

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO BE PROPOSED:

May 6, 2015

RESOLVED, That the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (g) of Section 10-66bb of the Connecticut General Statutes, renews the charter of Odyssey Community School from July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2020, subject to the conditions noted in the Commissioner's May 6, 2015, memorandum to the State Board of Education, and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of _____, this sixth day of May, Two Thousand Fifteen.

Signed: _____

Dianna R. Wentzell, Secretary
State Board of Education

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education Designate

DATE: May 6, 2015

SUBJECT: Renewal of State Charter – Odyssey Community School, Manchester

Introduction

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:

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 Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and SBE carefully evaluate qualitative and quantitative evidence and longitudinal data aligned to the four performance standards outlined above when making charter renewal decisions. The charter performance framework drives the CSDE's charter school accountability systems and processes, including initial approval decisions, annual monitoring, and renewal determinations. From inception to renewal, charter schools must abide by the CSDE's charter school accountability procedures and performance framework. Charter monitoring takes place through annual reporting, meetings, correspondence, and site visits, as appropriate. In accordance with C.G.S. § 10-66bb(g), a charter may be renewed, upon application, if the charter school has demonstrated satisfactory performance relative to the four performance standards.

Based on an evaluation of Odyssey Community School (Odyssey), the CSDE seeks the SBE's approval to renew Odyssey's charter for a period of five years. Odyssey increases quality educational options for families in Manchester and surrounding communities. In 2013, Odyssey achieved a School Performance Index (SPI) of 79.5 and earned the "Progressing" classification, whereas Manchester's

District Performance Index (DPI) was 72.3. Odyssey maintains strong demand and support from the community, as evidenced by a waitlist of over 80 students each year for the past three years.

History/Background

Odyssey opened in 1997 in the town of Manchester. Odyssey currently serves 328 students in kindergarten through Grade 8. Table 1 provides 2014-15 student enrollment and demographic data. The majority of students (259 students) reside in Manchester, and the remaining students come from 10 area towns. In 2010, the SBE approved Odyssey’s request to expand from Grades 4-8 to serve students in kindergarten through Grade 8. Odyssey successfully completed a large construction project to support this expansion effort. Odyssey’s mission is to “provide a positive elementary and middle school experience that emphasizes academic excellence, the ability to communicate effectively using traditional and technological media, and the development of strong character and self-confidence.” Accordingly, the school offers small class sizes, interdisciplinary curricula development and implementation, character education, and diversity. Odyssey recently adopted a new intervention/enrichment block, providing students with targeted support and acceleration. Odyssey implements the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and Responsive Classroom models, promoting consistent behavior management and a positive learning environment. Based on the CSDE’s review of the charter, the school is satisfactorily achieving its mission.

Table 1. 2014-15 Student Enrollment and Demographic Information	
Grades served:	K-8
Total enrollment:	328
Percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals:	32%
Percentage of special education students:	8%
Percentage of students with limited English proficiency:	0%
Percentage of minority students:	54%
Percentage of Black students:	22%
Percentage of Hispanic students:	16%
Percentage of Caucasian students:	46%
Percentage of Other students:	16%

Charter Renewal Process

Application for Renewal of Charter: The CSDE accepted an application for the renewal of Odyssey on November 21, 2014. The application detailed the charter school’s progress, operations, and achievement in relation to the CSDE’s charter school performance standards: (a) school performance; (b) stewardship, governance, and management; (c) student population; and (d) legal compliance. Odyssey submitted data and evidence to substantiate the charter school’s written responses.

A state-appointed renewal team comprised of CSDE staff with expertise in curriculum, assessments, special education, school management, finance, and school governance reviewed the renewal application and asked for clarification and additional information, where necessary. Overall, the team determined

that the application responded effectively to the areas required and provided sufficient supporting evidence.

Renewal Site Visit: On December 16, 2014, the CSDE renewal team conducted an on-site visit at Odyssey. The purpose of the renewal site visit was to observe charter school programs, policies, practices, and procedures to assess their efficacy and fidelity to the school's charter and aligned operating systems. Evidence was collected through site visit observations, document reviews, interviews, and focus groups. The team spoke with board members, administrators, staff, and parents and community members. The team used this process to ensure the school is functioning in compliance with the law and the school's mission. The team verified the responses detailed in the renewal application regarding compliance with the law and the CSDE's performance framework and accountability plan.

Invitation for Written Comment: The CSDE solicited written comments on the renewal of Odyssey from the Superintendent of Manchester and from contiguous school districts: Bolton, Vernon, South Windsor, East Hartford, and Glastonbury. No superintendent provided a written comment on the renewal of the charter school.

Public Hearing: Estela López, member of the SBE, and CSDE staff held a public hearing on February 25, 2015, in Manchester and heard from 19 individuals on the potential renewal of Odyssey and the impact it is having on the community. Public hearing participants included several members from the Odyssey community, including family members, students, school staff, and community members. In total, over 46 people attended the public hearing. The responses generated during the public hearing were overwhelmingly positive, both in terms of the impact the charter school has had on the community and support for Odyssey in the context of school choice.

Renewal Site Visit Findings and Follow-Up Activities

As required by law, the CSDE's renewal review focused on the following areas: (a) school performance; (b) stewardship, governance, and management; (c) student population; and (d) legal compliance. Data and information contained in this section speak to Odyssey's performance and success according to these four areas. The following section and the Charter Renewal Report highlight school strengths and areas for continued growth. Odyssey has satisfactorily begun to remedy issues identified by the CSDE during its December 16, 2014, site visit.

School Performance: The CSDE reviewed Odyssey's student achievement and school climate data, as well as progress toward mission-specific goals to determine its track record in improving student performance. First, the CSDE looked at student achievement, including overall school performance, performance trends over time, performance by content area, and performance by subgroup. Also, the CSDE examined performance relative to the host district. Table 2 provides a summary of student achievement data. Odyssey demonstrates strong performance, supporting the renewal of the school's charter. Odyssey's 2013 School Performance Index (SPI) was 79.5, outperforming Manchester, the host and majority sending district. In 2013, Manchester's overall District Performance Index (DPI) was 72.3. Odyssey is currently classified as a "Progressing" school.

Table 2: School Achievement Data			
Performance Metric:	2010-11:	2011-12:	2012-13:
Overall SPI:	77.6	80.4	79.5
Overall host district DPI:	74.8	75.7	72.3
Math SPI:	77.4	80.7	82.1
Math host district DPI:	76.8	76.6	72.3
Reading SPI:	76.8	81.3	77.3
Reading host district DPI:	71.8	73.7	71.0
Writing SPI:	82.2	83.7	79.8
Writing host district DPI:	80.3	81.4	77.4
Black/African American SPI:	69.8	74.2	75.2
Black/African American host district DPI:	64.6	64.3	61.7
Hispanic/Latino SPI:	75.2	82.9	80.7
Hispanic/Latino host district DPI:	65.5	67.1	62.1
EL SPI:	N/A	N/A	N/A
EL host district DPI:	51.9	53.0	47.1
FRL SPI:	73.1	73.7	74.0
FRL host district DPI:	67.1	68.4	64.5
Special education SPI:	51.4	53.5	63.9
Special education host district DPI:	46.5	48.6	42.9

N/A: N<20 students.

Second, the CSDE looked at school culture and climate data, including: student attendance, student chronic absenteeism, and behavioral incidents. Table 3 provides a summary of school climate data. Odyssey fosters a positive school culture and climate, supporting the renewal of the school's charter. In 2013-14, the percentage of students at Odyssey with one or more suspension was 5.8%, compared to 9.9% in Manchester and 7.5% statewide. Odyssey's 2013-14 average daily student attendance rate was 95%, and the student chronic absenteeism rate was 12%. In 2013-14, Manchester's average daily attendance rate was 95%, and the district had a chronic absenteeism rate of 13%. While Odyssey's chronic absenteeism rate is lower than its host district's, Odyssey's chronic absenteeism rate exceeds the state average of 10.7%. As a charter school, Odyssey has the opportunity to innovate and cultivate best practices to address chronic absenteeism.

Table 3: School Climate Data				
Performance Metric:	2010-11:	2011-12:	2012-13:	2013-14:
Average daily attendance rate:	95.3%	95.4%	95.2%	95.3%
Chronic absenteeism rate:	N/A	8.9%	9.4%	11.7%
Number of in-school suspensions:	6	9	7	20
Number of out-of-school suspensions:	9	9	6	13
Suspension rate (% students with 1+ suspension):	7.7%	4.5%	3.1%	5.8%
Number of expulsions:	0	0	0	0

N/A: The CSDE did not collect chronic absenteeism data in 2010-11.

Stewardship, Governance, and Management: Odyssey has maintained a positive cash flow for the past three years. Odyssey’s certified financial audit uncovered no deficiencies. The school’s Board of Directors has strong policies and procedures to promote school effectiveness and operations. Odyssey’s organizational structure, leadership, and staffing allow the school to successfully deliver upon its mission and goals. Odyssey required greater delineation of financial policies and procedures, including purchasing procedures and thresholds, and check signing authority. The CSDE has received revised financial policies and procedures from the school, and the Odyssey Board Finance and Audit Committee will meet on a quarterly basis and as needed, moving forward. Odyssey would benefit from adopting processes for the Board to periodically review the school’s data and progress meeting established achievement goals.

Student Population: In 2012, the General Assembly amended C.G.S. § 10-66bb(g) to require charter schools to make efforts to effectively attract, enroll and retain a diverse student population. All students are enrolled into Odyssey through a blind lottery process. According to October 2014 demographic data, students from minority groups represent 54% of Odyssey’s population, compared to 61% of Manchester’s population, which represents the majority sending district; 32% of Odyssey’s students are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals, compared to 55% in Manchester; 8% of students were identified as needing special education services, compared to 13% in Manchester; and zero students were identified as English language learners (ELs), compared to 6% in Manchester. ELs are a growing segment of the Manchester community. As such, Odyssey hired an ELL tutor to serve this emerging population. The school will continue in its efforts to attract, enroll, and retain ELs.

Table 4 summarizes student waitlist and mobility information. Odyssey maintains a sizable waitlist of families seeking enrollment in the school beyond the available number of seats. In 2014-15, 108 students were on the waitlist. The waitlist has included over 80 students each year for the past three years.

Table 4: Student Waitlist and Mobility Information			
Performance Metric:	2011-12:	2012-13:	2013-14:
Waitlist number:	82	170	105
Number of enrolled students who left during the school year:	12	5	8
Number of students who did not re-enroll the next year and had not completed the highest grade at the school:	12	20	21

Pending annual SBE approval and legislative appropriations, Odyssey proposes the following enrollment plan (see Table 5). The number of students served will be determined based on available funding and school performance.

Table 5. Preliminary Growth Projections															
SY	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2015-2016		37	37	37	37	37	37	33	37	35					327
2016-2017		37	37	37	37	37	37	33	37	35					327
2017-2018		37	37	37	37	37	37	33	37	35					327

Legal Compliance: It is imperative that charter schools – as with all other public schools – adopt and uphold the highest ethical and legal standards while delivering excellent academic opportunities for students and their families. Odyssey is in the process of updating policies to comply with new CSDE administrative oversight guidelines (i.e., anti-nepotism, conflict of interest, background checks). Based on the renewal application, site visit, and interviews, it appears Odyssey is in compliance with all current applicable laws and regulations.

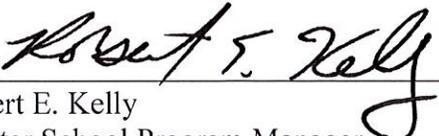
Recommendation with Conditions

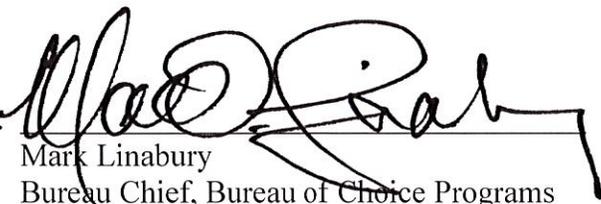
Odyssey provides its students and their families from 11 sending districts with a high-quality public school education. The data demonstrate the school is satisfactorily achieving its mission and successfully closing Connecticut’s achievement gap. Based on the record of student achievement of Odyssey and the CSDE’s evaluation of the charter, the CSDE recommends that the SBE renew the school’s charter for a period of five years.

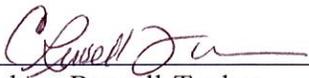
While Odyssey is serving its students very well academically, the rate of chronic absenteeism exceeds the 10.7% statewide average. By September 30, 2015, the CSDE will require Odyssey to submit a plan to target and address chronic absenteeism by: (a) isolating the root causes of chronic absenteeism; (b) identifying interventions to target root causes; and (c) monitoring interventions and applying midcourse corrections, as necessary. Additionally, Odyssey must submit its year-to-date chronic absenteeism rate to the CSDE twice annually, once in September via the annual reporting process and again at the

midyear in January. The CSDE will work with Odyssey to establish reasonable growth targets, and Odyssey must participate in relevant technical assistance organized by the CSDE.

If approved, in the 2015-16 school year, Odyssey will provide a high-quality public education to more than 300 students in kindergarten through Grade 8.

Prepared by: 
Robert E. Kelly
Charter School Program Manager

Reviewed by: 
Mark Linabury
Bureau Chief, Bureau of Choice Programs

Approved by: 
Charlene Russell-Tucker
Chief Operating Officer



CHARTER RENEWAL REPORT | SPRING 2015

Charter School Information:						
Charter School Name:	Odyssey Community School					
School Director:	Elaine Stancliffe					
School Board Chairperson:	Elizabeth Mix					
Location (City/Town):	Manchester, CT					
Rating Key:						
Meets/Exceeds (M/E): The school meets or exceeds performance expectations with minor, if any, concerns noted; the school can remedy any concerns.						
Approaches (A): The school approaches performance expectations; the school review generates moderate concerns with actions required by the school.						
Falls Below (FB): The schools falls below performance expectations with significant concerns noted, which require immediate attention and intervention.						
Standard 1: School Performance Indicators			FB	A	M/E	Points / Max
1.1. Student Achievement, Growth, and Gap Closure					✓	4 / 4
1.2. Mission-Specific Goals					✓	4 / 4
1.3. School Culture and Climate					✓	4 / 4
1.4. Instruction					✓	4 / 4
1.5. Academic Program					✓	4 / 4
1.6. Supports for Special Populations					✓	4 / 4
Notes and Evidence:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>● Indicator 1.1: Based on the most recent Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) administration in 2013, Odyssey Community School (Odyssey) achieved an overall School/District Performance Index (SPI/DPI) of 79.5. Odyssey outperformed Manchester, the host and majority sending district. In 2013, Manchester’s overall DPI was 72.3. In 2013, Odyssey outperformed the host district for all subgroups and in all content areas, and is effectively closing achievement gaps for minority subgroups. In spring 2014, Connecticut’s schools piloted the new Smarter Balanced Assessments (i.e., test to replace the CMT) in mathematics and reading for non-accountability purposes. Schools statewide continued administration of CMT science assessments. On 2014 CMT science assessments, 91% of Odyssey Grade 5 and 88% of Grade 8 students scored at or above proficient, compared to 63% of Grade 5 and 75% of Grade 8 students in Manchester. Odyssey is currently classified as a “Progressing” school, which is the second highest school classification under Connecticut’s school accountability system.</p> <p>● Indicator 1.2: Odyssey has established academic goals in the areas of mathematics, reading, and writing, which are quantified by grade level. Additionally, Odyssey maintains goals around class size, interdisciplinary curricula development and implementation, character education, and diversity. School data teams meet to monitor progress toward student and school goals.</p> <p>● Indicator 1.3: Odyssey’s 2013-14 average daily student attendance rate was 95%, and the student chronic absenteeism rate was 12%. In 2013-14, Manchester’s average daily attendance rate was 95%, and the district had a chronic absenteeism rate of 13%. While Odyssey’s chronic absenteeism rate is lower than its host district’s, Odyssey’s chronic absenteeism rate exceeds the state average of 10.7%.</p> 						

Odyssey implements the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and Responsive Classroom models, promoting consistent behavior management and a positive learning environment. In 2013-14, the percentage of students at Odyssey with one or more suspension was 5.8%, compared to 9.9% in Manchester and 7.5% statewide.

- **Indicator 1.4:** Odyssey partnered with the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) to support instructional shifts aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), improve rigor through Webb’s Depth of Knowledge, and promote data-driven instruction through formative assessment strategies. Teachers participate in weekly professional development and collaboration. Observed instructional practice demonstrated consistent routines and high levels of student engagement.
- **Indicator 1.5:** Through the partnership with CREC, Odyssey identified the need for programmatic improvements aligned to the CCSS, including nonfiction text, evidence-based writing, and new math curricula. All students participate in a daily intervention/enrichment block, providing students with targeted remediation and/or acceleration opportunities. Odyssey recently hired a part-time tutor to support a growing population of English learners (ELs), and increased their special education team to include three teachers and three paraprofessionals.
- **Indicator 1.6:** Currently, 8% of students qualify for special education services. The majority of these students are making satisfactory progress on short-term IEP objectives and annual goals. Where students do not meet expected goals, IEPs are appropriately revised to add needed supports.

Standard 2: Stewardship, Governance, and Management Indicators	FB	A	M/E	Points / Max
2.1. Fiscal Viability			✓	2 / 2
2.2. Financial Management		✓		1 / 2
2.3. Governance and Management		✓		1 / 2
2.4. Organizational Capacity			✓	2 / 2
2.5. Accountability Measures		✓		1 / 2
2.6. School Facility			✓	2 / 2

Notes and Evidence:

- **Indicator 2.1:** Odyssey has maintained a positive cash flow for the past three years. Odyssey’s certified financial audit uncovered no deficiencies. Odyssey’s current asset ratio, days of unrestricted cash, total margin (net income/total revenue), and debt-to-asset ratio (total liabilities/total assets) meet or exceed ranges recommended by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), signifying overall financial health.
- **Indicator 2.2:** Odyssey required greater delineation of financial policies and procedures, including purchasing procedures and thresholds; check signing authority; and the Board Treasurer’s roles and responsibilities. The CSDE has received revised financial policies and procedures from Odyssey, and the Odyssey Board Finance and Audit Committee will meet on a quarterly basis and as needed moving forward.
- **Indicator 2.3:** Odyssey’s Board has strong policies and practices to promote school effectiveness and operations. Odyssey is in the process of updating policies to comply with new CSDE administrative oversight guidelines (i.e., anti-nepotism, background checks) and feedback stating that dis-enrollment

processes require parental consent.

- **Indicator 2.4:** Odyssey’s organizational structure, leadership, and staffing allow the school to successfully deliver upon its mission and goals.
- **Indicator 2.5:** Odyssey demonstrates strong student achievement and maintains a positive school climate. However, Odyssey would benefit from adopting processes for the Board to periodically review the school’s progress toward meeting established achievement goals.
- **Indicator 2.6:** Odyssey has a safe and well-maintained school facility to support high-quality teaching and learning. Odyssey successfully completed a large construction project and expansion effort, including new classrooms, a library, a gymnasium, and an elementary learning center.

Standard 3: Student Population Indicators	FB	A	M/E	Points / Max
3.1. Recruitment and Enrollment Process			✓	2 / 2
3.2. Waitlist and Enrollment Data			✓	2 / 2
3.3. Demographic Representation		✓		1 / 2
3.4. Transfer/Retention Rates			✓	2 / 2
3.5. Parental and Community Support			✓	2 / 2

Notes and Evidence:

- **Indicator 3.1:** Odyssey currently serves 328 students in kindergarten through Grades 8. The school employs fair and equitable enrollment and recruitment processes. Students at Odyssey come from 11 different towns with 259 students residing in Manchester; students are selected through a blind lottery.
- **Indicator 3.2:** Odyssey maintains a sizable waitlist of families seeking enrollment in the school beyond the available number of seats. In 2014-15, 108 students were on the waitlist. The waitlist has included over 80 students in each of the past three years.
- **Indicator 3.3:** Students from minority subgroups represent 54% of Odyssey’s student population, 32% of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, and zero students are English language learners (ELs). In Manchester, students from minority subgroups represent 61% of the district’s student population, 55% of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, and 6% are ELs. It will be important for Odyssey to continue in its efforts to attract, enroll, and retain low-income students and ELs.
- **Indicator 3.4:** During the 2013-14 school year, eight students transferred out of the school during the course of the school year, and 21 students chose not to re-enroll for the next grade offered at the school. These figures are reasonable, given mobility rates in Manchester.
- **Indicator 3.5:** Odyssey demonstrates strong community support, as evidenced by the sizable waitlist, attendance and testimony at the recent renewal hearing, family involvement at the school, Welcoming Walkthroughs, and parent satisfaction. Forty-six individuals attended the February 25, 2015, renewal public hearing, and 19 individuals offered testimony supporting the school’s efforts and the renewal of its charter. Participants at the hearing conveyed a sense of “family” among Odyssey’s teachers, students, staff, parents, and community members.



Standard 4: Legal Compliance Indicators		Assurances:
4.1. Signed Statement of Assurances		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4.2. Open Public Meetings		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Recommendation:		Total Pts / Max Pts:
Five-year charter renewal		42 / 46
Prepared by:	Approved by:	
Robert Kelly		



ODYSSEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL DATA

Table 1. 2014-15 Student Enrollment and Demographic Information	
Grades served:	K-8
Total enrollment:	328
Percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced price meals:	32%
Percentage of special education students:	8%
Percentage of students with limited English proficiency:	0%
Percentage of minority students:	54%
Percentage of Black students:	22%
Percentage of Hispanic students:	16%
Percentage of Caucasian students:	46%

Table 2: School Achievement Data			
Performance Metric:	2010-11:	2011-12:	2012-13:
Overall SPI:	77.6	80.4	79.5
Overall host district DPI:	74.8	75.7	72.3
Math SPI:	77.4	80.7	82.1
Math host district DPI:	76.8	76.6	72.3
Reading SPI:	76.8	81.3	77.3
Reading host district DPI:	71.8	73.7	71.0
Writing SPI:	82.2	83.7	79.8
Writing host district DPI:	80.3	81.4	77.4
Black/African American SPI:	69.8	74.2	75.2
Black/African American host district DPI:	64.6	64.3	61.7
Hispanic/Latino SPI:	75.2	82.9	80.7
Hispanic/Latino host district DPI:	65.5	67.1	62.1
ELL SPI:	N/A	N/A	N/A
ELL host district DPI:	51.9	53.0	47.1
FRL SPI:	73.1	73.7	74.0
FRL host district DPI:	67.1	68.4	64.5
Special education SPI:	51.4	53.5	63.9
Special education host district DPI:	46.5	48.6	42.9

N/A: N < 20 students.



Table 3: School Climate Data				
Performance Metric:	2010-11:	2011-12:	2012-13:	2013-14:
Average daily attendance rate:	95.3%	95.4%	95.2%	95.3%
Chronic absenteeism rate:	N/A	8.9%	9.4%	11.7%
Number of in-school suspensions:	6	9	7	20
Number of out-of-school suspensions:	9	9	6	13
Suspension rate (% students with 1+ suspension):	7.7%	4.5%	3.1%	5.8%
Number of expulsions:	0	0	0	0

*N<5 students; N/A: The CSDE did not collect chronic absenteeism data in 2010-11.

Table 4: Student Waitlist and Mobility Information			
Performance Metric:	2011-12:	2012-13:	2013-14:
Waitlist number:	82	170	105
Number of enrolled students who left during the school year:	12	5	8
Number of students who did not re-enroll the next year and had not completed the highest grade at the school:	12	20	21