools and districts learn about the promising practices reported by the charter schools as having positive impacts on student and school outcomes. Please visit the CSDE’s Charter School Office [website](#) for a complete list of the schools’ annual reports inclusive of best practices.

