



TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: James N. Baldwin 

SUBJECT: Revision Recommendations for Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents

DATE: March 3, 2022

AUTHORIZATION(S): 

SUMMARY

Issue for Decision

Should the Board of Regents approve the proposed revisions to the following charter schools authorized by the Board of Regents?

- **Education Unlimited Lyceum Charter School** (A revision to change the name of the charter school to American Dream Charter School II).
- **Renaissance Charter School 2 (The)** (A revision to expand the charter school's grade span to add Grades 9 - Grade 12 to the school's currently approved K - Grade 6 configuration; and a corresponding increase in the charter school's approved enrollment from 567 students to 837 students).

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State statute.

Proposed Handling

This issue will come before the P-12 Education Committee and the Full Board for action at its March 2022 meeting.

Procedural History

The New York State Education Department (the Department) made the revision recommendations being presented to the Board of Regents for approval and issuance as required by Article 56 of the Education Law.

Background Information

The Board of Regents and the Department are bound by law, regulation, and Regents-endorsed internal policies regarding the criteria that can be considered in decision making pertaining to the authorization of new charter schools, charter school renewals, and charter school revisions. Detailed information on these laws, regulations, and Regents-endorsed internal policies can be found in the Appendix.

Related Regents Items

Education Unlimited Lyceum Charter School

October 2018: [Initial Charter](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1118p12a1.pdf)
(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/1118p12a1.pdf>)

Renaissance Charter School 2 (The)

June 2017 [Initial Charter](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/617p12a5.pdf)
(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/617p12a5.pdf>)

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Regents take the following actions:

VOTED: That the Board of Regents finds that: (1) the **Education Unlimited Lyceum Charter School** meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) the charter school can demonstrate the ability to operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) granting the request to amend the charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of Section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) granting the request to amend the charter will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves the charter revision for **Education Unlimited Lyceum Charter School** and amends the provisional charter accordingly.

VOTED: That the Board of Regents finds that: (1) **Renaissance Charter School 2 (The)** meets the requirements set out in Article 56 of the Education Law, and all other applicable laws, rules and regulations; (2) the charter school can demonstrate the ability to operate in an educationally and fiscally sound manner; (3) granting the request to amend the charter is likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes set out in subdivision two of Section twenty-eight hundred fifty of Article 56 of the Education Law; and (4) granting the request to amend the charter will have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and the Board of Regents therefore approves the charter revision for **Renaissance Charter School 2 (The)** and amends the provisional charter accordingly.

Timetable for Implementation

The Board of Regents action for the above-named charter schools will become effective immediately.

Education Unlimited Lyceum Charter School

In accordance with Education Law, Article 56, **the New York State Education Department recommends that this charter school be permitted to revise its charter** to change the name of the school to American Dream Charter School II.

Table 1: Charter School Summary

Name of Charter School	Education Unlimited Lyceum Charter School
Board Chair	Luz Maria Rojas
District of Location	NYC CSD 6 ¹
Planned Initial Commencement of Instruction	Fall 2023
Current Term Authorized Grades/Approved Enrollment	K - Grade 5 / 616 students
Facilities	To be Determined (This school has yet to commence instruction)
Mission Statement	<i>The mission of the Education Unlimited Lyceum Charter School (EULCS) is to provide an emotionally and intellectually supportive K-5th grade dual-immersion, STEM focused learning environment, dedicated to student achievement by cultivating the best in each child. The majority of students will reach proficiency on NYS exams in ELA, Math and Science and proficiency in two languages by the end of elementary school.</i>
Key Design Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction Content Blocks • STEM Education • Dual Language Instruction Program (DLIP) • Cambridge Primary • Teaching Tolerance • Physical Education • Parent Involvement
Recommended Material Revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To change the name of the school to American Dream Charter School II.

Table 2: Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	Year 1 2023-2024	Year 2 2024-2025	Year 3 2025-2026	Year 4 2026-2027	Year 5 2027-2028
Grade Configuration	K-Grade 1	K-Grade 2	K-Grade 3	K-Grade 4	K-Grade 5
Total Approved Enrollment	160	248	388	504	616

¹ Twenty-one percent of all students residing in this district attend charter schools.

Rationale for Revision Recommendation

NYSED recommends that the Board of Regents approve the revision described above in the **Issue for Decision** section, for the following reasons.

In October 2018, the Board of Regents approved and chartered the Education Unlimited Lyceum Charter School (“EULCS” or “the school”) in New York City Community School District 6 (NYC CSD). The school’s educational program focuses on creating an innovative, high-quality academic program for students in kindergarten through 5th grade in Washington Heights (NYC CSD 6). The school will provide parallel Dual-Language Immersion Programs (DLIPs) creating bi-literate, language diverse students.

The school’s trustees request that the Board of Regents approve the material revision to the school’s charter to allow the school to change its name to American Dream Charter School II, to reflect the school’s partnership with the existing Board of Regents-authorized American Dream Charter School (ADCS) in the Bronx (NYC CSD 7).

Approving this revision request will result in a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the charter school, and is likely to improve student learning and achievement, because the board of trustees of ADCS—which has successfully operated a dual-immersion language program for eight years—will provide the expertise and support needed to best attract, retain, and support students for this program. Over a year ago, EULCS began a partnership with ADCS – whose mission was closely aligned to theirs - to provide academic, community building, and student/teacher recruitment support. The partnership has been positive to the point that ADCS board members have been invited to join the EULCS board, and EULCS has decided to seek approval to rename the school as the American Dream Charter School II (ADCS II). The name change, high capacity of ADCS, and community recognition of ADCS’s reputation for its high-quality dual-immersion language program, along with its strong connections and partnerships in the southern Bronx and northern Manhattan, will put EULCS in the best position to best serve the community the school was chartered to, open for instruction in the fall of 2023, and to meet the expectations of the NYSED Charter School Performance Framework.

The requested revision will have no bearing on the school’s district of location or the number of students being served by this charter school, which will not change, nor will it impact the number of charters available for issuance in New York City or the State.

Summary of Public Comment

The required public hearing was held by the New York City Department of Education on February 28, 2022. 86 people attended, and one spoke. One was in favor of the revision and no one was opposed.

Renaissance Charter School 2 (The)

In accordance with Education Law, Article 56, **the New York State Education Department recommends that this charter school be permitted to revise its charter to** expand the charter school’s grade span to add Grades 9-12 to the school’s currently approved K-Grade 6 configuration; and to correspondingly increase the charter school’s approved enrollment from 567 students to 837 students by the 2024-2025 school year.

Table 1: Charter School Summary

Name of Charter School	Renaissance Charter School 2
Board Chair	Dr. Monte Joffee
District of Location	NYC CSD 24
Initial Commencement of Instruction	Fall 2020
Current Term Authorized Grades /Approved Enrollment	K - Grade 6 / 567 students
Facilities	60-02 Maspeth Ave., Queens, NY 11378, 3rd Floor - Private Space
Mission Statement	<i>The Renaissance Charter School 2 is based on the conviction that a change in the destiny of a single individual can lead to a change in the destiny of a community, nation, and ultimately humankind. Its mission as a K-12 school is to provide a comprehensive academic program aligned with the New York State learning standards that fosters educated, responsible, humanistic young leaders who will, through their own educational development and personal growth, spark a renaissance in New York City and beyond. Its graduates will be global citizens with an abiding respect for peace, human rights, the environment, and sustainable development.</i>
Key Design Elements²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong, comprehensive and proven NYSLS-aligned academic program. • A student-centered approach. • A commitment to project-based and experiential learning. • Extensive student academic and social-emotional development supports. • A commitment to college preparation and career readiness. Partnerships. TRCS 2 will be a “community school” that welcomes, supports and partners with parents, families, individuals and community organizations.
Recommended Material Revisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revision to increase the charter school’s current grade span to add Grades 9 through Grade 12 to the school’s currently approved K-Grade 6 configuration. • A revision to increase the charter school’s authorized enrollment from 567 students to 837.

² These Key Design Elements have been truncated here for brevity. The full Key Design Elements can be found in the school’s initial charter at <https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/617p12a5.pdf>.

Table 2: Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment*

	Year 1 2020-2021	Year 2 2021-2022	Year 3 2022-2023	Year 4 2023-2024	Year 5 2024-2025
Grade Configuration	K-Grade 2	K-Grade 3	K-Grade 4	K-Grade 5	K-Grade 6
Total Approved Enrollment	243	324	405	486	567

*The above table reflects the enrollment plan included in the school’s initial charter as approved by the Board of Regents.

**Table 3: Actual Grade Levels for Year 1 and Year 2*
And Proposed Grade Levels and Enrollment Years 3-5**

	Year 1** 2020-2021	Year 2** 2021-2022	Year 3 2022-2023	Year 4 2023-2024	Year 5*** 2024-2025
Grade Configuration	K-Grade 1	K-Grade 2	K-Grade 3, Grades 9-10	K-Grade 4, Grades 9-11	K-Grade 6, Grades 9-12
Total Approved Enrollment	162	243	432	594	837

*The above table reflects the actual grades and students served in Year 1 and 2 and proposed enrollment plan for the remaining years of the initial charter term submitted by the Renaissance Charter School 2 for approval. It is subject to change pending the final revision recommendation and approval by the Board of Regents.

**Actual Grades Served and Actual Enrollment/Count of Students Served

***Adding Grades 5-6 and Grade 12 in Year 5; Grades 7-8 will be added during the first renewal term if subsequently approved by the Regents as part of the school’s 2024-2025 renewal application.

Rationale for Revision Recommendation

NYSED recommends that the Board of Regents approve the revisions described above in the **Issue for Decision** section, for the following reasons.

In June 2017, the Board of Regents approved and chartered the school in the NYC CSD 24. The school’s academic and humanistic educational program is a replication of the New York City Department of Education-authorized Renaissance Charter School (RCS) that has been in operation for 22 years. The foundation of the RCS 2 academic program, which builds upon the experience and success of RCS, includes teaching students to work cooperatively, think creatively, and develop the skills and aptitudes necessary to become leaders and committed global citizens.

The proposed RCS 2 high school program will replicate the high school program of RCS. The RCS high school consistently outperforms both NYC CSD 30 (where it is located) and New York City on Regents exams and 4 and 6-year graduation rates, and has a college acceptance rate of 100%.

RCS 2 has decided to request high school grade expansion first, rather than a middle school expansion, based on community and stakeholder input from parents/guardians, students, and active community members, including people serving on the local community education council. These stakeholders spoke of the severe and pressing need for more high school options in this part of Queens. RCS 2’s long-term plans include replicating the successful RCS K-12 academic program, complete with the strong District 75

(D75)³ partnership that already exists at RCS. In this partnership, D75 students are integrated into RCS classes and fully participate in RCS enrichment programs. RCS does not receive any additional funding for this program. D75 students participating in this unique and innovate program are integrated into a less restrictive setting and see themselves as full members of the RCS community, a goal RCS 2 seeks to replicate in its proposed high school.

By offering students in Elmhurst and NYC CSD 24 a high school learning experience based on the RCS model, RCS 2 will engage its students in a wide range of innovative educational initiatives and features not otherwise available in this community, including:

1. A high school college readiness and preparation program in which RCS 2 students chart a portfolio-based four-year plan and a scaffolded College-Bound curriculum that guides students in exploring their values, social and academic interests, career options, college choices, and post-secondary college programs;
2. Project-based and experiential-learning activities and social justice initiatives. RCS 2 embeds project-based and experiential learning throughout its curriculum, and multidisciplinary project-based learning is emphasized at all grade levels. Its high school program will extend this tradition by engaging students in innovative “hands-on” learning experiences such as: a) field trips to museums, theaters, art galleries and films; b) school-organized college visits; c) art, music, dance, and drama exhibitions and talent shows; d) multicultural celebrations; and e) community service and social justice initiatives;
3. College Now, which enables students to take credit-bearing college courses while in high school;
4. Global Labs, which enable students to study Global History through targeted, small-group, hands-on learning experiences;
5. Student advisory program similar to that implemented at RCS, which will focus on creating a safe space where advisors can enhance student social-emotional development and work on team building and leadership development. The advisory program has a community service component in which students and advisors brainstorm around various issues, such as the environment, the elderly, etc., and come to consensus about a single issue to focus on or an organization for which they will volunteer. Students then research the selected topic and share presentations or projects related to their community service at a spring Advisory Community Service Fair;
6. Advanced Placement courses in a variety of subjects, including Literature and Spanish; and
7. Comprehensive and innovative programs and services for ELLs, SWDs and other “at-risk” students, including The Learning Center, an Instructional Support Team, an Advisory Program, and a college preparation program that has been particularly effective in helping at-risk students gain acceptance into and succeed in college. RCS 2 intends to use the Orton-Gillingham approach to support students who have difficulty with reading, spelling, and writing, and in particular students with dyslexia. This approach has been used effectively at RCS for the last several years. It is also used in conjunction with balanced-literacy instruction.

RCS 2’s high school program will also help to alleviate high school overcrowding in Elmhurst and throughout NYC CSD 24.

³ District 75 is a non-geographic district within the New York City Department of Education that serves students with individualized educational programs and students with significant challenges.

The school's trustees also request that the Board of Regents approve material revisions to the school's charter pertaining to student enrollment:

- Its first request is to allow the school to bring the charter school's actual enrollment/grades served and approved enrollment/grades into alignment, to commence in the 2022-2023 school year. After two planning years, the charter school identified incubation space that was smaller than anticipated, which led to an unauthorized change to the school's approved enrollment and grades served. This caused the school to open and operate for the first two years serving less than 85 percent of the maximum approved enrollment in its charter agreement and serving one less grade than approved. The school opened serving K-Grade 1 rather than K-Grade 2, and by the end of year 5, the school would serve 486 K-Grade 5 students rather than 567 K-Grade 6 students.
- Additionally, the charter school has requested a revision to increase its grade span to add Grades 9-12 to the school's currently approved K-Grade 6 configuration, beginning with Grades 9 and 10, and to correspondingly increase the charter school's approved enrollment from the currently approved 567 students to 837 students.

Evidence of Demand for Additional Grades/Seats

RCS, which is located in NYC CSD 30, reports that parents of high school students in neighboring NYC CSD 24 have long approached them with an interest in enrolling their children. RCS has a waitlist with more than 3,500 applicants, however, and can only accommodate a small fraction of NYC CSD 24 families.

Support for and interest in this expansion to high school is also strong among families at RCS 2, with the anticipation of this option being available to their children when they are high school aged. RCS 2's Parent Association conducted a survey of parents in October and November 2021, and of the 102 parents who responded, 97 percent approved of RCS 2's proposed high school program. The Parent Association also held a public meeting on November 4, 2021, where 56 of the 60 parents (93 percent) approved a resolution to support the application for a charter revision.

In addition, RCS 2 held and/or participated in several community engagement events to discuss the proposed high-school program. On September 9, 2021, the leadership of RCS 2 met with and solicited community input at Community Board 4. On September 28, 2021, the leadership discussed the high school model and solicited community input in a public meeting at Community Education Council (CEC) 4. In addition to parent and community partner support, the RCS 2 school leaders met with and received letters of support from several elected officials representing NYC CSD 24 or broader Queens. These included several members of the NYC Council and State Legislature.

Summary of Public Comment

The required public hearing was held by the New York City Department of Education on March 1, 2022. 168 people attended, and five spoke. Five were in favor of the revision and no one was opposed.

In the section above: *Evidence of Demand for Additional Grades/Seats*, the school provided details of the evidence of community support for these revision recommendations through the following:

- Meetings with Parents and community partners;
- Parent Association Surveys; and
- Elected Officials, including several members of the NYC Council and the State Assembly and Senate

APPENDIX

Laws, Regulations, and Regents-endorsed Internal Policies Applicable to Board of Regents-Authorized Charter School Revisions

Statutory requirements pertaining to Board of Regents charter school decision making are enumerated in Article 56 of the Education Law. This section of the law sets forth the purpose of charter schools to:

- (a) Improve student learning and achievement;
- (b) Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are at-risk of academic failure;
- (c) Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
- (d) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, school administrators and other school personnel;
- (e) Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public-school system; and
- (f) Provide schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems by holding the schools established under this article accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.

Criteria regarding the evaluation of charter schools, including for revision decisions, are set forth in Section 2852(2) of the Education Law:

- (a) Does the charter school described in the application meet the requirements set out in applicable laws, rules and regulations?;
- (b) Does the charter school demonstrate the ability to operate the school in an educationally and fiscally sound manner?;
- (c) Will approving the charter school action make it likely to improve student learning and achievement and materially further the purposes of the law?; and
- (d) In a school district where the total enrollment of resident students attending charter schools in the base year is greater than five percent of the total public-school enrollment of the school district in the base year (i) would granting the application have a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the proposed charter school or (ii) did the school district in which the charter school will be located consent to such application?

Performance Framework

The Board of Regents Charter School Performance Framework, which is part of the Board of Regents Charter School Renewal Policy and the Oversight Plan included in the Charter Agreement for each school, outlines three key areas of charter school performance: (1) Educational Success; (2) Organizational Soundness; and (3) Faithfulness to Charter and Law. The Charter School Performance Framework sets forth ten performance benchmarks in these three areas. The Charter School Performance Framework is designed to focus on performance outcomes, preserve operational autonomy, and facilitate transparent feedback to schools. It aligns with the Department's ongoing accountability and effectiveness work under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and holds charter schools accountable to standards set forth in the Education Law, while providing the Regents with discretion. Generally, charter schools are required to demonstrate performance outcomes that exceed those of traditional public schools.

The Department considers evidence related to all ten performance benchmark areas of the Charter School Performance Framework when making recommendations to the Regents concerning charter revisions. However, student academic performance is of paramount importance when evaluating each school (See [§ 8 NYCRR 119.7](http://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/law-regulations-memos) (<http://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/law-regulations-memos>). The recommendations in this document were made after a full due-diligence process over the charter term as set forth in the [NYSED Charter School Monitoring Plan](http://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/oversight-plan-board-regents-authorized-charter-schools) (<http://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/oversight-plan-board-regents-authorized-charter-schools>), including review of the information presented by the schools in their application for each revision; specific fiscal reviews; desk audits; comprehensive analysis of achievement data; and consideration of public comment.