



# Connecticut Charter Schools

## Best Practices Annual Report 2023 – 2024

### Charter School Office

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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 over 10,000 students.

Connecticut has both state and local charter schools. A state charter school is a new public school approved by the SBE. 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. 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) an annual report summarizing school progress, in alignment to the CSDE's charter school performance framework, toward meeting academic and organizational goals. The annual report includes the financial condition of the school, fulfillment of the school mission, student body composition, and self-reported best practices that schools believe positively impact student and school outcomes. [Annual reports](#) can be found on CSDE's website.



## Charter Schools Statewide

**Achievement First Bridgeport Academy**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Achievement First Hartford Academy**  
Hartford, CT

**Amistad Academy**  
New Haven, CT

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

**The Bridge Academy**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Brass City Charter School**  
Waterbury, CT

**Capital Preparatory Harbor School**  
Bridgeport, CT

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

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

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

**Explorations Charter School**  
Winsted, CT

**Great Oaks Charter School**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Highville Charter School**  
New Haven, CT

**Integrated Day Charter School**  
Norwich, CT

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

**Jumoke Academy**  
Hartford, CT

**New Beginnings Family Academy**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Odyssey Community School**  
Manchester, CT

**Park City Charter School**  
Bridgeport, CT

**Side by Side Charter School**  
Norwalk, CT

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



## Charter School Performance Standards

The CSDE's charter school performance framework includes four performance standards: Standard 1-School Performance; Standard 2-Stewardship, Governance, and Management; Standard 3-Student Population; and Standard 4-Legal Compliance. This framework holds charter schools accountable for impact and results.

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 Defined

## 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 incorporates 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 as 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; it has 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. The school has 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 complies with applicable state and federal laws, rules, and regulations regarding students with disabilities. These include but are not limited to, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section (§) 10-66ee(d)(7). The school also complies with its own policies and procedures governing the education of students with disabilities and those suspected of having a disability. A state charter school receives funding for special education from LEAs of enrolled students' residence, as set forth in C.G.S. Section (§) 10-66ee(d)(7). As such, while a state charter school is generally considered an LEA, it is not considered an LEA for purposes of IDEA grant funding. Furthermore, state law designates the LEA of the child's residence as responsible for the identification of student eligibility for special education services and determination of the special education services to be provided pursuant to the IDEA for students attending a charter school.

**English Learner/Multilingual Learner (EL/ML)** — 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 EL/MLs.

**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 in school choice by families and students. In 2023-24, over 4,000 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 comprehensive and holistic picture of student and school performance.

## Best Practices

[Connecticut General Statutes § 10-66ii](#) requires the CSDE to annually publish a report of 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 schools' annual reports to learn more about the best practices implemented by Connecticut's charter schools.

