

Santa Ana Unified School District
STAFF RECOMMENDATION REPORT
Edward B. Cole Academy Charter Renewal Petition
Published January 12, 2026

Edward B. Cole Academy (EBC) submitted a Petition for Renewal to the Santa Ana Unified School District (“District”) seeking authorization for a five-year term from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2031. This report summarizes District staff’s review of the petition and recommendations for consideration by the Governing Board. The Board must take action to either grant or deny the charter within ninety (90) days of receipt of the petition, unless the timeline is extended by mutual agreement of the parties. (Education Code § 47605(b).) Board action is scheduled for January 27, 2026. Staff recommend the Board approve the EBCA petition for renewal for a five-year term.

BACKGROUND

EBS was first authorized by the District in 2003 and began operations in September 2003. EBC’s charter was last renewed in 2018. Pursuant to Education Code section 47607(c), the chartering authority must consider the school’s placement within the state’s charter school performance categories based on the California School Dashboard. EBCA is classified as a middle-tier charter school and seeks renewal under Education Code section 47607.2(b).

LEGAL STANDARD

The standards for analyzing EBC’s petition are stated in Education Code section 47605(c), based on the school’s performance on state and local indicators reflected on the California School Dashboard. The law requires the Board to renew the charter, unless it finds:

- The charter school presents an unsound educational program.
- The petitioners are demonstrably unlikely to successfully implement the program.
- The petition does not contain specified affirmations in Education Code section 47605(e).
- The petition does not contain reasonably comprehensive descriptions of elements (A)-(O).
- The petition does not contain a declaration of whether the charter school will be deemed the exclusive public employer of the employees of the charter school.

SUMMARY AND STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff reviewed EBC's renewal petition, charter, supporting documentation, and site visits to EBC. Staff finds that EBC meets renewal standards, and recommends the Board of Education renew EBC's charters for a five-year term, July 1, 2026-June 30, 2031.

A. Educational Philosophy and Program

EBC's renewal petition articulates an educational philosophy consistent with the purposes of charter schools, emphasizing high academic expectations, equity, and the development of the whole child. The school's program is designed to serve a predominantly low-income, multilingual community and is grounded in the belief that all students can achieve at high levels when provided with rigorous instruction, targeted supports, and a safe, engaging learning environment.

The petition describes an instructional program anchored in standards-aligned core curriculum in English language arts, mathematics, and science, supported by a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) that integrates general education, intervention, and special education services. EBC incorporates GLAD strategies and designated and integrated English Language Development to ensure access to grade-level content for English Learners, as well as inquiry-based instruction, academic discourse, and culturally responsive practices to deepen student engagement and understanding. Personalized learning is supported through the instructional technology and adaptive programs, allowing teachers to differentiate instruction and monitor student progress.

Classroom observations demonstrated alignment between EBC's stated educational program and instructional practice. Staff observed consistent implementation of GLAD strategies, including inquiry charts, observation charts, and Thinking Maps; clearly posted learning objectives and daily agendas; and evidence of structured academic discourse through practices such as Number Talks and guided discussions. Core curricular programs, including Wonder for ELA/ELD, Savvas mathematics, and TWIG science, were in active use across classrooms. Classroom libraries and personalized learning tools, such as Lexia and ST Math, were accessible and integrated into instruction to support literacy and numeracy development.

Instructional aides were present in all observed classrooms, providing additional academic and behavioral support and enabling small-group instruction and differentiation. Visual indicators of a college-going culture were evident throughout the campus, reinforcing high expectations and long-term academic goals for students. EBC is implementing its educational program with fidelity and instructional practices are aligned with the school's stated mission, philosophy, and program design.

B. Measurable Pupil Outcomes

In accordance with Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(B), EBC has established measurable pupil outcomes aligned to state and local accountability systems, including academic achievement, English language development, chronic absenteeism, and school climate indicators. The petition uses multiple data sources, including California School Dashboard results and local assessments, to monitor student performance and guide instructional improvement.

Dashboard data reflect moderate overall academic performance and relative competitiveness within district peers, as well as strengths in school culture and climate indicators. At the same time, the data indicate ongoing challenges in English Language Arts, mathematics proficiency, English Learner progress, and chronic absenteeism, particularly for English Learners and Students with Disabilities. The petition acknowledges these challenges and identifies targeted improvement priorities aligned to the Local Control and Accountability Plan.

C. Methods of Measuring Pupil Progress

As required by Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(C), EBC utilizes a system of assessments to measure pupil progress and inform instructional decision-making. Students participate in statewide assessments, including CAASPP and ELPAC, and the school administers local benchmark assessments and curriculum-embedded measures to monitor academic growth throughout the year.

These practices support finding that EBC has established appropriate methods for measuring pupil progress and is using assessment data to monitor student growth and refine instructional supports in alignment with Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(C).

D. Governance

EBC's governance structure complies with Education Code sections 47604 and 47605(c)(5)(D). The renewal petition describes a governing board responsible for oversight of the school's educational program, fiscal operations, and organizational compliance, and outlines procedures to ensure transparency, accountability, and adherence to open meeting and public records laws.

The petition includes board bylaws, board member information, and conflict-of-interest provisions intended to support effective governance and responsible decision-making. Based on the information provided, EBC's governance framework meets statutory requirements and provides a structure for ongoing oversight and accountability. The District will continue to monitor governance practices as part of its regular charter oversight responsibilities.

E. Employee Qualifications

In accordance with Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(E), EBC affirms compliance with state and federal employment and credentialing requirements. The petition confirms all instructional staff will hold the appropriate Commission on Teacher Credentialing certificates, permits, or authorizations for their assigned positions and that credential documentation will be maintained and made available for District review.

F. Health and Safety Procedures

In accordance with Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(F), EBC's petition includes comprehensive policies and procedures designed to protect the health and safety of students and staff. These include supervision practices, emergency preparedness protocols, and compliance with applicable state and local safety requirements.

G. Student Population Balance

Consistent with Education Code section 47605(d), EBC has established outreach, recruitment, and enrollment practices intended to ensure that the student population served reflects the racial, ethnic, and demographic composition of the surrounding community. The petition outlines efforts to recruit and serve English Learners, students with disabilities, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

H. Admission Policies and Procedures

The petition demonstrates compliance with Education Code section 47605(d) by providing for a nondiscriminatory, open-enrollment admissions process. EBC does not charge tuition or administer entrance examinations, and utilizes a random public lottery when applications exceed available capacity. Policies clearly articulate nondiscrimination and waitlist procedures, ensuring that all students have equitable access to enrollment. EBC's admissions framework meets statutory requirements.

I. Annual Independent Financial Audits

Pursuant to Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(I), EBC affirms compliance with annual independent financial audit requirements and fiscal accountability standards. The petition describes audit processes, timelines, and procedures consistent with the State Controller's K-12 Audit Guide. Based on the documentation provided, EBC's audit practices meet statutory requirements and support ongoing fiscal oversight.

J. Suspension and Expulsion Procedures

In compliance with Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(J), EBC's charter includes suspension and expulsion procedures that outline due process protections for students. Policies identify the grounds for disciplinary action and provide notice and hearing procedures consistent with law. Staff find that EBC's discipline framework meets requires of law.

K. Employee Retirement Systems

In accordance with Education Code section 47611 and section 47605(c)(5)(K), EBCA affirms that eligible certificated employees participate in the State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) and classified employees participate in the Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) and Social Security, as applicable. The charter identifies responsible staff and reporting processes to ensure compliance with retirement system requirements. EBC meets statutory standards for employee retirement coverage.

L. Public School Attendance Alternatives

Consistent with Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(L), EBCA affirms that enrollment at the charter school is voluntary and that students may elect to attend other public school options available through the District. This element meets statutory requirements.

M. Employee Return Rights

Pursuant to Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(M), EBCA's petition clearly states that employment at the charter school does not confer automatic rights of return to District employment, unless expressly authorized by the District. The petition explains the status of seniority, service credit, and leave accrual. The charter meets statutory requirements regarding employee return rights.

N. Dispute Resolution Procedures

In accordance with Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(N), the petition includes dispute resolution procedures that establish a structured process for resolving disagreements between the charter school and the District in a manner intended to promote cooperation and timely resolution.

O. Closure Procedures

As required by Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(O), EBCA's petition outlines closure procedures addressing notification requirements, student record retention, disposition of assets, and fiscal close-out obligations. The charter meets statutory requirements and provide for responsible wind-down planning in the event of closure.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of Education approve Renewal of the EBC Charter for a five-year term, effective July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2031.