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CA CHARTER SCHOOLS UNVEIL NEW ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN TO RAISE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR RENEWAL

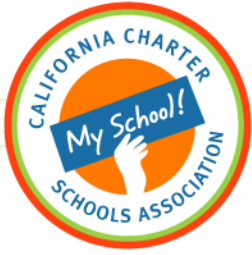
*Most Comprehensive Approach Proposed by a Charter Organization Nationwide to Establish
Increased Accountability for Academic Performance to Begin this Fall*

Sacramento, CA — The California Charter Schools Association today unveiled the nation’s most comprehensive proposal to date to establish and enforce rigorous minimum academic performance standards for charter schools at their time of renewal. Spearheaded by the Association’s Member Council, consisting of charter school leaders from across California, the program represents a major call from the state’s charter school movement to ensure greater accountability by introducing renewal standards that will result in the annual closure of several low-performing charter schools.

Currently, charter schools are held accountable to the minimum academic performance renewal standards contained within Assembly Bill (AB) 1137, which passed into law in 2003 but has proven unworkable in terms of closing schools that consistently underperform. As part of this accountability plan, charter leaders are calling for the implementation of a Similar Students Measure (SSM) which would significantly raise renewal standards while taking into account the demographic backgrounds of the students served by charter schools. Just as importantly, the plan calls for improved enforcement mechanisms which would eliminate deficiencies in the current law that make it difficult to shut down underperforming schools.

“California’s charter school movement is making exactly the contribution to our public education system that was originally envisioned,” said Jed Wallace, President and CEO of the California Charter Schools Association. “Charter schools are proving to be incubators of urgently needed innovation while also tackling some of the greatest social challenges confronting our state.”

The accountability plan, which has been in development since Wallace assumed the leadership role of the Association in February, was unanimously adopted this week by the Association’s Member Council.



“We are delighted that literally hundreds of new charter schools have been established in California which are offering improved learning opportunities at a quality level and at a scale that was simply unimaginable a decade ago,” added Wallace. “At the same time, as expected, we recognize that not all charter schools have been able to rise to the challenge that the greater movement is taking on. I am impressed that the charter school movement has proposed a plan that aligns so well with President Obama’s vision for charter schools, which is to continue to grow the movement while holding low-achieving charter schools accountable.”

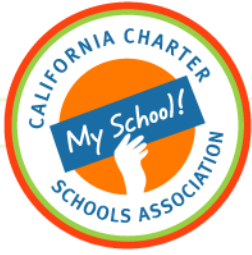
“What makes this effort particularly gratifying is knowing that this plan has been led by the schools themselves,” said Ana Ponce, Executive Director of Camino Nuevo Charter Schools and Chair of the Member Council. “In collaboration with Association staff, the Member Council has been proactively tracking charter school performance data and we feel that we have a better understanding than anyone of the movement’s strengths and weaknesses. We look forward to ensuring that this new approach to accountability is fully implemented across the state.”

Tapped to lead this effort by Wallace is long-time charter school veteran Dr. Ting Sun, the co-founder of Sacramento-based Natomas Charter School. Dr. Sun will assume the role of Vice President of Accountability for the Association.

“I am pleased to take on this role of ensuring that the charter school movement meets its intended promise, which is to ensure that innovation and accountability go hand-in-hand in our public school system,” said Dr. Sun. “In order to do that, we will need as a movement to have the intellectual honesty and integrity to speak candidly about what the movement is doing well and where we still need to improve. We believe that we are taking an important step today, which is to create and embrace new minimum academic performance expectations designed to ensure that the movement is better poised to positively impact the broader public school system.”

The SSM builds upon the state’s API system by setting rigorous expectations that take into account the starting point of enrolled students’ life backgrounds in order to establish a minimum performance expectation for a charter school. Then it assesses whether or not a charter school is surpassing its predicted performance. A charter school that is 10 percent or more below its predicted performance would be designated as low-performing. Charter schools identified as low-performing for three years in a row at the time of renewal will be identified for non-renewal. This could impact about a dozen charter schools per year, with that number potentially increasing in future years as the charter school movement continues to grow.

Pending peer review of the SSM instrument over the summer, the Association will share this plan with chartering authorities, the California Department of Education and the State Board of Education to ensure that it may be adopted quickly by this fall, the program’s pilot year. During the pilot year, the accountability plan will identify for non-renewal only the lowest-performing one percent of all charter schools. In subsequent years, the plan identifies for potential non-renewal of all schools at



10 percent or more below predicted performance for three years in a row. If necessary, the Association will work collaboratively with legislators in Sacramento to pass new legislation consistent with the newly-identified minimum performance expectations.

The SSM will provide authorizers with improved information and expectations to address low-performers, with the goal of having uniform standards consistently implemented statewide. The Association will play a critical role in supporting charter schools to meet these minimum renewal standards, and will work with charter authorizers, the California Department of Education and the State Board of Education, who will be responsible for enforcing them.

The comprehensive plan calls for the Association to have ongoing involvement in statewide charter school accountability efforts. In addition to providing early warning systems for charter schools at risk of missing renewal criteria, the Association will continue to provide supports to schools such as the highly-popular ZOOM! Data Source program, which is an initiative offering improved data performance management systems, professional development and support to over 300 California charter schools. The Association will also leverage its unique position in the charter school landscape to connect charter schools to providers able to offer support in areas critical to meeting ongoing minimum academic renewal requirements.

Finally, the Association will play a lead role in catalyzing the development of new charter schools in neighborhoods where underperforming charter schools close, thereby minimizing the disruption that occurs for displaced students and their families.

About the California Charter Schools Association

The California Charter Schools Association is the membership and professional organization serving 750 charter public schools that serve over a quarter million charter school students in the state of California. The Association's mission is to improve student achievement by supporting and expanding California's quality charter public school movement. www.myschool.org.

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