

**Testimony of Jed Wallace, President and CEO of the California Charter
Schools Association
Little Hoover Commission Hearing, November 19, 2009**

I am pleased to be here today to respond to the Commission's request for information and perspective on California's charter schools. As a quick background, my name is Jed Wallace and I am the President and CEO of the California Charter Schools Association. The California Charter Schools Association is the membership and professional organization serving charter public schools in California. Our mission is to lead the charter public schools movement in California in order to increase the number of students attending high-quality charter schools. We serve our membership through state and local advocacy, technical support for new charter developers and operating schools, and financial products and services to member schools. The Association and its membership have also taken a leadership role in the charter movement toward ensuring that every charter school achieves at high levels of academic and operational success.

The written answers to the Commission's questions below offer a framework for my oral testimony.

Responses to Questions posed by the Commission:

What measures is the California Charter Schools Association taking to improve accountability of its member schools and what opportunities exist to apply these measures to all charter schools?

One of the key tenants of the charter school concept is establishing a balance between school innovation and flexibility on one side, and school operational and academic accountability on the other. Since its inception in 2004, the Association has challenged its members to improve accountability. We are now engaged with our member council in developing specific targets of academic performance that should be met by all charter schools as a criterion for school renewal. (See included materials on the Similar Student Measure).

A central component of the Member Council's framework for improved academic accountability is the establishment of the Similar Students Measure (SSM) to identify underperforming charter schools. The SSM was developed to provide for "a simple, yet elegant" measure for minimum academic performance expectations based upon California's Academic Performance Index. The SSM does not define quality for charters, which would include a much broader set of measures beyond the API, but rather defines an output metric for minimum academic performance. The SSM is being developed with the considerations to establish a measure for minimum academic performance below which schools would not be renewed without a state level review. It is based on publicly available data and can be implemented by 3rd party, and fairly assesses charter schools' performance. After the metric is refined and piloted this year, we will be determining the best way to roll it out as a potential element for improving minimum renewal standards all charter schools.

How effective are California’s charter authorizing entities in ensuring accountability, oversight and transparency? Should the state expand the role or change the composition of charter authorizing entities?

Charter Authorizing in CA continues to be uneven and inconsistent. Because the authorizer structure in our state primarily relies on school districts to authorize and oversee charter schools, there are potentially over 1,000 different charter authorizers. In addition, school districts already have significant challenges and responsibilities to oversee and operate non charter schools and are faced with significant and ongoing budget challenges and enrollment declines. Given the wide range of authorizers and the lack of focus on charter schools, school districts may not be the most effective entity for approving and overseeing charter schools.

Effective charter authorizing and oversight is a complex challenge. Education Code Section 47604.32 outlines specific duties and responsibilities for charter authorizers with respect to their oversight duties. However, in practice, we find that many authorizers are either doing too little or too much to oversee their charter schools. Some may take a complete “hands off” approach only interacting with its charters when absolutely necessary, and often after it is too late to effectively intervene, and playing a game of “gottcha” upon charter renewal. Others may take too much of a “hands on” approach, second guessing and challenging each and every decision of the charter school to the point that charter autonomy is compromised. While there are many authorizers who take their role seriously and find the right balance, we believe that the structure for authorizing and oversight in California is seriously flawed. For charter schools to be successful, California needs a system of charter authorizers that is independent of the existing school district structure, and allows authorizers (which may include districts) to enter this work only if they are willing and committed to high standards of oversight.

My colleague Greg Richmond from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers may be able to offer several different and more effective models of charter authorizing that are being implemented in other states. We encourage the Commission to look to these examples of how charter authorizing and oversight in California could be improved.

Is California’s current criteria for charter revocations and renewals sufficient? If not, how could it be strengthened?

All charter schools are required to meet state standards, administer state required tests, and participate in the states accountability system like all other public schools. Education Code Section 47607 establishes additional academic criteria for charter school renewals and the process and criteria for revocations and by the charter authorizer. In addition to the specific, but minimum, academic criteria established in that section, each school’s charter must describe its measureable pupil outcomes and how progress towards achieving those outcomes will be measured. Failure to meet those outcomes is further cause for nonrenewal, corrective action or revocation. In addition, Section 47604.5 establishes criteria and condition for revocation of a charter school by the State Board of Education, even if it is not the charter authorizer.

Though Section 47607 established specific academic standards for charter renewal, we believe the section has not been consistently implemented. We are also concerned that the academic

standards applied for renewal in this section are not rigorous enough to ensure all charter schools meet a minimum threshold of academic quality. In addition, even though the law requires it, many charters are approved without rigorous or clearly stated pupil outcomes by which they can be evaluated by their authorizer.

Uneven practices around renewal and revocation in the state has resulted in denial of due process for some charters, and unwarranted school closures, while other charter schools of questionable quality may avoid any authorizer scrutiny at all. Currently the state board is in the process of establishing regulations to clarify and strengthen the process around charter renewal and revocations. We support the SBE efforts in this area. We also support the work of NACSA to help authorizers improve the process and criteria by which they evaluate charter schools. The work the Association is doing around the Similar Student Measure may lead to a strengthening of the academic criteria by which charters are held to at renewal.

How could the state improve transparency of governance and funding without stifling the flexibility of charter schools?

Charter schools are required to describe their governance structure in their charters, and to include the means by which the charter school will consult with parents and teachers regarding the schools education programs (EC 47605). In addition, charter schools are authorized to be governed as or by nonprofit public benefit corporations. If a charter schools is a nonprofit, it clearly must meet the transparency and governance standards required of all public nonprofit corporations. Additionally, the governance section of a school's charter should address other protections and procedures to ensure that the charter operations and decisions are free of self-dealing or conflicts of interest, and that meeting and decisions of the school's governing body are held in open meetings with publicly available agendas. The Association believes strongly that charter operations should be transparent and has developed materials and workshops to guide charters on good practice in these areas.

The exact legal status for charter schools with regard to many of the governance laws that apply to other public entities, such as school districts with publicly elected boards, are less clear for charter schools. While we strongly support charter school transparency and openness in governance, many of the specific rules and process that apply to public officials are too onerous for a small charter school, and would also stifle the core intent of charter schools to allow for teachers, school leaders and parents to be active participants in school governance. We believe that charter schools can and should operate with clear transparency and appropriate disclosure from its governing board members. However, it must be achieved thoughtfully and deliberately not to thwart the innovations in school structure, decision-making and operations that have led to the success of many charter schools.

What recommendations do you have for ensuring that successful charter school models are replicated and that failing schools are closed?

Creating new and successful schools is hard work. Charter schools do not offer a silver bullet for school success, but the opportunity presented in the chartering concept may offer the greatest

chance at sustainable and comprehensive school reform. Once a charter school has achieved success, we must remove the barriers that prevent replication and expansion. Capacity to scale up and replicate successful charter school models is inhibited by many factors.

Concerns with the unpredictability of charter approvals statewide inhibit growth. Even replication and expansions of high quality charter schools continue to face serious opposition from the education status quo. Some organizations with unquestioned level of success cannot get charters approved locally. Successful organizations simply must have assurance within the system that they can grow their organizations. The statewide benefit charter was designed to scale successful programs. It is, unfortunately, proving rather unworkable and cumbersome, leading many organizations to not seek to apply. We either must change the rules on statewide benefit charters or we must find an alternative authorizer approach to allow clearly successful schools to expand. This is made all the more important during the “Race to the Top” era, where the federal government is looking to see how states effectively address high quality charter school expansion.

Another barrier to successful replication and expansion is facilities. Access to adequate and affordable facilities and financing continues to provide yet another barrier to school expansion. Meaningful compliance and enforcement of the provisions of Proposition 39, and the simplification of the school construction process would go a long way toward mitigating this constraint.

Ensuring a pipeline of dedicated and qualified school leaders and teachers is critical to successful expansion of successful schools. At High Tech High (HTH), where I previously worked for five years, we were able to become the first charter school organization in California authorized to credential our own teachers. Since receiving that authorization, the organization has had well more than 100 teachers participate in the credentialing program, with approximately two-thirds receiving their credentials in the high need areas of math and science. The positive results that High Tech High experienced running its own credentialing program motivated the organization to expand its offerings to include formal degree programs. This led to High Tech High opening the HTH Graduate School of Education (GSE), the first new graduate school of education to open in the State of California in more than 20 years. Programs are now available both for teachers and for school directors. In addition, having the graduate school now affords High Tech High the flexibility to provide credentials and degree programs to its own employees as well as outside educators, many of whom will be coming from schools across California and the nation. As such, the GSE poises HTH to address its own human capital needs while disseminating practices and supporting broader school reform efforts.

At this time, High Tech High is still the only charter school organization that is credentialing its own teachers. In my estimation, this is unfortunate. Successful charter school organizations are, without exception, doing an excellent job of providing professional development for teachers. Our experience at High Tech High was that this quality professional development constituted 80% of the requirements for running an effective and compliant credentialing program. Unfortunately, there are a number of regulatory and logistical constraints that impede other charter schools from beginning to credential their own teachers. At the Association, we are attempting to eliminate barriers so that the large latent capacity for teacher credentialing that now

exists within our successful charter school organizations can be released, resulting in the quality credentialing of literally thousands of new teachers across California. As has happened at High Tech High, these new teachers would first allow the charter schools to provide their own talent as they scale. They would also provide critically needed new teachers for districts and other charter schools for years to come.

It is also important to have state support for implementing innovative service delivery models in special education so that students with special needs in charter schools can be served more effectively. We have been working closely with the state department of education, the state board and the special education community on several special education pilots and we strongly encourage their expansion to effective state wide models.

In addition, access to start up funding, and timely allocation of state funding to new schools is a significant barrier to school expansion and start up. For example, the recent budget deal to “freeze” most categorical funding at prior year levels creates a significant funding gap between existing schools and new or growing schools.

Despite these challenges, committed charter schools leaders continue to make gains at ensuring that high quality educational options are available. My colleague Steve Barr will be able to offer the Commission some specific insight into how that is happening at the local level.

As for school closures, the state and federal school accountability system have in place a series of interventions that are required of low performing schools. Interventions offer a continuum of options including school site changes such as staffing, curriculum and scheduling to more comprehensive reforms such as school closure or reconstitution. When the failing school is a charter school, the law provides an added layer of intervention in the opportunity (and obligation) to close the school through revocation or nonrenewal. Unfortunately, too often the political will does not exist among education leaders to take the bold step to initiate school closures, comprehensive restructuring or conversion to charter schools. Adult agendas such as job protection, resistant to change and allegiance to the status quo too often overshadow the need for real reform and commitment to high quality education programs.

There needs to be consistent statewide implementation of minimum performance expectations. Given that the closure of a public school, charter or otherwise, is among the most gut wrenching decisions that a public official has to undertake, we are finding that political pressures are leading to inconsistent application of standards at the time of renewal. This is why we support a change in the process for renewal, one where schools that fail to meet a statewide minimum performance expectation could not be renewed without a special hearing happening at a state level with reviewers having a long track record of having operated successful charter schools. Because in the end, we believe that only recognized charter school leaders will make the tough accountability decisions that will serve the long term interests of the charter school movement.

Based on your experience as chief operating officer of High Tech High and as the charter school authorizer for the San Diego Unified School District, what steps can be taken to improve the partnership between charter schools and school districts?

The charter school law provides a great opportunity for school districts to supplement its traditional role of “operating” schools to include the role as a “portfolio manager” of a broad range of education models, choices and innovations best designed to serve the diversity of its district. Charter-district relations need not be adversarial, but could be designed to be mutually supportive and responsive to the needs of the community.

Unfortunately, it is true that an adversarial relationship between charter schools and authorizers dominates in many locations across California. This leads school districts to miss the opportunity to benefit from promising new practices that are emerging in charter schools. It also leads to charter school operators sometimes choosing to isolate themselves from key logistical and compliance supports that many forward thinking districts are now offering. What is required is a change in mindset, an openness to learn from one another and share data and emerging solutions. My experience at both High Tech High and at San Diego Unified School District leads me to conclude that the best opportunity for information exchange occurs during professional development activities. Because HTH has been “open source” with its training programs, many school district teachers and leaders have attended, which has led to a greater sense of openness and cooperation. And we are aware of a number of school districts across the state which make professional development activities available on a voluntary basis to charter school leaders and teachers. We at the Association support such approaches and will work to see them spread more widely in the years to come.

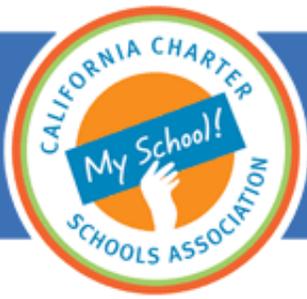
What disparities exist between funding facilities for charter schools and public schools? What barriers prevent facilities issues from being resolved?

Facility funding and access continues to be one of the greatest areas of inequity between public charter schools and traditional public schools. It is also one of the most significant barriers to the growth of the charter schools movement.

The state has made progress in creating a broad menu of facility options for charter schools. However, each of these programs carries with it some constraints and limitations that prevent charter schools from having full and equal access to the types of facilities that noncharter schools have. The State School Building Program, has provided charter schools an opportunity to access a portion of state bond funds. However, charter eligibility exceeds available funding 4 to1, and the program is too onerous for many charter schools. The Charter School Facility Grant Program provides lease reimbursement for schools in privately owned buildings. It has been very popular, but is currently limited only to schools with exceptionally high rates of disadvantaged pupils. Proposition 39 requires districts to provide their pupils in charter schools with reasonably equivalent facilities to those provided to their pupils in traditional district schools. But, the law does not have any consequences for noncompliance and many districts have simply ignored their obligations under this law.

Because charter schools must typically dip into their general fund to augment any of the state facility options, inequitable facility costs for charter schools result in a further widening of the funding gap for educational programs between traditional schools and charters. There is already a gap between operational funding for charters compared to their traditional district counterparts. Therefore the extra cost for facilities at a charter make even less funding available for educational programs.

We encourage the state to continue to move toward making these various facility options viable for charter schools. The State School Building Program must continue to be simplified to provide more bang for the buck and more flexible opportunities to build, buy or renovate facilities for public school use. Eligibly in the lease reimbursement Facility Grant Program should be expanded to include more schools. And, the state must intervene to ensure that districts are meeting their obligations under Proposition 39 to provide access to reasonable equivalent facilities to all of their pupils regardless of whether they attend a charter or traditional school.



Fact Sheet: Charter School Milestones – Fall 2009

STATE OVERVIEW

- 88 new charter schools opening statewide in the 2009-2010 school year
- 809 charter schools now operating in California
- Highest single-year increase in new students enrolling in new and existing charters with an estimated 56,000 new students
- Approximately 341,000 public school students now attend charter schools
- Forty five, or 51% of new charter schools opening this fall are replications of successful charter schools
- One in six charter schools nationwide (809 of 4,900) is located in California

AUTHORIZER AND COUNTY OVERVIEW

CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS WITH HIGHEST NUMBER OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

Authorizer	Total Charters	New Charters
Los Angeles Unified	163	19
San Diego Unified	37	2
Oakland Unified	32	2
State Board of Education	23	9
Campbell Union Elementary	12	0
Sacramento City Unified	11	0
San Francisco Unified	11	0
Fresno Unified	9	1
Nevada County Office of Ed	8	0
Santa Clara County Office of Ed	8	2

COUNTIES WITH LARGEST NUMBER OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

County	Total Charters	New Charters
Los Angeles County	216	27
San Diego County	81	10
Alameda County	45	4
Sacramento County	37	2
Santa Clara County	34	2
Sonoma County	33	5
Fresno County	31	5
San Bernardino County	31	4
Stanislaus County	21	3
San Joaquin County	20	3



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NUMBER OF CALIFORNIA CHARTER SCHOOLS SURPASSES 800, NEW ENROLLMENT SETS SINGLE- YEAR RECORD

88 New Charter Schools Open This Fall for Highest Single-Year Enrollment Increase Ever

Sacramento, CA – The California Charter Schools Association today announced that 88 new public charter schools opened their doors for the first time this fall, bringing the total number of California charter schools in operation to 809 schools, serving approximately 341,000 public school students.

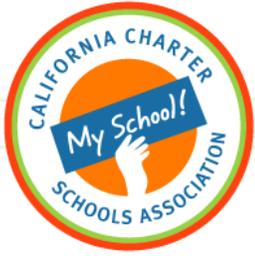
New and existing charter schools added an estimated 56,000 new students this year, the largest single-year enrollment increase in history and equivalent to adding the entire enrollment of the ninth largest school district in the state.

The number of new schools also marked an even greater increase over last year, when 75 new charter schools opened their doors. While it took California's charter school movement 13 years to reach 200,000 students (in 2005) it only took four years to surpass the 300,000 students mark.

“California charter schools are experiencing explosive growth, roughly 20 percent growth for two years in a row,” said Jed Wallace, president and CEO of the California Charter Schools Association. “This consistent growth is phenomenal given this tough economic climate and it speaks to the choices that both parents and teachers are making and their demand for high-quality educational options. The solid growth in charter school enrollment demonstrates that parents – and teachers – realize charters are mainstream options.”

This year also marked the first year that more than half of all new charter schools that opened this fall (45 of 88 schools) are replications of existing, successful charter school models, an increase of 11 percent over the previous year.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has the highest number of new charter schools in the state. With 19 new charter schools, for a total of 163 in operation, LAUSD also has by far the most charter schools for a single district in the nation. Of all the counties in the state, Los Angeles has the



highest number of new charter schools, adding 27 new schools this year and reaching over 200 charter schools across the county.

Besides Los Angeles County, several other counties had strong charter school gains, including 10 new charter schools in San Diego County, five each in Fresno and Sonoma Counties and four each in San Bernardino and Alameda Counties.

San Diego County now has the second largest number of total charter schools in operation, with 81 schools. Alameda and Sacramento County follow with 45 and 37 total charter schools, respectively. Santa Clara County rounded out the top five with 34 charter schools.

As of this fall, approximately one in every six charter schools nationwide (16 percent) operates in California. According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, based in Washington, D.C., there are now more than 4,900 charter schools currently educating over 1.5 million children.

“Trends for the future indicate that similar levels of growth in charter school enrollment will continue if not accelerate,” said Wallace. “This signals that a fundamental shift in the way we operate public schools is underway within California. It is then incumbent upon the charter school community to redouble our efforts to make sure that proper accountability systems are in place which will ensure that charter schools generate significantly higher levels of student learning than has historically been available within the traditional public education system. We will do everything we can to help our members continue to lead our state and the nation to develop critically needed improvements to charter school accountability systems.”

About the California Charter Schools Association

The California Charter Schools Association is the membership and professional organization serving over 800 charter public schools that educate more than 341,000 charter school students in the state of California. The mission of the California Charter Schools Association is to lead the charter public school movement in California in order to increase the number of students attending high-quality charter schools. www.myschool.org.

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ESTABLISHING AN IMPROVED ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

Introduction

From the moment a charter school petition is approved, its leaders enter into a pact, providing accountability for high student achievement in exchange for autonomy from onerous state regulations and requirements. Our ability as individual schools and as a movement to live up to that bargain will determine the strength and sustainability of charter schools. We believe that all charter schools in this state are bound by the commitment to improve educational opportunities for California's children. Our schools do not merely provide educational options, they must provide better options.

In alignment with our mission to increase student achievement through the support and expansion of quality charter schools, the Association staff and Member Council in 2003 took the lead on quality and accountability nationally with the creation and adoption of the Quality Standards for Charter School Operations, which currently serve as a public affirmation of our commitment to educational quality and as a guide for continuous school improvement. We are now building upon the practices imbedded within the Quality Standards by leading the charge to improve academic accountability in charter schools through the establishment of a rigorous minimum academic performance standard for charter schools at their time of renewal.

A Call for Increased Accountability:

The design of a more rigorous academic accountability measure was spearheaded through discussions by the Association's Member Council, which consists of charter school leaders from across California. In June of 2009, after a three-month planning process, the Member Council unanimously adopted a framework for improving academic accountability for charter schools, outlined in the twelve points listed below.

This effort coincides with President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan's drive to increase the number of charter schools as a key strategy to drive innovation, competition and improvement in America's public education system, while at the same time, holding schools accountable for performance.

Member Council Goals for Establishing Improved Academic Accountability for Charter Schools

1. Develop simple and elegant measures for minimum academic performance expectations based upon California's Academic Performance Index (API) system.
2. Advocate for and support the refinement of the state's academic accountability system to become a more sophisticated measure of value-add across all schools.
3. Establish a rigorous performance expectation that allows for the wide differences in school programs within the charter community and that takes into account the wide differences in student background coming into a school.
4. Articulate reasonable timeframes for decision-making with regards to renewals that provide for appropriate review and appeal of renewal decisions.

5. Ensure school districts may no longer unilaterally renew charter schools missing minimum performance expectations.
6. Proactively communicate performance standards to members and the wider public.
7. Advocate consistently so charter schools are not subject to inappropriate local measures being indiscriminately imposed.
8. Establish early warning systems.
9. Describe CCSA's role in ensuring availability of additional resources and supports for schools at risk.
10. Develop procedures for final determination regarding non-renewal of low performing charter schools.
11. Establish measures to enable the charter school movement to provide the improved learning opportunities that will be needed when students are displaced from a charter school going through closure.
12. Establish other minimum performance expectations regarding governance, finance and operations.

The Similar Students Measure (SSM)

A central component of the Member Council's framework for improved academic accountability is the establishment of the Similar Students Measure (SSM) to identify underperforming charter schools. The SSM was developed to provide for "a simple, yet elegant" measure for minimum academic performance expectations based upon California's Academic Performance Index (API). The SSM *does not define quality* for charters, which would include a much broader set of measures beyond the API, *but rather defines an output metric for minimum academic performance*. The SSM was created based on considerations that align with the framework proposed by the Member Council:

- Establishes a measure for minimum academic performance below which schools would not be renewed – *when is low performance too low?*
- Is simple yet elegant – *is it clear to explain? Is it correct?*
- Is based upon California's Academic Performance Index (API) system (public data and externally replicable)
- Is able to be implemented by 3rd party
- Fairly assesses charter schools' performance regardless of student demographics served

Description of the SSM:

The Similar Students Measure (SSM) was developed using the state's linear regression methodology for creating the Schools Characteristics Index (SCI). To generate "Similar Schools" rankings, the State uses the Schools Characteristics Index (SCI) which is a set of 25 school and student-related variables that are placed into regression models for elementary, middle, and high school grade levels. The resulting output is rescaled to generate an SCI score for each school, which is then used to generate similar schools rankings.

The California Charter Schools Association has built on this same regression methodology. We begin with 14 variables (using a reduced number of the SCI variables and adding only enrollment), choosing only student characteristic variables which are truly outside a school's control. We believe using this smaller number of variables in the regression models is a more methodologically sound approach, allowing us to hold constant only those factors beyond a school's control and to better isolate the impact of a school's educational program on student performance. Similar to the state model, we then plug our variables into regression models for elementary, middle and high school grades. The resulting

output of the regression models yields predicted API scores. We then compare schools' actual to predicted API scores to determine what percent of their prediction schools achieved.

The SSM linear regression models used to predict each school's API score include demographic factors such as, free/reduced-price lunch participation, average parent education level, school enrollment in the fall (CBEDS data) and at the time of testing (API data), and mobility, as well as the percentage of each racial subgroup, English Learners, and students with disabilities. These demographic variables were selected specifically because these are factors outside of a school's control. As a result, the measure allows for uniformly high expectations (with API as the outcome) while also taking into account the starting point of a student's life background.

Further technical analysis is now underway to confirm the statistical validity of the SSM instrument. However, given the positive reception the SSM has thus far received from statisticians, academics and school accountability experts, we feel that our approach is the most accurate and fair way to gauge the impact of a school on a child's education based on available school level data. We also believe that the SSM represents a substantial improvement over the current renewal formula for charter schools under Assembly Bill (AB) 1137 which relies on statewide and similar schools rank scores. Our preliminary analysis has shown that the SSM:

- Does the best job of identifying underperforming schools than other measures based on the API
- Relates positively and significantly with all other measures of school performance such as API growth scores, state and similar schools ranks, English and math proficiency, as well as cumulative API growth
- Is not biased against schools serving higher percentages of traditionally disadvantaged students nor schools with non-traditional pedagogical programs such as independent study, Montessori or dual immersion
- Is an extension of measures the state already uses, allowing external validation and transparency
- Can potentially serve as the measure for a continuum of performance, helping to identify high performing schools as well those that are low-performing

Application of the SSM: Establishing Minimal Performance Expectations for Charter School Renewal:

The Similar Students Measure is unique from existing state accountability metrics in that it isolates the direct impact of a given school's program regardless of the students they serve, and, therefore, allows us to establish a *uniform* academic performance expectation across all charters, despite the wide differences in school programs within the charter community. The Member Council has made the recommendation that a charter school that is 10 percent or more below its predicted API performance on the SSM would be designated as underperforming. Charter schools identified as underperforming for three years in a row at the time of renewal would not meet minimal academic standards for renewal by their authorizers. We believe that the application of rigorous academic performance criteria using the SSM will provide more transparency and consistency for evaluating charter school performance.

Advocacy for the Adoption of the Similar Students Measure as a Minimal Academic Renewal Standard

Currently, charter schools are held accountable to the minimum academic performance renewal standards contained within AB 1137, which passed into law in 2003 but has not been effective in terms the non-renewal and closure of schools that consistently underperform. The Association's Member Council accountability framework calls for the implementation of the SSM which would significantly

raise current renewal standards for charter schools and eliminate deficiencies in the current process that makes it difficult to close underperforming schools. The Association is also discussing advocacy routes so that these minimum academic renewal criteria under the SSM would be adhered to across the entire state. This includes interfacing with local and state authorizers to adopt this measure and the consideration of regulatory or legislative measures for statewide adoption.

The California Charter Schools Association has already begun to engage the State Board of Education and the California Department of Education in discussions to establish clearer academic renewal criteria for charter schools and will continue to engage both internal and external stakeholders in the development of the measure.

Next Steps Regarding Further Development and Implementation of the SSM Framework

The Association is working diligently to devise a full implementation plan for the SSM and the Member Council framework over the 2009-2010 school year. A part of the eventual implementation of the measure will be to launch an “early warning” system to notify schools annually where they fall on the academic performance continuum of the Similar Students Measure. The Association is also planning to refer our members identified as underperforming to resource providers in the areas where they need help, or to Association programs that can help them improve their data-driven decisions, like Zoom!/Data Source, in order to improve their ability to meet these new minimum performance expectations.

Conclusion

Quality and accountability for academic performance have been core initiatives within the California Charter Schools Association since its inception. Because of our diligent work in this area, we have a better understanding than anyone of our movement’s strengths and weaknesses. The new Similar Students Measure is designed to shine a light on school academic performance that allows for the wide variety of programs within the charter school community and establishes a uniform bar for minimal academic performance that can be applied consistently and transparently across the state.

California’s charter school movement is making exactly the contribution to our public education system that was originally envisioned. Charter schools are proving to be incubators of urgently needed innovation while also tackling some of our state’s greatest academic challenges. The support structures that the Association provides to its schools and our current work to raise academic accountability standards will help the charter schools movement become even stronger and better poised to impact the broader educational system.

High Tech High Graduate School of Education

The mission of the HTH Graduate School of Education is to prepare reflective practitioner leaders to work with colleagues and communities to develop innovative, authentic, and rigorous learning environments. This mission parallels that of the High Tech High K-12 schools: to provide *all* students with an extraordinary project-based education and to graduate students who will succeed in post-secondary education and be thoughtful, engaged citizens. HTH GSE opened in September 2007 at the High Tech High village of schools in San Diego, California.

High Tech High is the first charter school that has been authorized by the state of California to fully credential teachers. The program is available to our teachers as well as those who come to us from partner schools beyond the High Tech High community. For districts interested in establishing a credentialing partnership with the GSE at High Tech High, contact Amy Reising at areising@hightechhigh.org or call (619)398-4907.

HTH GSE offers a Master's of Education degree (M.Ed.) with two concentrations: School Leadership, for individuals who wish to lead a small innovative school, and Teacher Leadership, for experienced teachers who aspire to deepen their practice and broaden their leadership capacity at their school.

Both programs are open to educators within and beyond our network of schools.

High Tech High Learning (HTHL) supports the work of adults in HTH schools and elsewhere to put the HTH design principles into practice. HTHL offers many learning opportunities for practitioners, including teacher residencies and institutes at High Tech High, teacher ambassador programs, on-site technical assistance, and a graduate school of education offering master's degrees in teacher leadership and school leadership. HTHL also provides resources for educators, including guides to project-based learning, curriculum integration, internship program development, teaching to diverse learners, student advisory, college advising, facilities development, technology infrastructure and policies, and management.

Teacher Credentialing at High Tech High

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing has approved High Tech High to certify teachers in mathematics, science, English, history/social studies, Spanish, Mandarin, and art through its Teacher Intern Program. The goal of the program is to prepare teachers to work in an environment that integrates technical and academic education while creating a sense of community engagement and responsibility. The HTH Teacher Intern program situates teacher training in HTH sites where candidates can experience a 21st century context for teaching and learning. The program provides direct, on-the-job training to recent graduates of post-secondary institutions, as well as to mid-career individuals in transition.

As a partnership between High Tech High and the University of San Diego, the HTH Teacher Intern Program provides the equivalent of a 120-hour pre-service program and 600 hours of training and practice over two academic years. Interns earn full-time salaries and benefits as teachers in charter school classrooms while working toward their credentials.

Admission and Eligibility

To be considered for the program, applicants must be High Tech High teachers, or must be employed at one of our partner schools. For information on available positions and how to apply, please go here: <http://www.hightechhigh.org/employment.php>. For districts interested in establishing a credentialing partnership with the GSE at High Tech High, contact Amy Reising at areising@hightechhigh.org or call (619)398-4907. Once hired at a HTH or a partner school, intern teachers must submit the following items:

- Complete list of BA/BS courses completed
- Official transcripts
- Passing scores on the California Basic Skill Test (CBEST)
- Passing scores on the California Subject Examination for Teachers (CSET) or a letter verifying completion of a course of studies waiver program upon completion of teacher internship program
- Certificate of Clearance (fingerprints)
- HTH Teacher Intern Program application with completed essays
- Letter of reference from current or previous employer
- Three confidential references
- A recommendation from the principal of a High Tech High affiliated school.

For more information about teacher credentialing at HTH, please contact either Hayley Loendorf hloendorf@hightechhigh.org or Julie Holmes juholmes@hightechhigh.org. For more information on the HTH Graduate School of Education, please visit: <http://gse.hightechhigh.org/>.

High Tech High Internship Program - Course Descriptions

HTH 101. How People Learn: Principles of Educational Psychology

In this course, candidates learn major theories, concepts, principles, and research related to adolescent development and human learning. The course focuses on the physical, personal, intellectual, social and ethical development of adolescents. Candidates learn how to create learning opportunities in their subject area to support student development, motivation and learning.

HTH 102. Introduction to Teaching Methods and Content Standards

In this course, candidates will learn the skills and acquire the tools necessary to prepare for the beginning weeks of the school year. The course will focus on developing learning communities that promote student effort and engagement. Candidates explore ways to create an effective classroom environment, establish rapport with all students, and develop relationships with students' families.

HTH 103. Equity and Diversity: Social and Cultural Foundations

This course develops candidates' concept of culture and its implications for teaching and learning. Candidates learn about the background experiences, skills, languages and abilities of diverse student groups, and how to apply appropriate pedagogical practices that provide access to the HTH curriculum and create an equitable community within the classroom. Candidates study different perspectives on teaching and learning, examine various theories of education, and

identify the inequalities in academic outcomes in American education. The course will focus on how teacher and student expectations affect student achievement.

HTH 104. Classroom Management and Assessment (Field Experience)

This course is a comprehensive, rigorous introduction to classroom management, lesson planning and assessment. This course provides candidates with the opportunity to work with their assigned Mentor Teacher and complete all requirements for their field experience report.

HTH 105. Teaching Methods, Curriculum Design and Classroom Settings

This course provides candidates with instruction and practice for planning and delivering curriculum in their specific content area (math, English, science, humanities, art, Spanish), and in using appropriate instructional technology in the content area. Candidates will review and analyze the state content standards in their specific content area as part of this course.

HTH 106. Teaching Practicum I

This course provides candidates with the opportunity to apply and practice the learning theories covered in HTH 101 in a classroom setting in their subject area. The course provides opportunities to identify and solve subject-specific problems inherent in clinical teaching, lesson planning, and classroom organization and management. This course runs concurrently with HTH 105 (Teaching Methods).

HTH 107. Professional Portfolio Development I

This course introduces candidates to the portfolio development process. Candidates learn about the Teaching Performance Assessment requirements and the final exit interview, and how they relate to the Teaching Performance Expectations. The course helps candidates identify the types and quality of teaching artifacts that should be collected and presented in the portfolio.

HTH 108. Technology in Portfolio Development

This course is designed to assist and guide candidates in the use of technology to complete and assemble their professional teaching portfolio. The course combines training in the use of appropriate technologies and portfolio advisement for each of the portfolio domains, which candidates will be expected to present electronically.

HTH 109. Teaching Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum

This course prepares candidates to teach content-based reading and writing skills to all students. Candidates review and analyze the *Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools*, and learn to use effective strategies and methods aligned to the framework. The course provides practical experience in content-based reading and writing,

HTH 110. Teaching Practicum II

This course provides candidates with opportunities to connect learning theories with subject specific pedagogical practices in the classroom. Candidates work with their Mentor Teachers in their subject area. This course runs concurrently with HTH 109 (Teaching Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum).

HTH 111. Technology in Instruction

This course will focus on the application of teaching and learning strategies that integrate technology into the learning process. Candidates will learn to use technology tools to prepare teaching materials, to develop curriculum, deliver instruction, evaluate student performance, and assist in course management.

HTH 112. Philosophy of Education: Teaching Performance Expectations

In this course, candidates review the full range of Teaching Performance Expectations identified in the *Standards for Quality and Effectiveness for Teacher Preparation Programs*. Candidates will research prominent educational philosophies and learning theory, and will articulate in writing their own Philosophy of Education.

HTH 113. Preparation to Teach English Language Learners

In this course, candidates learn about issues pertaining to the special needs and considerations of English learners in secondary classrooms. The course emphasizes understanding English language proficiency assessment and placements, and how to address a range of fluency and proficiency levels in a single classroom.

HTH 114. Teaching Practicum III

This course provides candidates with the opportunity to apply and practice the learning theories covered in their teacher training sessions in a classroom setting in their subject area. The course provides opportunities to identify and solve subject-specific problems inherent in clinical teaching, lesson planning, and classroom organization and management. This course runs concurrently with HTH 113 (Preparation to Teach English Language Learners) and HTH 116 (Assessment and Evaluation).

HTH 115. Healthy Environments

This course is designed to teach methods and best practices in the physical education and health curricula. Candidates review and analyze the California Physical Education and Health Frameworks and supplemental readings to develop their understanding of a comprehensive physical and health education system that will prepare adolescents for a lifelong commitment to physical activity and health.

HTH 116. Assessment and Evaluation

This course is designed to teach candidates how social, emotional, cognitive and pedagogical factors impact students' learning outcomes. Candidates learn how a teacher's beliefs, expectations and behaviors affect student learning. The course provides a professional perspective on teaching that includes an ethical commitment to teach every student effectively and to continue to develop as a professional educator.

HTH 117. Professional Portfolio Development II

This course provides candidates with the opportunity to assemble their professional portfolio. Each candidate will work with a Portfolio Advisor to examine the materials they have collected during their supervised fieldwork to determine which will be the best examples to use as evidence of their professional growth.