



Odyssey Community School Peer Review Comments and Final Applicant Scores 2024 RFA

Application Details	
Contact Person: Phillip O'Reilly	Contact email: poreilly@odysseyschool.org
Application type: Expansion	Approved Budget: \$150,000
Grades Served: PreK- 8	New Seats created: 36
Application Status: Funded	

The following are condensed Peer Reviewer comments and scores for Odyssey Community School’s application for the Great Schools for Connecticut Charter School Program, encompassing Sections 1 through 7 of the scoring rubric. The complete rubric can be found on the GSCT website in the Request for Applications ([RFA](#)) [Guide](#). Please refer to Appendix 3 of the RFA for a complete overview of the scoring rubric.

SECTION ONE Board Capacity and Governance Structure

A competent, trained governing board is essential to the success of a public charter school. Describe how your school has developed a strong governing board with a diverse set of skills. Be sure to include how board members understand their roles and responsibilities and have developed a transition plan and ongoing professional development to maintain board strength going forward.

Subsection 1: *Describe the composition (size, roles, committees) and selection process for the governing board. {Comments below}*

- Board includes 3 parent representatives, two teacher and two non-certified staff representatives, as well as one community representative who is also a CPA. Resumes/bios are included, as well as board policies and guiding documents.
- Gaps in skills and targeted board recruitment efforts are not directly described.
- During 2022-23, the Board attended several online training modules offered by the Connecticut Charter School Association. These included topics of leadership, governance, and school and special education finance and has also engaged Board's attorneys (Shipman and Goodwin) to review and revise bylaws and other policy documents (e.g., manual).
- The applicant did not describe the composition (size, roles, and committees) and selection process for the governing board in the application, but referred to the Bylaws in Appendix 1.

- Article II, Section 1 of the Bylaws addresses board powers and responsibilities. Article II, Section 2 of the Bylaws addresses board size, qualifications to serve, and the selection process. However, the applicant did not describe the expertise present on the current board and resumes were not provided for four members, making it difficult to determine if the school's board has a diverse set of skills essential to the effective oversight of a successful school. Although the applicant addressed board expertise during the interview, a comprehensive overview of board expertise has not been provided.
- Additionally, the applicant did not explain how the board's composition and selection process ensures adequate expertise (e.g. in the fields of education, law, real estate, strategy, finance, management, and external relations) to perform board responsibilities. Article VI addresses board Committees and states that the board may create committees, but the applicant did not state if the board has any current committees. It was clarified during the interview that the board does not have committees.
- Gaps in skills were not identified in the application and the applicant did not provide a plan to address gaps through recruiting additional board members or through acquiring board training in specific areas. The applicant described efforts to recruit additional board members, but did not identify a specific plan to address skill gaps.
- The proposal provides a policy document in the appendix that details how board members will be covering the needed expertise for the school. The proposal states that their recruitment efforts were successful for board members, but it is not entirely clear what the recruitment plan for the board will be.

Subsection 2: *The board has established clear policies and procedures that guide its oversight of the school.* {Comments below}

- Appendices include bylaws, which detail the Board's responsibility in meeting all Open Records laws and other meeting requirements, sample board meeting agenda, etc.
- The applicant did not provide sufficient evidence that the school has established clear policies and procedures that guide its oversight of the school. The applicant did not outline a comprehensive set of board roles and responsibilities, but referred to the Board Bylaws (p. 8), which is noted above. The applicant did not provide sufficient evidence of compliance with Open Meeting and Open Records Laws.
- The applicant did not demonstrate clear policies and procedures (e.g. board manual) that guide its oversight of the school (including financial, legal, operational, reporting compliance), including an annual review of policies. The board bylaws require annual completion of a Conflict-of-Interest form (Article VIII).
- In appendix one of the proposal, there is a clear description of the board's policies and procedures that detail the expectations for specific roles, conduct and also conflicts of interest.

Subsection 3: *Applicant provides resume of board members, personnel occupying key leadership positions, governing council members.* {Comments below}

- Resumes of board members and key leaders are included.
- The applicant provided resumes for personnel occupying key leadership positions and some board members. However, resumes are not provided for all members of the board. Although the applicant

stated that the board attended online training last year (p. 8), a comprehensive training plan for school leadership and board members was not discussed. Cost for the board training is not evident in the operating budget. The applicant stated during the interview that a training plan is currently being developed with the input of an attorney. Although this is appropriate to meet state requirements, it raised concerns about how the board is prepared to understand elements that are unique to the school.

Clear criteria and procedures for selecting officers and members of the governing council exist in the bylaws (Article 2 and Article 4). However, it was not evident that no member or employee of governing council has financial interest in the school's assets (real or personal) because several members of the school staff serve on the governing board. During the interview, the applicant adequately clarified how conflicts of interest are handled during board meetings.

- The proposal provides the CVs for the board members, which show that they have extensive and diverse experience. The proposal also notes that during the 2023-2024 school year, the Board attended several online training modules offered by the Connecticut Charter School Association. These included topics of leadership, governance, and school and special education finance. The capacity interview revealed some of the training expectations and opportunities for the board.

SECTION ONE OVERVIEW: Board Capacity and Governance Structure Overall Comments

- Gaps in skills and targeted board recruitment efforts are not directly described.
Procedures for selecting officers and members of the governing council exists; however criteria was not clearly defined.

Peer Reviewer Scores for Section 1	
Peer Reviewer 1	11
Peer Reviewer 2	8
Peer Reviewer 3	13
Aggregate Score for Section 1	32
Average Score	10.667

**SECTION TWO
School Leadership and Management**

Describe the intended leadership structure of the proposed school. A strong leadership and staffing plan are essential to ensure high-quality implementation and sustainability of a new school.

Subsection 1: *The leadership and administrative roles at the school are well-defined, and comprehensively cover the broad set of responsibilities required of charter school leadership.* {Comments below}

- Organizational chart indicates clear division of roles and management responsibilities.

2021-22 performance goals for the ED, as well as lists of questions with space for board consensus notes are included; however, the evaluation process is not described.

Co-principals are evaluated annually by the Executive Director, using the Connecticut Leader Evaluation and Support Rubric and the Connecticut School Leadership Standards; however, the evaluation process is not described.

- The applicant provided an organizational chart that included topics assigned to members of the school leadership team. However, a clear and comprehensive discussion regarding each team members' responsibility for each topic was not provided. Thus, the leadership and administrative roles at the school are not clear and well-defined. Although the applicant included an organizational chart, the applicant did not present a complete organizational and management plan for the school. These concerns were clarified during the interview.

The applicant stated that the co-principals are evaluated by the Executive Director and the Executive Director is evaluated by the board (p. 8-9) with additional information in Appendix 2. Appendix 2 include performance areas and goals from 2021-22. However, the process for evaluation is not described nor is the protocol for addressing performance concerns. The applicant provided adequate additional information about the evaluation process during the interview.

The applicant did not demonstrate how the school has designed its leadership team to ensure sufficient expertise to manage charter school- specific compliance, operations, finance, and legal matters. The applicant detailed leadership team experience and expertise during the interview which inspired confidence in the team's ability to manage the school's expansion and operations.

- Appendix two in the proposal communicates the organizational chart as well as the process for the two co-principals being evaluated annually by the Executive Director, using the Connecticut Leader Evaluation and Support Rubric and the Connecticut School Leadership Standards. Moreover, the process for evaluating the executive director is presented as it will be carried out by the board. However, it is not evident how the leadership team, such as the shift to co-principals, specifically the leadership team possesses sufficient expertise to manage charter school-specific compliance, operations, finance, and legal matters.

Subsection 2: *The school demonstrates sufficient leadership and governance capability to implement and sustain the new school or expansion projects outlined in this application. {Comments below}*

- The applicant described two effectively managed expansion projects, including the addition of kindergarten through Grade 3 (approved in 2011) and the additional of two pre kindergarten early childhood classrooms (approved in 2022), and the related advocacy and facilities projects.

The current co-principal of PreK-3 will oversee the additional Pre-K classrooms. Plans for this expansion were included.

- The applicant has not demonstrated sufficient leadership and governance capability to implement and sustain the expansion project outlined in this application. The applicant has not identified any material operational challenges or key risk factors, or a process to identify and mitigate key risk factors.

The applicant has not provided evidence that the school's leadership team demonstrates the ability to operate soundly, strategically, and in ways that staff and stakeholders can understand and follow (e.g. demonstrated through previous successful expansions, mitigation of existential risk, etc.). These concerns were sufficiently addressed during the interview. The expertise of the applicant team

inspires confidence in their ability to implement and sustain the expansion project outlined in the application. The applicant stated that a school leader for the expansion has been hired (p. 10), and a complete resume has been included as part of application.

- The proposal identifies co-principals who will lead the school. Based on their bios and their CVs provided in the proposal, they clearly have the skills and expertise to lead the school. The capacity interview made clear some of the operational challenges that the school project plans to mitigate.

SECTION TWO OVERVIEW: *School Leadership and Management Overall Comments*

- Descriptions of leader evaluation processes are not included. Strategies to identify and address skill gaps on board are not articulated.

Peer Reviewer Scores for Section 2	
Peer Reviewer 1	8
Peer Reviewer 2	8
Peer Reviewer 3	7
Total Score	23
Average Score	7.7

SECTION THREE
Student Demand and Community/Local/Family Support

The school must demonstrate that a Community Needs Analysis has been completed in planning for the new school / expansion / replication. This includes demonstrated presence of community demand, and that the proposed new school / expansion / replication is in tune with community needs and priorities, and how management intends to engage with parents / families / community to enhance access and equity for at-risk populations.

Subsection 1: *School vision and design communicates high standards for student success.*
{Comments below}

- First lottery for 36 open seats yielded more than 120 preschool applications, within 48 hours of notifying the parent community
- Subsequently, we have had hundreds of preschool parents enter the lottery with only very few available seats.
- 150 waitlisted preschool families.
- Program design was clearly articulated, inclusive of tools to monitor growth and development and associated goals. (e.g., SMART goal to monitor that at least 80% of all preschool students will fall within their age's color band for at least 90% of all standards measured within Teaching

StrategiesGOLD® by June 2025). National Association for Education for Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation is being pursued.

- The applicant described a school vision and design that communicates high standards for student success. Clear evidence of community need and demand for the school and the educational model was provided (p. 9).
- The proposal demonstrates that the applicant's schools have experienced extensive demand for enrollment based on the number of students entering the lottery process. However, the proposal does not make clear how the demand relates to the specific instructional or design elements enacted by the school.

Subsection 2: *Enrollment forecast is well articulated, clear data, rationale for enrollment growth (includes grades and ages of students to be served, clear picture of community demand for school).*
{Comments below}

- The applicant did not offer analysis of the proposed school's projected student demographics or a description of demographics of students attending public schools in the local community. NAEYC's commitment to advancing equity was included.
- Admissions policy was not included. Description of how school will engage and accommodate families from various backgrounds was not described.
- During interview, leaders described investment in ParentSquare, working closely with MLL coordinator on communicating with families in preferred language. and incorporating relevant cultural experiences (e.g., Ghanaian drummers, heritage night, etc.).
- The ED reported that % of students of color has increased in last few years - currently about 25% Black/African American, 25% Latino/Hispanic, 25% Asian, 25% White.
- The applicant provided an enrollment forecast that is well articulated with clear data, the rationale for enrollment growth, and a clear picture of community demand for school)
- The applicant did not provide an analysis of the proposed school's projected student demographics and a description of the demographics of students attending public schools in the local community in which the charter school would be located and the school districts from which the students are, or would be, drawn to attend the charter school. The applicant also did not address the impact of the proposed charter school on the racial and socio-economic diversity of public schools and school districts from which children would be drawn to attend the charter school. Adequate information about the impact on surrounding districts and schools was provided during the interview.
- In the application, the applicant did not provide a description of plans to ensure Access and Equity for at-risk student populations and establish and maintain a racially and socio- economically diverse student body, including proposed strategies (consistent with state statute and legal requirements) to recruit, admit, enroll, and retain a diverse student body. The applicant did not provide a description of how the school will identify, engage and accommodate families from various backgrounds, including English learners, students with disabilities, and students of color. However, this was clarified during the interview with specific school demographic information.

- The applicant did not describe the school's admission policy or explain compliance with C.G.S §10-66bb(d)(8), defining student recruitment and retention plan that includes students as defined in C.G.S (10- 66bb(c)(3) (page 2/27).
- The proposal provides enrollment forecasts for the proposed school. The demographics for the current school show a racially diverse student body and approximately 40% of the students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. From the capacity interview, the applicants made clear that the school is engaging families from diverse backgrounds to ensure equitable access and enrollment.

Subsection 3: *Demonstrates significant planning and effort, can provide examples of strategies to meaningfully engage current and prospective families and community members (including current or former teachers and other educators) in implementation and operation of the school. {Comments below}*

- Parent and staff representatives serve on board. Board has a number of educators. Applicant shared evidence of communications with families related to board member recruitment and expansion initiatives. Evidence of seeking parent involvement in process to hire new principal.
- The applicant did not provide examples of strategies to meaningfully engage current and prospective families and community members (including current or former teachers and other educators) in implementation and operation of the school. The applicant did not outline specific and concrete roles of parents, community members, and current and former educators in the school's decision making on an ongoing basis. . However, clear information was provided during the interview with specific examples of how the school meaningfully engages families and community members.

The applicant did not provide evidence that the school publicly provides information about educational options and the school's state report card on the school's website.

- The proposal provides examples of letters and brochures for encouraging families to enroll into the new school. It is not clear that the school is making the state report card on the web site. Moreover, it is not evident in the narrative that families and community members can and will have a role in school planning or decision making.

Subsection 4: *Applicant details comprehensive approach to achieving / sustaining equitable access, including mitigating barriers, including practices around discipline, transport, enrollment and retention that could impede access to their programs. {Comments below}*

- During the interview, the leader expanded on collaboration with Manchester Early Learning Center around supporting families around the challenges/burdens of after care (including financial). Shared efforts to expand lines of communication, particularly with social media and summer activities. Also expanded behavioral health supports.
- Within the written narrative, applicant did not directly address "equitable access, including mitigating barriers, including in practices around discipline, transport, enrollment and retention," with the exception of teacher recruitment, which can be considered a contributing factor:

"The State of Connecticut requiring all school districts to create a diversity plan. OCS remains committed to this critically important pursuit. With our continued participation and partnership with the Connecticut Teacher Residency Program (Connecticut TRP) and the RESC Alliance Minority

Recruitment Fair, we will continue to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of a talented and diverse educator workforce. We have had significant success in this effort. All of our current and newly hired preschool teachers as well as two of our para educators came to us after we participated in RESC Alliance Minority Recruitment Fair the last three years."

- In the application, the applicant did not detail a comprehensive approach to achieving and sustaining equitable access and mitigating barriers including in practices around discipline, enrollment, and retention that could impede access to their programs. However, during the interview, the applicant discussed how the lack of after school care may provide a barrier to attending the school, and described plans to address this. Barriers including in practices around discipline, enrollment, and retention were not addressed.
- To connect with families, the applicant conducts extensive community outreach and municipal collaboration with that effort, including neighborhood meetings, Town of Manchester Government Meetings and door-to-door meetings with families. However, the proposal does not make clear how the school will mitigate barriers to sustainable access.

Subsection 5: *Applicant outlines transportation plan for students (meeting requirements of C.G.S 10-66ff(f)) (page 11/27) {Comments below}*

- Applicant described coordination with district for bus transportation.
- The applicant did not outline a transportation plan for students in the application. However, the applicant clarified the transportation plan during the interview, which will meet the needs of families.
- The applicant partners with the Manchester Public Schools for all resident student transportation services including outside field trip experiences for all students. However, preschoolers will not be offered any school bus transportation and must be transported by family members. Bus transportation is only available for K-8 students who reside in Manchester. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from the school for those students living outside Manchester.

SECTION THREE OVERVIEW: Student Demand and Community/Local/Family Support Comments

- Not included in application:
 - Student admissions policy
 - Description of how school will engage and accommodate families from various backgrounds was not described.
 - Could applicant share diversity plan required by SOC?

Peer Reviewer Scores for Section 3	
Peer Reviewer 1	19
Peer Reviewer 2	20
Peer Reviewer 3	17
Total Score	56
Average Score	18.7

SECTION FOUR

Instructional Practices, Student Academic Achievement

Fully describe the design of the academic program (including specialized focus, if any) of the school. Provide data that justifies / supports the school's mission and overall goals, providing a brief description of key instructional and curriculum design elements and how these will be leveraged to meet the school's performance objectives and community needs. Be sure to include data / references supporting the instructional and curriculum design and how these align to state and federal requirements.

Include a description of why this educational model was chosen and how students will be assessed, how assessment practices are aligned to state standards and state assessment requirements.

Subsection 1: *Explains key design elements for the proposed educational model (has clear plan for ongoing development, improvement of curriculum).* {Comments below}

- Applicant references research-based resources/approach, but not specific to demographic population.
- PreK: The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool. K-8 Amplify (CKLA), Science of Reading (SOR), Lexia LETS training, Lexia Aspire training, Illustrative Mathematics exploring purchase of curriculum materials that specifically align with the OpenSciEd curriculum
- The applicant has proposed an expansion project to add two prek classrooms (p. 3). The applicant explained key design elements for the proposed educational model that include a structured, play-based learning environment with an emergent curriculum responsive to students' interests (p. 3). Key curriculum materials were clearly identified (p. 3-4) along with the core academic curriculum for each content area (p. 6-8). The applicant made a compelling case for why the chosen approach is likely to improve students' academic performance by including student achievement data and evidence of growth (p. 4).
- The proposal identifies the core curriculum for ELA, math and Science. This choice of curriculum builds upon work with the applicant's current students. And the proposal shows the applicant's success with improving students' performance on those content area's assessments. A key area of emphasis for the applicant is reading instruction. The applicant has spent a great deal of time and financial resources on supporting their teachers with their understanding of the Science of Reading (SOR) and their ability to implement effective literacy teaching practices with fidelity.

Subsection 2: *Describes how the choice of curriculum will help the school meet Connecticut's required school performance standards for charter schools.* {Comments below}

- Applicant described curriculum resources and presented state assessment results, which show year over year improvement. PreK: Creative Curriculum® for Preschool focuses on skill development (Social/Emotional, Physical, Cognitive and Language) by structuring the learning, play-based environment. emergent curriculum to teach and plan children's learning experiences that focus on being responsive to their interests. K-8 ELA - supporting teachers with their understanding of the Science of Reading (SOR) and their ability to implement effective literacy teaching practices with fidelity. Illustrative mathematics: developing their understanding of mathematical practices, how mathematical concepts spiral and develop overtime, and how to develop a strong classroom community that engages in mathematical discourse, rigorous problem solving, and productive struggle.

- The applicant stated that adding pre-k classrooms had long been a goal of the board (p. 2) and that the early learning opportunities were important to ensuring continuity of the school's programming (p. 3). The applicant further stated that adding early childhood opportunities provides meaningful intervention that mitigates subsequent remediation in later schooling (p. 20-21). However, the applicant did not clearly explain how the choice of the preK expansion curriculum will help the school meet CT's required school performance standards for charter schools. This was clarified during the interview and inspired confidence in the applicant's ability to meet CT's required school performance standards for charter schools.
- The proposal generally conveys that the curriculum that will be chosen will support and align with the state standards. Mostly, this is communicated through the success that the applicant's students have had on math, science and English Language Arts assessments.

Subsection 3: *Describes instructional techniques / methods that will facilitate high quality teaching and learning, and how these are appropriate for all students (including educationally disadvantaged students).*
{Comments below}

- Applicant described differentiation strategies and the ongoing development of teacher support efforts, such walkthrough and teacher peer observation protocol and new intervention staff.
 - PreK:create a rich and diverse learning, play-based environment that fosters social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic development. focus on skill development (Social/Emotional, Physical, Cognitive and Language)
- K-8: SOR, Students receive targeted tiered intervention based on observations and data.Targeted small group instruction, as well as using IXL and Khan Academy Supporting our new math and reading specialists with training in student centered coaching, Applicant described monitoring the data of special education students closely to ensure that they are making growth and having consistent access to rigorous grade level curriculum, but did not expand on techniques designed specifically for educationally disadvantaged students (other than below proficient).
- The applicant did not explicitly describe instructional techniques and methods for the expansion project that will facilitate high quality teaching and learning, and how these are appropriate for all students (including educationally disadvantaged students). The applicant mentioned skill development across several domains, a play-based environment, and curriculum responsive to students' interests (p. 3-4) but did not fully explain how these are or will be implemented in classrooms. The applicant addressed instructional methods and systems to support effective teaching and learning (p. 15), but it's not clear if these will apply to the prek classrooms. Additional information was provided during the interview that provided evidence of high-quality and developmentally appropriate teaching.
 - The instructional techniques that are advocated by the applicant are intended to adhere to a high level of quality and be responsive to students. For example, the school will carry out walk-throughs and peer observation to support instruction. In addition, the school maintains a multi-tiered system of instruction, which is meant to differentiate instruction across students.

Subsection 4: *Clear plan for monitoring and assessing student and teacher performance (including how school will use classroom and standardized assessments to determine needs of students and differentiate instruction. {Comments below}*

- PreK: Teaching StrategiesGOLD®, each child assessed on 75 different standards in the areas of: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, the arts, and English language acquisition.

K-8: MClass for grades K-4 and MAP data (fall and winter) in grades 5-8 to assess progress in ELA. MAP data (fall and winter) in grades K-8 to assess progress in Math. MAP data (fall and winter) in grades 5 & 8 to assess progress in Science.
- Redesign of our MTSS team structures and responsibilities. Our team now consists of a math specialist/MTSS coordinator, a certified reading specialist, and two experienced interventionists. Teachers work collaboratively with our special education team to ensure that student accommodations and modifications are implemented with fidelity, and that our students are continuing to progress in their development. We monitor the data of special education students closely to ensure that they are making growth and having consistent access to rigorous grade level curriculum.
- The applicant explained assessment and monitoring in the prek classrooms using a standardized, observation-based assessment system (p. 4). The applicant stated that teachers will use assessment results to create environments and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for students (p. 4), but did not explain how. However, specific examples were provided during the interview. The applicant additionally explained monitoring and assessment in grades K-8 that includes the use of a variety of standardized tests, weekly collaborative meetings, monthly grade level meetings, and MTSS meetings p. 15). The applicant further described differentiation and support in grades K-8. However, the applicant did not explain how the K-8 practices align with the prek expansion project and classrooms. Clarification was provided during the interview that ensures consistency throughout the school.
- The proposal states that the applicant will use a variety of assessment tools for monitoring student learning and progress. The applicant will carry out weekly collaborative meetings, monthly grade level and MTSS team meetings with a focus on student data. They will also utilize IXL to collect ongoing diagnostic data for individual students and grade levels. Moreover, the applicant will use MAP assessment data to monitor student progress.

Subsection 5: *Consistent with the definition of a charter school in ESEA §4310, the school can justify how key elements have been chosen to utilize autonomies and flexibilities granted to charter schools under state statutes to create programs that meet the unique needs of the school's anticipated demographic. {Comments below}*

- autonomy in finding the right balance of curricular resources and professional development aimed at advancing teacher practice, "focus is on ensuring our teachers are able to effectively instruct students using research based best practices and not simply be able to implement a program."
- The applicant did not justify how key elements have been chosen to utilize autonomies and flexibilities granted to charter schools under state statutes to create programs that meet the unique needs of the schools anticipated demographic.
- The proposal communicates that the choice of curriculum and the emphasis on instruction have been chosen and developed internally. The collaboration of teachers, for example, is important to the professional development and improvement of practice within the school. However, these elements

were not clearly linked in the narrative with the autonomy and flexibility that a charter school has.

SECTION FOUR OVERVIEW: *Instructional Practices, Student Academic Achievement Comments*

- Expand on techniques and strategies designed specifically for educationally disadvantaged students (other than below proficient, e.g. SWD, EL).

Peer Reviewer Scores for Section 4	
Peer Reviewer 1	23
Peer Reviewer 2	19
Peer Reviewer 3	19
Total Score	61
Average Score	20.3

SECTION FIVE Financial Management and Monitoring

Describe how the school intends to achieve financial stability and viability through implementation of proposed activities, keeping in mind federal guidelines around Allowable Costs. Refer to 2CFR 200 as the guiding document for a comprehensive understanding of allowable costs, non-regulatory guidance, and the Allowable Cost Guide when constructing a school budget. In this section explain the school's plan to be strategic, compliant and a responsible fiduciary of federal funds. All proposed expenditures and grant-supported activities will need to align with at least one of the SMART Goals applicant indicates in Section 6 (SMART Goals).

Subsection 1: *Budget Template and Narrative: Are complete and demonstrate clear understanding of allowable, allocable costs. Implementation and planning periods are broken out clearly (planning period not to exceed 18 months). School provides three-year CSP grant budget with justification for activities, complete descriptions of activities and expenditures. School provides five-year school operating budget in addition to CSP grant budget to show that there will be financial sustainability after the CSP grant period ends.*
{Comments below}

- Secure financials every year. projected budget does not assume any revenue from a potential GSCT-CSP yet it does include all the associated costs for addition two brand new classrooms. justification for expenses is included and expenditures are allowable
- The applicant provided a CSP budget and narrative that are complete and demonstrate clear understanding of allowable, allocable costs. The three-year CSP grant budget narrative includes an explanation for expenditures. The applicant has included only one year of grant expenses. The applicant provided a five-year school operating budget in addition to the CSP grant budget to show that there will be financial sustainability after the CSP grant period ends. Additional information that clearly demonstrated sound sustainability plans was included (p. 16-18).
- The proposal includes a comprehensive budget. The costs appear to be allowable and they are commensurate with the intended impact of the school plan.

Subsection 2: *Applicant demonstrates understanding that charters have a high degree of autonomy over budget, operations, personnel decisions (e.g. by making requests in the budget that are allowable but diverge*

from the suggested subgrant structure in Table 2 of the RFA (Size and Structure of Subgrants). {Comments below}

- Autonomy in finding the right balance of curricular resources and professional development aimed at advancing teacher practice - financial investments evidenced flexible decision-making
- The applicant demonstrated understanding that charters have high degree of autonomy over budget, operations, personnel decisions by making requests in budget that are allowable but diverge from suggested subgrant structure in Table 2 of the RFA - Size and Structure of Subgrants.
- The proposal clearly demonstrates that the applicant possesses an understanding that charters have high degree of autonomy over budget, operations, and personnel decisions. This is primarily evident in the policies and procedures of the board listed in appendix one of the proposal.

Subsection 3: *Applicant completes annual reporting requirements to CSDE (including submission of financial audit, other required submissions).* {Comments below}

- Applicant included 3 years of 990s and audited financial statements.
- The applicant provided evidence of compliance with annual reporting requirements to CSDE.

Subsection 4: *Applicant submits a sound facilities plan that includes: Concreate location, a timeline for acquiring, developing, and / or remodeling as well as equipping the new school or expansion facility. If facility is not identified there is a viable plan for obtaining one to ensure timely opening / expansion of the school.* {Comments below}

- Facility expansion plans were clearly articulated; lease was included
- The applicant explained that the facility needs and design plan (p. 3, 5), but did not include a specific timeline or plan for construction and equipping the new expansion facility. Additional information was provided during the interview that indicated a sound facilities plan.
- The proposal provides a financial audit. The business operations manager is listed as being responsible for completing the annual state financial audit, which shows a level of accountability for completing the audit.

Subsection 5: *The budget contains the following:*

- *CMO fees, if any, and delineates how these will be paid*
- *Sufficient budgetary resources to fulfill program requirements for educationally disadvantaged, at-risk students.*

Comments:

- No CMO
- The projected budget does not assume any revenue from a potential GSCT-CSP yet it does include all the associated costs for addition of two brand new classrooms. Surplus margins in FY 2026 are greater than 6% and in the remaining three years these margins are 5.3% or higher.
- The budget contains the following sufficient budgetary resources to fulfill program requirements for educationally disadvantaged at-risk students.

- There are no requests for facility support in this grant. The proposal does include a lease agreement that the applicant currently has in place. The applicant has undergone a building modification effort to create two completely new furnished, equipped preschool classrooms with much needed and required bathrooms.

Subsection 6: *Applicant has a plan to mitigate the risks associated with projected enrollment, and financial resources sufficient to adequately serve student population. {Comments below}*

- OCS continues to seek competitive funds from various funding sources, The Peter and Carmen Lucia Buck Foundation (PCLB) provides us with annual operation support as well as targeted financial support.
- The applicant provided evidence of a sufficient waitlist to mitigate risks associated with projected enrollment (p. 10).
- The proposal generally shows that the applicant can mitigate financial challenges based on enrollment. While the proposal does not specifically address the possibility of lower enrollment, since there is such a large waiting list for the school, the proposal also communicates diverse sources of funding to offset financial shortfalls and maintain the operations of the school as planned.

SECTION FIVE OVERVIEW: *Financial Management, Monitoring Overall Comments*

- No comments made by reviewers.

Peer Reviewer Scores for Section 5	
Peer Reviewer 1	28
Peer Reviewer 2	29
Peer Reviewer 3	29
Total Score	86
Average Score	28.667

**SECTION SIX
Grant Project Goals**

Identify 3-5 SMART grant project goals. Justify each goal through its value in supporting the planning and implementation of the proposed school. All grant spending, including future budget revisions must fit clearly within your stated project goals. All proposed expenditures and grant- supported activities need to align with at least one of the SMART Goals outlined in your Project Narrative.

Subsection 1: *Each grant project goal is a quality goal, and the set of goals fulfill minimum requirements for content including:*

- *At least one project goal addresses how the school intends to achieve Connecticut's targets for school performance (School Performance Index) and academic growth (Smarter Balanced Growth) in Math and ELA*
- *A minimum of three project goals are clearly articulated with trackable time-bound measures and outcomes for each goal (at least one goal must address how to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged students).*

Comments:

- Goals are SMART, and rationale/strategies are described.
 1. OCS will fill 100% of the available seats for preschool three and four-years old students throughout the 2004-2025 school year.
 2. 80% of OCS preschool three and four-year old students will fall within their age's color band for at least 90% of all standards measured within Teaching StrategiesGOLD® by June 2025.
 3. OCS 3-8 students will improve their 2025-2026 Next Generation Accountability Index score from 72.7 to 73.7% as reported on the 2025-2026 CT Accountability Index. [This accountability system moves beyond test scores and graduation rates and instead provides a more holistic, multifactor perspective of the district and school performance (including children with high needs)and incorporates student growth over time.]]
- Each grant project goal is a quality goal, and the set of goals fulfill minimum requirements for content. At least one project goal addresses how the school intends to achieve Connecticut's targets for school performance (School Performance Index) and academic growth (Smarter Balanced Growth) in Math and ELA. Three project goals are clearly articulated with trackable time-bound measures and outcomes for each goal. The applicant did not include a specific goal to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged students.
- The proposal provides three SMART goals to guide the project. These goals are mostly time delimited and the measurable. Two of these goals relate to student learning and engagement, such as performance on the next generation accountability index.

Subsection 2: *Clear alignment exists among project goals, and overall mission and goals of the school. Each goal should have a justified purpose that supports the charter school in reaching performance goals. All grant measures must be appropriately rigorous for the targeted student population and measured by standard assessments. {Comments below}*

- SMART goals are aligned to project and broader school goals related to student learning.
- Clear alignment exists among project goals, and the overall mission and goals of the CSP expansion project and school. Each goal has a justified purpose that supports the charter school in reaching performance goals. All grant measures are appropriately rigorous for the targeted student population and measured by standard assessments.
- The proposal generally notes that the SMART goals are aligned with the overall mission of the school. Continued investment in early learning opportunities, provides all members of the school community the motivation and impetus for school community growth and continued school improvement.

SECTION SIX OVERVIEW: SMART Goals / Grant Project Goals Overall Comments

- Is advancing the Next Generation Accountability Index score from 72.7 to 73.7% a rigorous enough goal? The listed goals are SMART, but typically also include the methods to achieve them [e.g. we will X and Y by (what steps you'll take to achieve the goal)]. For example, improving the Next Generation Accountability Index score from 72.7 to 73.7% is a goal, but what will OCS do to achieve it?

Peer Reviewer Scores for Section 6	
Peer Reviewer 1	9
Peer Reviewer 2	9
Peer Reviewer 3	8
Total Score	26
Average Score	8.667

SECTION SEVEN Grant Points

Priority points may be awarded to applicants for the competitive priorities below. Applicants will have to provide supporting documentation to evidence that their project narrative in the grant application meets the criteria for priority point awards.

Subsection 1: *Two additional priority points may be awarded to applicants that demonstrate in their grant application how they will promote high-quality educator and community centered charter schools to support underserved students. {Comments below}*

- Applicant included growth in academic performance over time.

OCS has engaged teachers in meaningful ways.

an authentic assessment of community assets, beyond level of interest, would be instructive.

Subsection 2: *Two additional priority points may be awarded to applicants that articulate how they will collaborate with at least one traditional public school, or traditional public school district. {Comments below}*

- Collaborate with the Town of Manchester for a before and after school care program that is run daily at OCS Collaborating with Manchester Town officials to expand our before and aftercare programs for our 3 and 4-year olds
- While the applicant shows that they have experience collaborating with Manchester schools in areas like transportation, lunches and nursing, it is not clear how this fits with a project plan or directly benefits

Subsection 3: *Two additional priority points may be awarded to applicants that articulate a plan to serve and intentionally meet the unique needs of students in rural geographic areas. {Comments below}*

- Not applicable and no comments or scores from any reviewers

Subsection 4: *Two additional priority points may be awarded to schools that provide a high-quality high school program. {Comments below}*

- Not applicable and no comments or scores from any reviewers

SECTION SEVEN OVERVIEW: *Priority Points Overall Comments*

None

Peer Reviewer Scores for Section 7	
Peer Reviewer 1	4
Peer Reviewer 2	2
Peer Reviewer 3	0
Total Score	6
Average Score	2

TOTAL SCORES
Across all sections

Peer Reviewer Scores for all sections	
Peer Reviewer 1	102
Peer Reviewer 2	95
Peer Reviewer 3	93
Total Score	290
Average Score	96.7