

**Connecticut State Department of Education**  
**Biennial Report on the Operation of**  
**Charter Schools in Connecticut**  
**2024**

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## Introduction/Background Information

Since Connecticut's charter school law was first enacted in 1996, charter schools have been one part of Connecticut's approach to closing the achievement gap. Charter schools are a tuition-free public-school model available to Connecticut students, in addition to magnet schools, vocational-agricultural schools, career-oriented technical high schools, endowed academies and traditional public schools.

Charter schools are authorized and funded by the state. The term "charter school" refers to the state-issued governing document, or charter, that grants a non-profit board of directors the conditional authority to operate the school. Student enrollment is determined using a random selection process via lottery conducted at each school or district. Students who are not selected are placed on the school's waitlist.

In exchange for greater autonomy, charter schools are subject to heightened accountability. All charter schools operate on a strictly provisional basis, subject to continuous review and renewal by the State Board of Education (SBE) for up to five years. In accordance with subsection (g) of Section (§)10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), charters may be renewed, upon application, in accordance with the provisions for the granting of new charters. The State Board of Education (SBE) may renew a charter for a period of up to five years. The SBE makes renewal decisions based on evidence of the following performance standards: School Performance; Stewardship, Governance, and Management; Student Population; and Legal Compliance.

**Statutory Reporting Requirement:** Section (§)10-66gg of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) requires the Commissioner of Education to review and report biennially, within available appropriations, on the operation of charter schools established pursuant to Section (§)10-66aa to 10-66ff, inclusive, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education. Such reporting must provide: (1) recommendations for any statutory changes that would facilitate expansion in the number of charter schools; (2) a compilation of school profiles pursuant to Section (§)10-66cc; (3) an assessment of the adequacy of funding pursuant to Section 10-66ee; and (4) the adequacy and availability of suitable charter school facilities for such schools.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) issued a Request for Proposals for the development of state and local charter schools on March 15, 2022. Prospective applicants were required to submit a completed application packet on or before December 1, 2022. The CSDE received seven applications: Breakthrough Leadership Academy Charter School (Hamden), Capital Preparatory Charter School Middletown (Middletown), CoLAB Academy (Waterbury), Edmonds Cofield Preparatory Academy for Young Men (New Haven), New Haven Hebrew Public Charter School (New Haven), Reach Academy Charter School of Connecticut (Bristol) and Hartford Science and Technology Academy. Hartford Science and Technology Academy was returned because it was identified as being incomplete.

On March 1, 2023, the State Board of Education granted an initial certificate of approval for a state charter to two of the six applicants, Capital Preparatory Middletown Charter School and Edmonds Cofield Preparatory Academy for Young Men. Both schools were approved with conditions determined by the Commissioner of Education, which were based on state legislative appropriation of funds.

On June 12, 2023, Governor Ned Lamont signed the biennial budget to include funding for two new public charter schools to open in Connecticut, allocating funding to the Edmonds Cofield Preparatory Academy for Young Men in New Haven and Norwalk Charter School for Excellence, both granted an initial certificate of approval by the SBE.

Currently, the Legislature has not appropriated funding to open two of the school that were granted an initial certificate of approval by the SBE, Capital Preparatory Charter School Middletown and Danbury Charter School.

The Connecticut State Department of Education released a new request for proposals for the development of state and local charter schools in April 2024.

**Enabling Legislation:** C.G.S., Section (§)10-66aa to 10-66ff.

## Charter School Landscape

A total of 10 school districts host 21 charter schools serving approximately 10,884 students. As of October 2022, the CSDE’s latest audited student enrollment data show 83 school districts (about 50 percent of all school districts) send students to charter schools. A table of charter schools, their host district, and school districts served is included on page four.

**The State Charter School Grant:** The state charter school per pupil amount for 2021-22 and 2022-23 was \$11,525, for each student enrolled in the school per approved enrollment and additional support provided depending on student eligibility for free or reduced-priced meals and students identified as English Learners/Multilingual Learners.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
<b>FY 2019-20</b>	\$118,046,250
<b>FY 2020-21</b>	\$118,417,500
<b>FY 2021-22</b>	\$124,537,357
<b>FY 2022-23</b>	\$129,203,384

**Use of Funds:** Charter schools can use state charter school grant funds for any costs associated with the operation of a school, including the acquisition and maintenance of suitable facilities.

**The Local Charter School Grant:** The CSDE may award, subject to funding availability, initial start-up grants of up to \$500,000 and grants of up to \$3,000 per student to local charter schools. There is currently one local charter school, Elm City Montessori School in New Haven.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Per Pupil Grant</u>
<b>FY 2019-20</b>	\$600,000
<b>FY 2020-21</b>	\$690,000
<b>FY 2021-22</b>	\$801,000
<b>FY 2022-23</b>	\$855,000

## Charter Schools and the Districts Served

Charter School	Host District	Districts Served
Achievement First Bridgeport Academy	Bridgeport	Bridgeport
Achievement First Hartford Academy	Hartford	Hartford
Amistad Academy	New Haven	New Haven
Booker T. Washington	New Haven	East Haven, Hamden, Milford, New Haven, Stamford, Watertown, West Haven
Brass City Charter School	Waterbury	Waterbury
Capital Preparatory Harbor School	Bridgeport	Ansonia, Bridgeport, Derby, Hamden, Middletown, Milford, New Haven, Norwalk, Shelton, Stamford, Stratford, Trumbull, Waterbury, West Haven
Common Ground High School	New Haven	Ansonia, Branford, Bridgeport, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, Meriden, Milford, Naugatuck, New Haven, North Branford, Orange, Oxford, Shelton, Stratford, Wallingford, Waterbury, West Haven, Wolcott, Woodbridge
Elm City College Preparatory School	New Haven	New Haven
Elm City Montessori (local charter)	New Haven	East Haven, Hamden, Milford, New Haven, North Haven, Wallingford, Waterbury, West Haven
Explorations Charter School	Winsted	Avon, Barkhamsted, Canaan, Canton, Colebrook, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Litchfield, Norfolk, Sharon, Simsbury, Thomaston, Torrington, Watertown, Winchester
Great Oaks Charter School	Bridgeport	Bloomfield, Bridgeport, Bridgewater, Bristol, Derby, Milford, Naugatuck, Shelton, Stratford, Waterbury, West Haven
Highville Charter School	New Haven	Ansonia, Bridgeport, Derby, East Haven, Hamden, Meriden, New Haven, North Haven, Shelton, Wallingford, Waterbury, West Haven
Integrated Day Charter School	Norwich	Canterbury, East Lyme, Franklin, Griswold, Groton, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Montville, North Stonington, Norwich, Plainfield, Preston, Sprague, Stonington
Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC)	New London	East Haddam, East Lyme, Groton, Ledyard, Middletown, Montville, New London, Norwich, Preston, Stonington, Waterford
Jumoke Academy Charter School	Hartford	Bloomfield, Cromwell, East Hartford, East Windsor, Enfield, Hartford, Manchester, Meriden, New Britain, South Windsor, Vernon, Waterbury, West Hartford, Windsor, Windsor Locks
New Beginnings Family Academy	Bridgeport	Ansonia, Bridgeport, Derby, Milford, New Haven, Stamford, Stratford
Odyssey Charter School	Manchester	East Hartford, East Windsor, Enfield, Glastonbury, Hartford, Hebron, Manchester, Middletown, New Britain, Newington, South Windsor, Tolland, Vernon, Windham
Park City Prep Charter School	Bridgeport	Bridgeport, Derby, Fairfield, Hamden, Shelton, Stratford, Waterbury
Side by Side Charter School	Norwalk	Bridgeport, Fairfield, Newtown, Norwalk, Seymour, Shelton, Stamford, Stratford
Stamford Charter School for Excellence	Stamford	Stamford
The Bridge Academy	Bridgeport	Ansonia, Bridgeport, Stratford

Source: Public School Information System (PSIS) October 2022

## Charter Renewal

The charter school performance framework drives the CSDE's charter school accountability system and charter renewal determinations. Charters may be renewed by the SBE for up to five years. In accordance with C.G.S., Section 10-66bb(g), the CSDE and the SBE evaluate charter school performance and operations based on evidence of four performance standards outlined below.

- 1. School Performance:** Is the school a successful model resulting in strong student outcomes and a positive school climate?
- 2. Stewardship, Governance, and Management:** Is the school financially and organizationally healthy and viable?
- 3. Student Population:** Is the school promoting equity by effectively attracting, enrolling, and retaining students, particularly among targeted populations?
- 4. Legal Compliance:** Is the school acting in compliance with applicable laws and regulations?

The CSDE and the SBE evaluate qualitative evidence and longitudinal data when making charter renewal recommendations. The renewal process begins with an eligible charter school's submission of a charter renewal application to the CSDE. A successful application provides clear and compelling evidence for renewal of the charter, focused primarily on student outcomes. The application must offer a vision for the school's future and identify and offer solutions for any weaknesses or gaps in the current program.

A review team comprised of the CSDE staff with expertise in curriculum and instruction, student assessment, teacher certification, school administration, school finance, English Learner/Multilingual Learners (EL/MLs) and special education will review the renewal application. The renewal team conducts a site visit at the school. The site visit is designed to collect data to confirm and supplement the review of the schools' renewal application. The charter renewal team conducts interviews of administrators, staff, and meets with focus groups comprised of diverse school stakeholders, including school leaders, governing board members, teachers, and family members of students.

Additionally, the CSDE solicits comments on the charter renewal from the superintendent of the school district where the charter school is located and superintendents of contiguous districts. A public hearing on the charter renewal is held in the school district in which the school is located. Evidence collected through the site visit observations, interviews and focus groups, superintendent letters and public testimony inform a renewal report prepared by the CSDE and submitted to the Commissioner and the SBE.

The SBE uses findings from the renewal process to determine the length of the renewal and any necessary conditions and/or reporting requirements. In accordance with state law, a charter may be renewed for a maximum of five years. To be eligible for a five-year renewal, the charter school must meet most, if not all, of the performance indicators outlined in the charter school performance framework including, but not limited to, a minimum eligibility requirement of being identified through the State Next Generation Accountability Plan as a category 1 or 2 school.

Conversely, a school’s charter will not be renewed if the school does not apply for renewal or if the school fails to meet most or all of the charter performance standards. In the case of non-renewal, the charter school will be closed upon the charter’s expiration.

On July 14, 2020, the SBE, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, extended by one-year the term of each of the eligible charter schools currently in operation and under the jurisdiction of the SBE. The rationale for this action was to ensure that charter schools were able to devote all the time and resources necessary to adequately address issues imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and maintain a comprehensive charter renewal process.

Currently, eight charter schools are eligible for renewal to operate in the 2024-25 fiscal year: Booker T. Washington Academy (New Haven), Capital Prep Harbor (Bridgeport), Common Ground (New Haven), Explorations Charter School (Winsted), Great Oaks Charter School (Bridgeport), Highville Charter School (New Haven), Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (New London), and Jumoke Academy (Hartford). These schools were issued a one-year extension to their last charter renewal, which made them eligible for a 2024 renewal.

School Name	Renewal Date	Renewal Period
Booker T. Washington Academy, New Haven	June 3, 2020	3 years
Capital Prep Harbor, Bridgeport	June 3, 2020	3 years
Common Ground High School, New Haven	March 4, 2020	3 years
Explorations Charter School	April 6, 2022	2 years
Great Oaks Charter School	April 6, 2022	2 years
Highville Charter School, New Haven	June 3, 2020	3 years
Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC), New London	June 3, 2020	3 years
Jumoke Academy, Hartford	June 3, 2020	3 years

## **School Profile Compilations**

Section 10-66gg of the C.G.S. requires Strategic School Profiles to be identified in Biennial Reports on the Operation of Charter Schools in Connecticut. *EdSIGHT-INSIGHT INTO EDUCATION* is an interactive data portal that supports data, statistics, reports about schools, districts, and the state. This portal can be accessed by using the following link: [EdSight Home Page \(ct.gov\)](#).

## **Funding**

Pursuant to changes in the law for the 2021 legislative session, effective July 1, 2021, state charter schools received a per-pupil base grant of \$11,525 for each student enrolled in the school per approved enrollment and additional financial support provided depending on student eligibility for free or reduced-priced meals and students identified as English Learners/Multilingual Learners.

The manner in which state charter schools are funded is set forth in C.G.S. § 10-66ee. The formula for the state grant to state charter schools is set forth in subsection (d) of this statute. Such payments shall be made as follows: twenty-five percent of the amount not later than July fifteenth; twenty-five percent September first, based on estimated student enrollment on May first; twenty-five percent of the amount no later than January first; and the remaining amount no later than April first, each based on student enrollment on October first.

Legislation also provides, within available appropriations, a per-student grant to local charter schools of \$3,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, and each fiscal year thereafter.

## **Charter School Facilities**

The legislation authorizes grants to state charter schools to assist them in financing building projects, general improvements to school buildings, and repayment of debt incurred for school building projects. To fund the program, section 10-66jj of the C.G.S. states that the State Bond Commission has the authority to approve the issuance of state bonds for charter school facilities not to exceed 45 million dollars. Since the grant went into effect in July 2005, the CSDE has issued seven requests for proposals (RFPs) resulting in \$37.7 million dollars in competitively awarded grants to state charter schools. In November 2018, the CSDE issued an RFP with a January 2019 due date. The CSDE received applications from 10 schools totaling \$6.8 million in requests. Applications from six schools were approved by the CSDE, totaling \$3.8 million. The CSDE awaits the Bond Commission's approval to release the funds. The CSDE plans to issue an RFP for the remaining balance of \$3.5 million after the Bond Commission acts on the current proposal before it.

## Demographic Information

The following table represents charter school actual October 2022 enrollment information:

### Charter Grantees 2022-2023

State Charter School	Actual Enrollment Approved	2022-2023 Actual Grant Payment
Achievement First Bridgeport Academy	1,084	\$13,377,644
Achievement First Hartford Academy	1,041	\$12,469,098
Amistad Academy	1,098	\$13,582,260
Booker T. Washington Academy	444	\$5,498,052
Brass City Charter School	360	\$4,339,440
Capital Preparatory Harbor School	772	\$9,462,404
Common Ground High School	226	\$2,759,912
Elm City College Preparatory School	765	\$9,454,635
*Elm City Montessori School	285	\$855,000
Explorations Charter School	92	\$1,106,668
Great Oaks Charter School	661	\$7,956,457
Highville Charter School	502	\$6,152,512
Integrated Day Charter School	361	\$4,350,772
Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC)	276	\$3,411,084
Jumoke Academy Charter School	629	\$7,893,950
New Beginnings Family Academy	406	\$5,144,832
Odyssey Community School	373	\$4,468,167
Park City Prep Charter School	383	\$4,733,497
Side By Side Charter School	236	\$2,872,120
Stamford Charter School for Excellence	560	\$6,737,920
The Bridge Academy	280	\$3,431,960
<b>Total State Charter</b>	<b>10,834</b>	<b>\$130,058,384</b>
<b>*Total Local Charter</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>\$855,000</b>

Source: Based on projected enrollment, provided by the schools and reviewed by the CSDE.

## **Statutory Update**

Effective July 1, 2015, legislation requires that the CSDE review and recommend approval of a charter school material change requests if the request is to increase the total student enrollment capacity by twenty percent or more. The legislation requires the charter school to submit the request to the CSDE no later than April first, two years prior to the fiscal year in which such material change is planned to take effect. In determining whether to recommend approval of such a request, the CSDE considers: (1) the financial feasibility of such increased enrollment; (2) such charter school's performance, stewardship, governance and management, student population, and legal compliance; and (3) any other factors the CSDE deems relevant to such request. Upon a recommendation by the CSDE to approve the request, the SBE shall vote on such request not later than sixty-days after the date of receipt of such request, or as part of the charter renewal process of the charter school.

## **Noteworthy Achievement**

Stamford Charter School for Excellence, which opened in 2015, was named by the U.S. Department of Education as a 2023 National Blue Ribbon School. This award is given annually to select schools across the nation for demonstrating overall high achievement or success in closing achievement gaps.

Stamford Charter School for Excellence is Connecticut's first charter school to be recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School.

## **Conclusion**

Success is the goal for all students. Charter school oversight is grounded in school quality, accountability, and transparency. To provide greater public transparency, the CSDE continues to maintain active and ongoing communication with the charter schools. Together, CSDE and charter schools strive to improve governance and operations, as well as strengthen and clarify the charter schools' responsibility to produce clear expectations for student performance and increase equity.

The CSDE will work to maintain focused oversight, school quality, accountability, and transparency to ensure schools are operating in accordance with, but not limited to, the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Sections (§)10-66aa through 10-66uu.