



TO: P-12 Education Committee
FROM: Angelique Johnson-Dingle *Angelique Johnson-Dingle*
SUBJECT: Revision to Charters Authorized by the Board of Regents
DATE: May 30, 2024
AUTHORIZATION(S): *Betty M...*

SUMMARY

Issue for Decision

Should the Board of Regents approve the revision recommendation for the following charter school authorized by the Board of Regents?

- **Charter High School for Law and Social Justice** (Revision to increase the school's grade span from Grades 9 through 12 to include Grades 6 through 8 and make a corresponding increase to the school's authorized enrollment from 475 students to 745 students)

Reason(s) for Consideration

Required by State statute.

Proposed Handling

This issue will come before the P-12 Education Committee for recommendation to the Full Board for action at its June 2024 meeting.

Procedural History

The New York State Education Department (the Department) made the revision recommendation(s) being presented to the Board of Regents for approval 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

Charter High School for Law and Social Justice

December 2013: [Initial Applications and Charters](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/1213p12a2%5B1%5D.pdf)

(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/1213p12a2%5B1%5D.pdf>)

May 2015: [Revisions to a Charter Authorized by the Board of Regents](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/meetings/May%202015/515p12a3.pdf)

(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/meetings/May%202015/515p12a3.pdf>)

March 2016: [Revisions to Charters Authorized by the Board of Regents](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/316p12a2REVISED.pdf)

(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/316p12a2REVISED.pdf>)

February 2019: [Revision to a Charter Authorized by the Board of Regents](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/319brca2.pdf)

(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/319brca2.pdf>)

March 2020: [Renewal Recommendations for Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/320p12a1.pdf)

(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/320p12a1.pdf>)

June 2023: [Renewal Recommendations for Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Regents](https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/623p12a6.pdf)

(<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/623p12a6.pdf>)

Recommendation

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

VOTED: That the Board of Regents finds that: (1) the **Charter High School for Law and Social Justice** 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 **Charter High School for Law and Social Justice** and amends the provisional charter accordingly.

Timetable for Implementation

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

Charter High School for Law and Social Justice

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 increase the school’s grade span from Grades 9 through 12 to include Grades 6 through 8 and make a corresponding increase to the school’s authorized enrollment from 475 students to 745 students.**

Table 1: Charter School Summary

Name of Charter School	Charter High School for Law and Social Justice (CHLSJ)
Board Chair	John Callahan
District of Location	New York City (NYC) City School District (CSD) 10 ¹
Initial Commencement of Instruction	Fall 2015
Current Term Authorized Grades /Approved Enrollment	Grades 9-12 / 475 students
Comprehensive Management Service Provider	Shared Space Professional Development, Inc. (SSPD)
Facilities	1960 University Avenue, Bronx, NY 10453 - Private Space
Mission Statement	<i>The Charter High School for Law and Social Justice will provide students from the southern Bronx with a comprehensive high school education and lay the academic and social groundwork for success in college and careers. Using a theme of law and social justice, the school will engage, inspire, and empower students, and will equip them with the academic skills to earn a Regents diploma and gain admission to the college of their choice prepared for success. The school will create a pathway for its students to law school and careers as attorneys. The pathway will include mentoring opportunities with law students and attorneys and partnerships with institutions of higher learning. These institutions will offer college and law school experiences to our students and share with them the academic benchmarks and habits necessary to gain entrance to college and law school.</i>
Key Design Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualized Learning Plans • Partnership with Mount St. Vincent College • Universal Design for Learning • Small Class Size and Low Student-Teacher Ratios • Teaching Assistants • Extended School Day and Looping • Extended Time for Planning and PD • Extra ELA Class for Grade 9 and Grade 10 students • Support for ELL and SWD

¹ Seventeen percent of all students residing in this district attend charter schools.

Table 2: Current Grade Levels and Approved Enrollment

	Year 1 2023 to 2024	Year 2 2024 to 2025	Year 3 2025 to 2026	Year 4 2026 to 2027
Grade Configuration	Grades 9-12	Grades 9-12	Grades 9-12	Grades 9-12
Total Approved Enrollment	475	475	475	475

***Table 3: Recommended Grade Levels and Recommended Enrollment**

	Year 1 2023 to 2024	Year 2 2024 to 2025	Year 3 2025 to 2026	Year 4 2026 to 2027
Grade Configuration	Grades 9-12	Grades 6,9-12	Grades 6,7, 9-12	Grades 6-12
Total Recommended Enrollment	475	565	655	745

*The proposed chart was submitted by the Charter High School for Law and Social Justice. It is subject to change pending the final revision recommendation and approval by the Board of Regents.

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 December 2013, the Board of Regents approved and chartered CHLSJ in CSD 10. The school’s educational program focuses on incorporating law and social justice throughout the school’s curriculum and programs, including street law courses, moot court competitions, and internships. The school is fully implementing the mission, key design elements, education program, and organizational plan set forth in the charter.

The school’s trustees request that the Board of Regents approve a material revision to the school’s charter to allow the school to:

- Amend its charter to increase the school’s grade span from its current Grades 9 through 12 configuration to include Grades 6 through 8 and make a corresponding increase to the school’s authorized enrollment from 475 students to 745 students.

Approving this revision request will result in a significant educational benefit to the students expected to attend the school by establishing strong academic foundations in English language arts and math in middle school grades that will better prepare students for high school, which should contribute to increased graduation rates.

Approving this revision request is likely to improve student learning and achievement by equipping students with the academic skills these students need to be prepared for postsecondary success.

The school’s four-year graduation rate as of August 2023 was 86%, which equaled the State average.

Performance Framework Ratings:

During the Department’s October 24, 2022, renewal site visit, the school was rated on each of the 10 NYSED Charter School Performance Framework Benchmarks as indicated below. These ratings reflect performance over the entire charter term and are considered when making a renewal recommendation pursuant to the Board of Regents Renewal Policy.

- The school received a “Meets” rating on seven of the 10 benchmarks.
- The school received an “Approaches” rating on three of the 10 benchmarks: Benchmark 1: Student Performance; Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention; and Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance for the following reasons:
 - The school’s August 2022 four-year graduation rate lagged that of NYS. The most recent data, 2023, showed the school’s graduation rate improved and is now equal to NYS.
 - The school had overenrolled students in each year of the renewal charter term. There is a high demand for enrollment at this school.
 - The school had not fully met statutory requirements for teacher certification, fingerprinting, and clearance for all staff members. The school has since addressed those concerns and for the past two school years, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, the school has met statutory requirements.

**2019 Charter School Performance Framework Benchmark Ratings
Charter High School for Law and Social Justice**

2019 Performance Benchmark		Level
Educational Success	Benchmark 1: Student Performance: The school has met or exceeded achievement indicators for academic proficiency, trends toward proficiency, similar schools, college and career readiness, and high school graduation, if applicable. Proficiency at the elementary/middle school level shall be defined as achieving a performance level of 3 or higher on Grade 3-8 state assessments in ELA, math, and science. At the high school level, passing shall be defined as obtaining a Regents exam score of 65 or higher.	Approaches
	Benchmark 2: Teaching and Learning: School leaders have systems in place designed to cultivate shared accountability and high expectations and that lead to students' well-being, improved academic outcomes, and educational success. The school implements research-based practices and has a rigorous and coherent curriculum and assessments that are aligned with New York State Learning Standards for all students. Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn so that all students experience consistently high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.	Meets
	Benchmark 3: Culture, Climate, and Student and Family Engagement: The school has systems in place to support students' social and emotional health and to provide a positive, safe, and respectful learning environment that prepares all students for college and careers. Families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being. Families and students are satisfied with the school's academics and the overall leadership and management of the school.	Meets
Organizational Soundness	Benchmark 4: Financial Condition: The school is in a sound and stable financial condition as evidenced by performance on key financial indicators.	Meets
	Benchmark 5: Financial Management: The school operates in a fiscally sound manner with realistic budgets pursuant to a long-range financial plan, appropriate internal controls and procedures, and in accordance with state law and generally accepted accounting practices.	Meets
	Benchmark 6: Board Oversight and Governance: The board of trustees provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school while maintaining policies, establishing performance goals, and implementing systems to ensure academic success, organizational viability, board effectiveness, and faithfulness to the terms of its charter.	Meets
	Benchmark 7: Organizational Capacity: The school has established a well-functioning organizational structure, and clearly delineated roles for staff, management, and board members. The school has systems and protocols that allow for the successful implementation, evaluation, and improvement of its academic program and operations.	Meets
Faithfulness to Charter & Law	Benchmark 8: Mission and Key Design Elements: The school is faithful to its mission and has implemented the key design elements included in its charter.	Meets
	Benchmark 9: Enrollment, Recruitment, and Retention: The school is meeting or making annual progress toward meeting the enrollment plan outlined in its charter and its enrollment and retention targets for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who are eligible applicants for the free and reduced priced lunch program; or has demonstrated that it has made extensive good faith efforts to attract, recruit, and retain such students. High schools are meeting persistence rates commensurate with the NYSED target.	Approaches
	Benchmark 10: Legal Compliance: The school complies with applicable laws, regulations, and the provisions of its charter.	Approaches

Summary of Public Comment

The required public hearing was held by the New York City Department of Education on February 6, 2024. One hundred twelve people attended, and thirteen spoke. Eight were in favor of the revision and five were opposed.

The school provided evidence of community support for this revision recommendation in the following ways:

- The school surveyed its families, and a majority of parents are in support of the expansion. Families who responded indicated they had younger children in the household and would enroll their children in the middle-level grades when they became eligible.
- The school's executive director and community engagement leader did extensive outreach to inform community members and stakeholders about the proposed expansion to middle-level grades. The school received letters of support from elected officials, institutions of higher education, and school partners. In addition, the school collected approximately 200 signatures from parents and local businesses supporting the expansion.

Please note that for all charter school revisions, the school was required to conduct extensive community engagement prior to submitting the revision request.

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](https://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/charter-school-regulations-1197) (<https://www.nysed.gov/charter-schools/charter-school-regulations-1197>). 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.