

Policy 0420.4: Charter School Authorization

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 05/01/2019 | **Last Revised Date:** 06/01/2025 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 06/01/2025

CSBA NOTE: The following optional policy may be revised to reflect district practice. Education Code 47600-47616.7 authorizes the establishment of public charter schools, which are generally exempt from the Education Code unless otherwise specified in law. To establish a charter school within the district, petitioners are required to submit to the Governing Board for approval a petition which includes all components required by law as described in the accompanying administrative regulation. The following policy reflects the criteria and procedures required by Education Code 47605.

Under certain circumstances, charter petitions may also be approved by other governmental entities. For example, Education Code 47605.5-47605.6 require petitioners to submit a petition directly to the County Board of Education when (1) the charter school will serve students for whom the county office of education would otherwise be responsible for providing direct education and related services or (2) the countywide program will provide educational services to a student population that cannot be served as well by a charter school operating in only one district in the county.

Pursuant to Education Code 47606, a district may petition the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education (SBE) to convert all its schools to charter schools, provided that 50 percent of the district's teachers sign the petition, the petition contains all specified components, and arrangements are made for alternative attendance of students residing within the district who choose not to attend a charter school.

For further information regarding the submission and review of charter school petitions, see CSBA's, "Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams." CSBA's District and County Office of Education Legal Services attorneys can also assist with petition reviews for districts that subscribe to that service.

The Governing Board recognizes that charter schools may assist the district in offering diverse learning opportunities for students. In considering any petition to establish a charter school within the district, the Board shall give thoughtful consideration to the potential of the charter school to provide students with a high-quality education that enables them to achieve to their fullest potential.

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 47605 allows for Board approval of a start-up charter school or the conversion of an existing public school into a charter school, provided that the charter school adopts and maintains a policy giving admission preference to students who reside within the former attendance area of that public school. The signature requirement differs for each type of charter school; see the accompanying administrative regulation.

One or more persons may submit a petition to the Board for a charter school to be established within the district or for the conversion of an existing district school to a charter school. (Education Code 47605)

Any petition for a charter school shall include all components, signatures, and statements required by law, as specified in the accompanying administrative regulation. The proposed charter shall be attached to the petition. (Education Code 47605)

The Superintendent or designee shall consult with legal counsel, as appropriate, regarding compliance of the charter petition with legal requirements.

The Superintendent or designee may work with charter school petitioners prior to the formal submission of the petition in order to ensure compliance of the petition with legal requirements. As needed, the Superintendent or designee may also meet with the petitioners to establish workable plans for contracted services, which the district may provide to the proposed charter school.

The Board shall not require any district student to attend the charter school, nor shall it require any district employee to work at the charter school. (Education Code 47605)

Timelines for Board Action

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 47605, the Board is required to hold a public hearing within 60 days of receiving a charter petition to determine the level of support for the petition, and to hold a public hearing within 90 days to take final action on the petition. Education Code 47605 also requires the district to publish, at least 15 days prior to the public hearing at which the Board will grant or deny the petition, staff recommendations regarding the petition and, if applicable, the certification from the County Superintendent of Schools regarding the potential fiscal

impact of the charter school on the district.

To provide adequate opportunity for public input and thoughtful consideration of the charter petition, it is recommended that the Board conduct two public hearings -- one hearing to determine the level of support for the petition and, following the publication of staff recommendations, a second hearing to grant or deny the petition. However, the law does not explicitly require two hearings, and it may be possible to hold one public hearing to both determine the level of support for the petition and grant or deny the petition, provided that staff recommendations are published 15 days prior to the hearing, the hearing is held within 60 days of receipt of the petition, and the petitioners have equal time and opportunity to present evidence and testimony. It is recommended that CSBA's District and County Office of Education Legal Services or district legal counsel be consulted as needed to ensure that all requirements are met.

Within 60 days of receiving a charter petition, the Board shall hold a public hearing on the charter provisions, at which time the Board shall consider the level of support for the petition by district teachers, other district employees, and parents/guardians. A petition is deemed received on the day the petitioner submits a petition to the district office, along with a signed certification that the petitioner deems the petition to be complete. (Education Code 47605)

The Board shall either grant or deny the petition at a public hearing held within 90 days of receiving the petition, or within 120 days with the consent of both the petitioner and the Board. (Education Code 47605)

At least 15 days before the public hearing at which the Board will grant or deny the charter, the district shall publish all staff recommendations regarding the petition, including any recommended findings and, if applicable, certification from the County Superintendent of Schools regarding the potential fiscal impact of the charter school on the district. During the public hearing, the petitioners shall have equal time and opportunity to present evidence and testimony in response to the staff recommendations and findings. (Education Code 47605)

CSBA NOTE: The following paragraph is optional and may be revised to reflect district practice. Pursuant to Education Code 47605, in the event that a petition is denied and the matter is appealed, the Board is required to provide a documentary record to the petitioner, including a transcript of the public hearing at which the Board denied the hearing. See "Appeals" below. Thus, it may be useful to have a transcription of the hearing(s) in the event that the petitioners later appeal the decision of the Board.

The Superintendent or designee shall maintain accurate records, in relation to each charter petition, of documents submitted, the Board's proceedings, and the findings upon which the Board's decision is made.

Approval of Petition

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 47605 requires the Board to give preference to charter petitions that demonstrate the capability to provide comprehensive learning experiences to students identified by the petitioner as academically low achieving based on the standards established by the California Department of Education (CDE) pursuant to Education Code 54032, as that section read before July 19, 2006. Prior to its repeal on that date, Education Code 54032 required CDE to develop standards to identify students as academically low achieving for purposes of allocating Economic Impact Aid funds to school sites. However, the Economic Impact Aid program is no longer funded or administered by CDE.

Pursuant to Education Code 47605, the Board is required to also consider the interests of the community in which the school is proposing to locate.

A charter petition shall be granted only if the Board is satisfied that doing so is consistent with sound educational practice and the interests of the community in which the school is proposing to locate. In granting charters, the Board shall consider the academic needs of the students the charter school proposes to serve and shall give preference to petitions that demonstrate the capability to provide comprehensive learning experiences for students who are identified by the petitioner as academically low-achieving, based on standards established by California Department of Education (CDE). (Education Code 47605)

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 47604.1, charter schools are subject to the Brown Act (Government Code 54950-54963), California Public Records Act (Government Code 7920.000 - 7930.215), conflict of interest laws (Government Code 1090-1099), and the Political Reform Act (Government Code 81000-91014).

Prior to authorizing any charter, the Board shall verify that the charter includes adequate processes and measures for monitoring and holding the school accountable for fulfilling the terms of its charter and complying with all applicable laws, including Education Code 47604.1. Such processes and measures shall include, but are not limited to, fiscal accountability systems, multiple measures for evaluating the educational program, inspection and observations of

any part of the charter school, and regular reports to the Board.

The approval or denial of a charter petition shall not be controlled by collective bargaining agreements nor subject to review or regulation by the Public Employment Relations Board. (Education Code 47611.5)

CSBA NOTE: The following optional paragraph may be revised to reflect district practice. Although not required by law, CSBA's, "Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams," recommends one or more memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to address matters that are related to the charter petition but are not included in the petition, and to establish expectations for which the charter school can be held accountable. CSBA's manual provides examples of issues that might be addressed in an MOU, including business operations, facilities, administrative and support services, special education, student assessment, and athletics. See CDE's website for sample MOUs.

The Board may approve one or more memoranda of understanding (MOU) to clarify the financial and operational agreements between the district and the charter school. Any such MOU shall be annually reviewed by the Board and charter school governing body and amended as necessary.

The Board may initially grant a charter for a specified term not to exceed five years. (Education Code 47607)

When a petition is approved by the Board, it shall be the responsibility of the petitioners to provide written notice of the Board's approval and a copy of the petition to the County Superintendent, CDE, and the State Board of Education (SBE). (Education Code 47605)

Denial of Petition

The Board shall summarily deny any charter petition that proposes to:

1. Operate a charter school as or by a for-profit corporation, a for-profit educational management organization, or a for-profit charter management organization (Education Code 47604)
2. Convert a private school to a charter school (Education Code 47602)

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 47605, the Board may approve a charter school serving students in a grade level not offered by the district only when the charter school will also serve all the grade levels offered by the district. Thus, an elementary district's board cannot approve a charter for a high school, but may approve a charter for a K-12 school since the charter school will serve all grade levels served by the elementary school district.

3. Serve students in a grade level that is not served by the district, unless the petition proposes to serve students in all the grade levels served by the district (Education Code 47605)

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 47612.7, until January 1, 2026, the Board is prohibited from approving a petition for the establishment of a new charter school offering nonclassroom-based instruction. A charter school approved before October 1, 2019, which had started providing educational services as of that date may continue to offer nonclassroom-based instruction under the circumstances specified in Education Code 47612.7.

4. Offer nonclassroom-based instruction (Education Code 47612.7)

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 47605, a charter petition may be denied only if certain factual findings are made. 5 CCR 11967.5.1 contains criteria for SBE's review of charter petitions, which may be useful to the district in determining how it might evaluate whether a petition meets the conditions specified below.

Regarding all other charter petitions, the Board shall deny a petition only if the Board makes written factual findings specific to the petition that one or more of the following conditions exist: (Education Code 47605; 5 CCR 11967.5.1)

1. The charter school presents an unsound educational program that has a likelihood of physical, educational, or psychological harm to, or which is not likely to provide an educational benefit for, the students to be enrolled in the charter school
2. The petitioners are demonstrably unlikely to successfully implement the program set forth in the petition
3. The petition does not contain the number of signatures required

4. The petition does not contain a clear, unequivocal statement described in Education Code 47605(e), including that the charter school will be nonsectarian and that the school shall not charge tuition or discriminate against any student based on the characteristics specified in Education Code 220
5. The petition does not contain reasonably comprehensive descriptions of the charter provisions in Education Code 47605(c)
6. The petition does not contain a declaration as to whether the charter school shall be deemed the exclusive public employer of the school's employees for purposes of collective bargaining pursuant to Government Code 3540-3549.3
7. The charter school is demonstrably unlikely to serve the interests of the entire community in which the school is proposing to locate

Analysis of this finding shall include consideration of the fiscal impact of the proposed charter school. A written factual finding shall detail specific facts and circumstances that analyze and consider the following factors:

- a. The extent to which the proposed charter school would substantially undermine existing services, academic offerings, or programmatic offerings
- b. Whether the proposed charter school would duplicate a program currently offered within the district, when the existing program has sufficient capacity for the students proposed to be served within reasonable proximity to where the charter school intends to locate

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 47605, a district under state receivership is not in a position to absorb the fiscal impact of a proposed charter school.

8. The district is not positioned to absorb the fiscal impact of the proposed charter school

The district meets this criterion if it has a negative interim certification, has a qualified interim certification and the County Superintendent certifies that approving the charter school would result in the district having a negative interim certification, or is under state receivership.

The Board shall not deny a petition based on the actual or potential costs of serving students with disabilities, nor shall it deny a petition solely because the charter school might enroll students with disabilities who reside outside the special education local plan area in which the district participates. (Education Code 47605.7, 47647)

Appeals

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 47605, if the Board denies a charter petition, the petitioner may, within 30 days of the denial, submit the petition to the County Board. If the County Board denies a petition on appeal, the petitioner may, within 30 days of the denial by the County Board, appeal to SBE.

If the Board denies a petition, the petitioner may choose to submit the petition to the County Board of Education and, if then denied by the County Board, to SBE. (Education Code 47605)

At the request of the petitioner, the Board shall prepare the documentary record, including a transcript of the public hearing at which the Board denied the charter, no later than 10 business days after the petitioner makes the request. (Education Code 47605)

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 47605, SBE may only reverse a denial of a charter school petition upon a determination that there was an abuse of discretion by each of the board of the district and the county board. Abuse of discretion is the most deferential standard of review, under which SBE must give deference to the decisions of the board of the school district and the county board to deny the petition.

In *Napa Valley Unified School District v. State Board of Education*, the district and the county Board denied a charter school petition on the basis that it was unlikely to serve the interests of the entire community and that it would have a negative fiscal impact on existing district services. The proponents of the charter school appealed to SBE, however, the California Appellate Court held that SBE could not overturn the denial. The proponents of the charter school had petitioned the California Supreme Court for review. Due to the legal uncertainty in this area, it is recommended that the Board consult CSBA's District and County Office of Education Legal Services or district legal counsel when a petition the Board has denied is on appeal to SBE.

Within 30 days of receipt of an appeal submitted to SBE, the Board may submit a written opposition to SBE, which

may include supporting documentation, detailing, with specific citations to the documentary record, how the Board did not abuse its discretion in denying the petition. (Education Code 47605)

If either the County Board or SBE remands the petition to the Board because the petition on appeal contains new or different material terms, the Board shall reconsider the petition and shall grant or deny the petition within 30 days. (Education Code 47605)

Material Revisions to Charter

Material revisions to a charter may only be made with Board approval. Material revisions shall be governed by the same standards and criteria that apply to petitions for the authorization of charter schools as set forth in Education Code 47605 and shall include, but not be limited to, a reasonably comprehensive description of any new requirement for charter schools enacted into law after the charter was originally granted or last renewed. (Education Code 47607)

The Board shall determine whether a proposed change in charter school operations would constitute a material revision of the approved charter.

If an approved charter school proposes to expand operations to one or more additional sites or grade levels, whether concurrently with or unrelated to a renewal, the charter school shall request a material revision to its charter and shall notify the Board of those additional locations or grade levels. The Board shall consider approval of the additional locations or grade levels at an open, public meeting. (Education Code 47605, 47607)

The Board may deny a proposed material revision if it finds that the proposed material revision would render the charter school demonstrably unlikely to serve the interests of the entire community in which the school is located or proposes to locate. In making this finding, the Board shall consider all of the following: (Education Code 47605)

- 1. The fiscal impact of the proposed expansion on the district
- 2. The extent to which the expansion would substantially undermine existing services, academic offerings, or programmatic offerings
- 3. Whether the expansion would duplicate a program currently offered within the district that has sufficient capacity for the students proposed to be served within reasonable proximity to where the charter school intends to locate

Additionally, the Board may deny a proposed material revision if it finds that the district is not positioned to absorb the fiscal impact of the proposed material revision. The Board shall make this finding if the district has a qualified interim certification pursuant to Education Code 42131 and the County Superintendent, in consultation with the County Office Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, certifies that approving the charter school would result in the district having a negative interim certification pursuant to Education Code 42131, the district has a negative interim certification pursuant to Education Code 42131, or the district is under state receivership. (Education Code 47605)

Policy Reference Disclaimer: These references are not intended to be part of the policy itself, nor do they indicate the basis or authority for the Governing Board to enact this policy. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.

State	Description
5 CCR 11960-11969.10	Charter schools
Corp. Code 5110-6910	Nonprofit public benefit corporations
Ed. Code 1240	County superintendent of schools; duties
Ed. Code 17078.52-17078.66	Charter schools facility funding; state bond proceeds
Ed. Code 17280-17317	Field Act; approval of plans and supervision of construction
Ed. Code 17365-17374	Field Act; fitness for occupancy; liability of board members
Ed. Code 200	Equal rights and opportunities in state educational institutions
Ed. Code 220	Prohibition of discrimination

State

Ed. Code 32280-32289.5	School safety plans
Ed. Code 33126	School accountability report card
Ed. Code 41365	Charter school revolving loan fund
Ed. Code 42131	Interim certification
Ed. Code 42238.02-42238.52	Funding for charter districts
Ed. Code 44237	Criminal record summary
Ed. Code 44830.1	Certificated employees; conviction of a violent or serious felony
Ed. Code 45122.1	Classified employees; conviction of a violent or serious felony
Ed. Code 46201	Instructional minutes
Ed. Code 47600-47616.7	Charter Schools Act of 1992
Ed. Code 47640-47647	Special education funding for charter schools
Ed. Code 47650-47655	Funding of charter schools
Ed. Code 48900	Suspension or expulsion; use of controlled substances
Ed. Code 49011	Student fees; definition
Ed. Code 51744-51749.6	Independent study
Ed. Code 51745	Independent study
Ed. Code 52052	Accountability; numerically significant student subgroups
Ed. Code 52060-52077	Local control and accountability plan
Ed. Code 56026	Special education
Ed. Code 56145-56146	Special education services in charter schools
Gov. Code 1090-1099	Prohibitions applicable to specified officers
Gov. Code 3540-3549.3	Educational Employment Relations Act
Gov. Code 54950-54963	The Ralph M. Brown Act
Gov. Code 7920.000-7930.215	California Public Records Act
Gov. Code 81000-91014	Political Reform Act
W&I Code 224.1	Indian child; definition

Description**Federal**

20 USC 1400-1482	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
20 USC 7221-7221j	Charter schools
29 USC 794	Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Section 504
42 USC 12101-12213	Americans with Disabilities Act

Description**Management Resources**

Attorney General Opinion	101 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 92 (2018)
Attorney General Opinion	78 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 297 (1995)
Attorney General Opinion	89 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 166 (2006)
Attorney General Opinion	80 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 52 (1997)
California Charter Authorizing Professionals Pub.	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Resource, September 2022
Court Decision	Napa Valley Unified School District v. State Board of Education, Case No. C099068

Description

Management Resources

CSBA Publication	Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams, rev. 2021
CSBA Publication	Uncharted Waters: Recommendations for Prioritizing Student Achievement and Effective Governance in California's Charter Schools, September 2018
CSBA Publication	Charter Schools in Focus, Issue 1: Managing the Petition Review Process, Governance Brief, November 2016
U.S. Department of Education Publication	Charter Schools Program: Title V, Part B of the ESEA, Nonregulatory Guidance, January 2014
Website	CSBA District and County Office of Education Legal Services
Website	National Association of Charter School Authorizers
Website	California Charter Schools Association
Website	California Department of Education, Charter Schools
Website	CSBA
Website	U.S. Department of Education

Description**Cross References**

0420.41	Charter School Oversight
0420.41-E(1)	Charter School Oversight
0420.42	Charter School Renewal
0420.43	Charter School Revocation
0430	Comprehensive Local Plan For Special Education
0430	Comprehensive Local Plan For Special Education
0460	Local Control And Accountability Plan
0460	Local Control And Accountability Plan
0510	School Accountability Report Card
0510	School Accountability Report Card
2230	Representative And Deliberative Groups
4116	Probationary/Permanent Status
4116	Probationary/Permanent Status
6146.3	Reciprocity Of Academic Credit
6146.3	Reciprocity Of Academic Credit
6158	Independent Study
6158	Independent Study
6162.51	State Academic Achievement Tests
6162.51	State Academic Achievement Tests
6178	Career Technical Education
6178	Career Technical Education
6184	Continuation Education
6184	Continuation Education
7160	Charter School Facilities
7160	Charter School Facilities
9320	Meetings And Notices

Description