



Pasadena Unified School District

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Elizabeth Blanco, Superintendent

FROM: Kristina Turley-Payne, Director, State & Federal Programs

DATE: October 10, 2025

RE: **STAFF ANALYSIS AND PROPOSED FINDINGS OF FACT REGARDING
REQUEST FOR RENEWAL OF CHARTER PETITION FOR ODYSSEY CHARTER
SCHOOL SOUTH**

PROCEDURAL STATUS

The PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT ("District") received a renewal charter petition from ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH ("Charter") on August 29, 2025. OCS-South's current charter is set to expire on June 30, 2026.

Pursuant to the Charter Schools Act of 1992 ("CSA"), the District Governing Board is to hold a public hearing on the provisions of the Charter within 60 days of receipt, which that hearing was held on October 23, 2025. The District Board is to approve or deny the renewal request within 90 days of receipt of the Charter, which time can be extended for an additional 30 days upon mutual agreement of the parties. This means the deadline for the District Governing Board to approve or deny the renewal is November 27, 2025.

Education Code section 47605(b) requires the Board to act to either grant or deny a charter within 90 days of receipt of the petition. The Pasadena Unified School District Governing Board held a **public hearing on October 23, 2025**, and is scheduled to act on the petition at its November 20, 2025, meeting.

ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH, operated by Odyssey Charter Schools, a nonprofit public-benefit corporation, currently serves approximately 455 students in grades TK–8. The renewal petition seeks approval for a **seven-year term (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2033)**. This is their first charter renewal since opening in 2018.

CRITERIA FOR RENEWAL OF A CHARTER PETITION

A petition submitted for renewal pursuant to **Education Code Sections 47607 and 47607.2** shall be considered by the chartering authority's governing board in accordance with the following standards:



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I. **Standards and Criteria in Education Code Section 47605**

A renewal charter shall be governed by the standards and criteria described in Education Code Section 47605. The District Governing Board shall grant a renewal charter if it is satisfied that granting the charter is consistent with sound educational practice and the interests of the community in which the school operates.

The Board may deny a renewal petition only if it makes written factual findings to support one or more of the following:

- A. The charter school presents an unsound educational program for students to be enrolled.
- B. The petitioners are demonstrably unlikely to successfully implement the program set forth in the petition.
- C. The petition does not contain the affirmations required by statute.
- D. The petition does not contain a reasonably comprehensive description of all required elements.
- E. The petition does not declare whether or not the charter school shall be deemed the exclusive public employer of its employees for purposes of the Educational Employment Relations Act (EERA).

II. **Determination of Performance Category**

Pursuant to Education Code Sections 47607 and 47607.2, the authorizer must determine whether the charter school qualifies as High, Middle, or Low Performing based on academic performance indicators from the California School Dashboard and other verified data:

- A. **High-Performing:** *Renewal term 5-7 years based on authorizer's discretion.*
 - 1. *Had all students in the two highest performance bands for all indicators on the California Dashboard for the preceding two years prior to renewal, OR*
 - 2. *Had all students out-perform the State in all academic indicators on the California Dashboard (or a majority of the student groups out-perform the State) for the preceding two years prior to renewal*
- B. **Middle-Performing:** *Eligible for renewal for 5 years. The authorizer must consider:*
 - 1. *Performance on the state and local indicators on the Dashboard, giving greater weight to measurements of academic performance*
 - 2. *Clear and convincing evidence based on verified data showing either:*



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- a) *The school achieved measurable increases in academic achievement, defined by at least one year of growth for each year of school, OR*
- b) *Strong post-secondary outcomes, as defined by college enrollment, persistence, and completion rates equal to similar peers*
- C. **Low-Performing:** *Presumptive non-renewal, except when authorizer renews for two years based on "second review opportunity"*
 - 1. *Had all students in the two lowest performance bands for all indicators on the California Dashboard for the preceding two years prior to renewal, OR*
 - 2. *Had all students not out-perform the State in all academic indicators on the California Dashboard (or a majority of the student groups not out-perform the State) for the preceding two years prior to renewal.*

The authorizer is permitted to make an exception and renew a low performing charter school for a 2-year term if it makes both of the following written factual findings:

- 1. *The charter school is taking meaningful steps to address the underlying cause or causes of low performance, and those steps are reflected, or will be reflected, in a written plan adopted by the charter school's governing body, AND*
- 2. *There is clear and convincing evidence that the charter school has either achieved measurable increases in academic achievement, as defined by at least one year's progress for each year in school, or the charter school has demonstrated strong postsecondary outcomes, as defined by college enrollment, persistence, and completion rates equal to similar peers.*

These written factual findings must be specific to the charter school's particular petition, setting forth specific facts to support the findings. (Ed. Code § 47607.2(a)(3).) The findings must also be demonstrated by verified data. (Ed. Code § 47607.2(a)(3).) The meaning and application of "verified data" to be used in considering and making these findings are discussed in more detail in Section 2, below.

Verified Data

Pursuant to EC Section 47607.2(c)(2), the California State Board of Education (SBE), at their November 2020 meeting, approved the criteria to define verified data as well as a list of valid and reliable assessments, and measures of postsecondary outcomes. The approved list is effective until January 1, 2026. No data sources other than those adopted by the SBE can be used by a chartering authority as verified data. As this charter is requested before the effective date, the analysis and submission refer to the state dashboard for data.



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III. **Inclusion of New Legal Requirements**

The renewal petition must include a reasonably comprehensive description of any new statutory requirements enacted since the last charter approval and reflect the current educational program of the school.

IV. **Additional Criteria for Denial**

A chartering authority may deny renewal of a charter petition, regardless of performance category, if it finds substantial fiscal or governance concerns, or evidence that the charter school is not serving all students who wish to attend.

Performance Criteria for renewal of ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL (OCS) - SOUTH

In 2017, the State of California instituted the California Dashboard to help parents and educators identify strengths and areas for improvement in student academic performance. The Dashboard reports how districts, schools (including charter schools), and student groups are performing across state and local measures. For state measures, performance is based on two factors: (1) current year results (Status) and (2) whether results improved from the prior year as compared to themselves (Change). Performance on state measures, using comparable statewide data, is represented by one of five colors starting with red as the lowest, through orange, yellow, green, and blue as the highest. A performance level (Color) is not provided on the Dashboard when a student group has fewer than 30 students, but the Status and Change data will be displayed. When a student group has less than 11 students, the group does not receive a performance level (Color), and the group's Status and Change are not displayed, in order to protect the anonymity of the students. In such a case, this information is represented by using a grey gauge with the words "No Performance Color." Because the Dashboard performance level (Color) relates to how the particular entity performed compared to past performance, the colors cannot necessarily be compared across schools or entities. For example, a district with a lower performance score could have a "better" color than a district with a higher score, because the former district had greater improvement from the preceding year than did the latter district.

As specified in CDE's Charter Performance Category Data File, and confirmed in the ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH Charter, they are in the high performing category. Therefore any renewal of the ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH's Charter would be for a five-to-seven-year renewal term pursuant to Education Code section 47607.2(b). If the District renews the Charter, the new Charter term would begin on July 1, 2026, and run through and including June 30, 2031, if approved for a five-year renewal term, and June 30, 2033, if approved for a seven-year renewal term. CDE's latest Performance Category Data File, released March 14, 2025, can be found here: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ch/documents/perfcats25.xlsx>. The data file with the list of charter schools and their respective performance categories will be updated annually and



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can also be accessed on the CDE Charter School Performance Category Data File web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ch/perfcatltr2025.asp>.

In its Charter, ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH states that it is eligible for and meets the criteria for charter renewal for a term of seven-years. To demonstrate its academic performance against the criteria for seven-year renewal, ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH submitted its data from the California Dashboard, their Local Control Accountability Plan that aligns to the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress ("CAASPP") outcomes for the 2023 administration, and locally used i-Ready Assessment System. ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH states that the data submitted on pages 8 and 19 of the renewal Charter establish that ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH meets the criteria for a seven-year renewal. This report does not reproduce all of the information provided by ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH; rather, it incorporates the CAASPP results and related data shared in the petition into the analysis findings described in later portions of this report.

The data below represents some of the most significant data provided by ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH and/or available for consideration of their performance.

State Dashboard & CAASPP Outcomes

OCS–South demonstrates sustained high academic achievement relative to the state and district.

Table 1 – CAASPP Academic Performance

Indicator	2022–23	2023–24	State (23–24)	District (23–24)	Change
ELA – Distance from Standard	+19.8	+27.4	–13.2	–14.5	↑ +7.6 pts
Math – Distance from Standard	+3.4	+9.9	–47.6	–50.2	↑ +6.5 pts
ELA Proficient ($\geq$ Std Met)	58 %	64 %	47 %	46 %	↑ 6 pts
Math Proficient ($\geq$ Std Met)	49 %	54 %	36 %	34 %	↑ 5 pts



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Subgroup Highlights (2023–24), Distance From Standard (DFS)

Student Group	ELA DFS (22–23)	ELA DFS (23–24)	Math DFS (22–23)	Math DFS (23–24)	Change (ELA/Math)
Latino Students	+18.2	+25.5	–19.8	–13.5	↑ +7.3 / +6.3
Socio-econ. Disadvantaged	–14.8	–9.4	–28.4	–22.5	↑ +5.4 / +5.9
Students w/ Disabilities	–68.7	–59.6	–64.2	–56.5	↑ +9.1 / +7.7

Note: Student groups with fewer than 11 students are omitted from each testing year

Table 2 – Dashboard Engagement Indicators

Indicator	2022–23 Status	2023–24 Status	State (23–24)	District (23–24)	Change
Chronic Absenteeism	31.8 % (Very High)	20.2 % (High)	18.6 %	20.8 %	↓ –11.6 pp
Suspension Rate	2.5 % (Medium)	1.6 % (Low)	3.2 %	2.9 %	↓ –0.9 pp

Table 3 – Multi-Year Trend Summary (2019–2024)

Indicator	2019	2022	2023	2024	Trend (19→24)
ELA DFS	+5.2	+11.1	+19.8	+27.4	↑ +22.2
Math DFS	–10.8	–2.6	+3.4	+9.9	↑ +20.7
Chronic Absenteeism	15.4 %	26.8 %	31.8 %	20.2 %	↓ –11.6 pp since peak
Suspension Rate	4.1 %	2.9 %	2.5 %	1.6 %	↓ –2.5 pp



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Academic Achievement – Analysis & Conclusion

This report utilizes the most recently available 2024, 2023, and 2019 California School Accountability Dashboards because COVID-19 school closures and subsequent state legislative action suspended reporting for the 2020 and 2021 years. Non-academic Dashboard indicators provide evidence that ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH's overall student outcomes are more favorable than those within the State of California beginning in 2021–22 and continuing through the most recent reporting year, particularly in the areas of suspension rate reduction and steady improvement in academic performance.

While chronic absenteeism rates for ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH remain close to the state average, the school demonstrated significant improvement between 2022–23 (31.8%) and 2023–24 (20.2%), reflecting a meaningful post-pandemic recovery in attendance. Suspension rates also declined from 2.5% to 1.6% over the same period, substantially lower than both the state (3.2%) and district (2.9%) averages.

The California School Dashboard academic indicators reveal a consistent pattern of growth in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. Across multiple assessment years, student proficiency rates and Distance from Standard (DFS) scores at ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH exceed those of the State of California and the Pasadena Unified School District for nearly all student groups. From 2022–23 to 2023–24, schoolwide ELA performance increased from +19.8 to +27.4, while Mathematics improved from +3.4 to +9.9, indicating year-over-year academic gains across grade levels.

Subgroup data demonstrate similarly positive trends. Latino students and socioeconomically disadvantaged students, who represent the largest student populations at ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH, outperform their peers statewide by more than 50 points in both ELA and Math. Students with Disabilities, often a subgroup with persistent statewide achievement gaps, showed an improvement of nearly 10 points in both subjects, narrowing the gap relative to the state and district averages.

While the 2023–24 CAASPP proficiency rate for students identified as Two or More Races was slightly lower than the state's rate for the same group, this variance cannot be established as a trend due to the small sample size at the site in prior years.

When considering both academic and non-academic indicators together, there is substantial evidence to conclude that ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH provides an effective instructional program resulting in measurable increases in academic achievement. Students



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across all reported subgroups are more likely to experience favorable academic and behavioral outcomes at ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH compared to peers within the same student groups statewide.

Finances

Over the most recent period of the ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH charter, no significant financial findings have been found. A review of the four most recent independent audit reports do not indicate any significant fiscal findings or financial concerns.

OCS–South demonstrates strong fiscal health and operational capacity.

Four consecutive years of independent audits report no material weaknesses or findings.

Multi-year projections indicate positive fund balances and conservative enrollment growth, with sufficient reserves above 5%.

The charter maintains prudent internal controls, transparent budgeting practices, and clear separation of fiscal duties. Oversight costs are included within the school’s budget assumptions.

REVIEW OF THE CHARTER PETITION

Staff reviewed the Odyssey Charter School – South renewal petition in accordance with California Education Code Sections 47605, 47607, and 47607.2 and determined the following:

1. Sound Educational Program

The ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH petition articulates a clear educational philosophy grounded in inquiry-based, project-centered, and student-driven learning. The instructional model emphasizes hands-on experiences, critical thinking, and collaboration aligned with California Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and the English Language Development (ELD) Standards.

The petition provides evidence of rigorous instructional design through sample grade-level schedules, pacing guides, and assessment calendars that ensure sufficient instructional minutes across all content areas. The use of performance-based assessments, integrated technology, and community partnerships supports college and career readiness.

Special Education:

ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH provides a continuum of services for students with



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disabilities, using a full inclusion model with access to both push-in and pull-out supports as determined by Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The petition includes clear processes for initial assessment, IEP development, and service delivery, as well as procedures for dispute resolution and due process consistent with federal and state law.

English Learners (ELs):

The petition includes comprehensive procedures for identification, placement, and reclassification of English Learners. Supports include designated and integrated ELD, Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) strategies, and teacher professional development on instructional differentiation. The school's reclassification rates over the past three years have exceeded both State and District averages, demonstrating effective implementation of EL services.

Other Student Subgroups:

The charter identifies that the overall student population of ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH reflects broad socioeconomic and racial diversity; however, staff analysis finds some disproportionality in the representation of specific student groups when compared to Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) averages.

ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH enrolls a lower percentage of English Learners (ELs) than the district as a whole and a higher proportion of African American students relative to its surrounding neighborhood schools. According to the renewal petition and current CALPADS data, English Learners constitute approximately 6% of ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH's total enrollment, compared to 11–12% districtwide. In contrast, African American students comprise roughly 16% of ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH's population, compared to approximately 9% districtwide.

While this variation does not indicate exclusionary practices, it does highlight a disproportional enrollment pattern for English Learners that should be monitored to ensure ongoing alignment with the district's diversity and access goals. The charter acknowledges this variance and includes commitments to strengthen targeted outreach and enrollment efforts in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of English Learners, including expanded translation of marketing materials, improved family engagement strategies, and enhanced support for dual-language development.

Despite this disproportionality, subgroup outcome data indicate that ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH's English Learners and African American students perform significantly



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above their state and district peers in both English Language Arts and Mathematics, demonstrating that the instructional program effectively serves those who are enrolled.

2. *Ability to Successfully Implement the Program*

ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH's educational program and operations are supported by a strong leadership structure and clear systems of accountability. The school's administrative team, led by an Executive Director and supported by site-based leadership, demonstrates the capacity to successfully implement and sustain the proposed program.

The renewal petition provides detailed evidence of:

- Qualified and credentialed teachers assigned within their authorization areas;
- Annual professional development focused on data analysis, differentiated instruction, and culturally responsive pedagogy;
- A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) that integrates academic and social-emotional interventions; and
- Collaborative planning protocols and instructional rounds designed to ensure consistent instructional quality.

Based on the information presented, the petitioners are demonstrably likely to successfully implement the program set forth in the renewal petition.

3. *Affirmations and Statutory Declarations*

The petition contains all required affirmations and statutory declarations consistent with Education Code Section 47605(e), including:

- Nonsectarian programs and employment practices;
- Admission of all students regardless of background or academic ability;
- Compliance with federal and state laws regarding student rights, safety, and special populations; and
- Declaration that ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH shall be deemed the exclusive public employer of its employees for purposes of the Educational Employment Relations Act (EERA).

4. *Reasonably Comprehensive Description of Required Elements*



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Staff found the renewal petition includes reasonably comprehensive descriptions of all 15 required charter elements:

1. Element 1 – Educational Program
2. Element 2 – Measurable Pupil Outcomes
3. Element 3 – Method of Measurement
4. Element 4 – Governance
5. Element 5 – Employee Qualifications
6. Element 6 – Health and Safety
7. Element 7 – Racial and Ethnic Balance
8. Element 8 – Admissions Policies
9. Element 9 – Financial Audits
10. Element 10 – Suspension/Expulsion
11. Element 11 – Employee Retirement System
12. Element 12 – Attendance Alternatives
13. Element 13 – Rights of District Employees
14. Element 14 – Dispute Resolution
15. Element 15 – Closure Procedures

All elements meet the “reasonably comprehensive” threshold required for renewal consideration.

5. *Exclusive Public Employer*

The renewal petition includes the required declaration pursuant to Education Code Section 47605(e)(1) that ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH, the nonprofit public benefit corporation governing both Odyssey Charter School and ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH, shall be deemed the exclusive public employer of all employees of ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH for purposes of the Educational Employment Relations Act (EERA) (Government Code Section 3540 et seq.).

This designation establishes that collective bargaining, employee relations, and labor negotiations are managed by the ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH Board of Directors rather than Pasadena Unified School District. The petition also outlines procedures to ensure compliance with all applicable employment and labor laws, including the Political Reform Act, Brown Act, and conflict-of-interest provisions. District staff reviewed this section and determined that the statement meets the statutory requirement and clearly delineates the governance relationship between the authorizer and the charter operator.



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6. Required Additional Information

The renewal petition includes all required additional information in accordance with Education Code Section 47607(b) and updates all previously approved sections to reflect current state law and operational practices.

These updates include:

- Implementation of universal transitional kindergarten (UTK) in alignment with Education Code §48000(g).
- Compliance with AB 130 (Independent Study and tiered re-engagement procedures).
- Adherence to AB 1505/1507 charter school renewal provisions and the 2025 LCAP/California School Dashboard accountability system.
- Updated ELD standards implementation plan and procedures for the California EL Roadmap.
- Revised financial and audit reporting timelines consistent with the latest California School Accounting Manual (CSAM) guidance.

Staff confirmed that ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH's renewal petition reflects all new statutory requirements enacted since its prior approval, ensuring continued legal and operational compliance.

CONCLUSION

After thorough review, staff find that ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH meets or exceeds the standards for renewal established in Education Code Sections 47605, 47607, and 47607.2.

The petition presents:

- A sound educational program,
- Evidence of academic success and subgroup growth,
- Strong governance and fiscal systems, and
- Full compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

Accordingly, staff recommend that the Pasadena Unified School District Board of Education approve the renewal of ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL - SOUTH for a period of five (5) to seven (7) years, beginning July 1, 2026, with the final term to be determined by the Board.