



SANTA CRUZ
COUNTY OFFICE OF
EDUCATION
DR. FARIS SABBABH • SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Santa Cruz County Board of Education • 400 Encinal Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060 • Tel (831) 466-5900 • www.santacruzcoe.org

Mr. Ed Acosta • Mr. Edward Estrada • Mr. Greg Larson • Ms. Sue Roth

Mr. Abel Sanchez • Mr. Bruce Van Allen • Ms. Rachel Williams

Student Trustees: Natalie Hofkins and Ruben Marcus

RESOLUTION #25-19

TO APPROVE PETITION TO RENEW CAREER ADVANCEMENT CHARTER SCHOOL

WHEREAS, on April 22, 2025 lead petitioner Denise Guerra-Sanson, Executive Director, Student Program (“Petitioners”) for the Career Advancement Charter School (“Charter School”) submitted a charter petition renewal (“Petition”) to the Santa Cruz County Office of Education Board of Trustees.

WHEREAS, on May 15, 2025, Petitioners submitted a revised charter petition renewal to the Santa Cruz County Board of Trustees seeking approval to renew the school’s charter petition for a five year term, from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2030.

WHEREAS, the Santa Cruz County Board of Education (“County Board”) held a public hearing on May 15, 2025, as required by Education Code section 47605, for the purpose of considering the level of support for the Petition by parents, teachers and other employees of the Charter School within the jurisdiction of the County Office; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Cruz County Office of Education charter school review team have reviewed and analyzed the Petition, including all supporting documentation submitted by Petitioners to the County Office following submittal of the Petition, for legal, programmatic and fiscal sufficiency, and have submitted a Staff Report and Proposed Findings of Fact (“Staff Report”) to the County Board, which Staff Report was made part of the agenda for this meeting and shall be deemed integrated into this resolution as Exhibit A; and

WHEREAS, the County Board and the Charter School have adopted a current Operational Memorandum of Understanding between the County Office and the charter school within the thirty (30) calendar days prior to the Charter Renewal decision

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Santa Cruz County Board of Education, having fully considered and evaluated the Petition and supporting documentation hereby approves the Petition of the Charter School.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Santa Cruz County Board of Education, County of Santa Cruz, State of California, this 12th day of June 2025, by the following vote:

AYES: Estrada, Larson, Roth, Sanchez, Van Allen, Williams

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Acosta

ABSTAIN: None



Abel Sanchez, Board President
Santa Cruz County Board of Education



Dr. Faris M. Sabbah, Secretary
Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools

Charter Board Committee Findings on the Renewal for the Career Advancement Charter Santa Cruz County Office of Education Date: May 21, 2025

Background Information

The petition for the Career Advancement Charter (CAC) is to renew the charter for an age 18 and older school for students who have not yet obtained a high school diploma. The current enrollment of the school is approximately 324 students (with 230 as of 2024-25 census day). The school is located at multiple locations within Santa Cruz county and has expanded in locations since initial authorization. CAC was originally authorized by Santa Cruz COE in 2017 and opened in the fall of 2017. The school is currently in their first charter term that is set to expire on June 30, 2025. The initial 5-year authorization was extended by CDE along with all California charter schools due to the COVID pandemic.

Mission and Purpose

Career Advancement Charter (CAC), operated by the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, serves adults 18 and older who have not earned a high school diploma. CAC offers individualized instruction with a focus on academic achievement, career readiness, and technical skill development to help students secure family-sustaining employment and reintegrate into society as productive members. The program targets marginalized groups, including formerly incarcerated individuals, foster youth, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students.

Program Overview

CAC functions as a non-classroom-based, independent study charter school operating across eight active and one planned site in Santa Cruz County, including correctional and probation facilities. It offers a personalized learning model, flexible schedules, blended digital and paper-based curriculum, and wraparound services. Curriculum aligns with California State Standards and includes CTE pathways in Building Trades, Culinary Arts, Hospitality, and Medical/Dental Assisting. Each student follows a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) designed in collaboration with their assigned teacher.

The school has expanded in campuses and the number of students served. They plan to continue this expansion in the coming two years. This is a material revision to the charter that the Authorizing Board must consider in its decision for charter renewal.

Student Outcomes and Impact

CAC's model supports students in earning high school diplomas, industry-recognized certifications, and transitioning to post-secondary education or employment. While there have been fluctuations in metrics such as graduation rates and persistence data, post-secondary transition rates have steadily increased, reflecting effective transition and career services. Performance data, including CASAS Educational Functioning Level gains and student satisfaction surveys, guide continuous improvement efforts. Most importantly, CAC is rated "Middle Performing" by CDE based on the school's Dashboard data.

Accreditation and Compliance

CAC is fully accredited by WASC and complies with all applicable federal and state laws, including those concerning non-discrimination, special education, and English learner support. The program maintains transparency through annual audits, comprehensive assessments, and detailed LCAP reporting.

Governance and Staff

The Santa Cruz County Board of Education oversees CAC. The school also has a Charter Advisory Council and School Site Council. The school employs a diverse and credentialed team, including academic and CTE instructors, bilingual staff, transition specialists, and administrators.

Financial Overview

CAC is funded through state apportionments and workforce partnerships, with projected revenues meeting the needs of its growing enrollment. While expenditures are expected to slightly exceed revenues in future years, the school maintains a strong ending fund balance, ensuring sustainability.

Renewal Justification

CAC qualifies for charter renewal under the "middle-performing" tier of Education Code Section 47607.2, showing sufficient academic growth, low suspension rates, and increasing post-secondary transitions. The renewal request from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2030, is supported by demonstrated need, proven outcomes, and alignment with community workforce demands. Moreover, the school does not have any concerns based on the two remaining charter renewal criteria: 1) serving all students and 2) fiscal and accountability requirements

Santa Cruz County Office of Education Review Process

Review Criteria: The Santa Cruz County Office of Education Charter School Board Committee considered the petition according to the requirements of the Education Code and other pertinent laws, guidance established in the California Code of Regulations Title 5, County Board Policy and Administrative Regulations.

All charter schools requesting renewal must clearly show that they meet eligibility requirements set forth in the Charter Schools Act and further defined in AB 1505. Depending on the findings adopted by the County Board, a charter may be renewed or denied renewal based on these criteria found in EC 47605, 47607 and 47607.

The following questions guide the authorizer's review of the charter petition and their recommendation for renewal:

1. Does the petition and the supporting documentation reflect a sound educational program for pupils? Are the petitioners likely to successfully implement the program set forth in the petition?

Does the petition contain a reasonably comprehensive description of all required elements and affirm the conditions of EC 47605(e)?

2. Is the charter eligible for renewal under the High, Middle, or Low performing category and has the charter provided an argument with sufficient evidence that it has attained the criteria for renewal under that category? Has the charter attained measurable increases in academic achievement schoolwide and for numerically significant subgroups served by the charter school, and if applicable, does the school have strong postsecondary outcomes?

3. Does the charter school have discriminatory enrollment or dismissal practices? Does the charter have substantial fiscal or governance issues?

The full renewal criteria can be found at Source: CDE Charter Schools Performance Category Data Files <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ch/performcategorydf.asp> Retrieved 11-16-24

COE Board Charter Committee Findings on the Renewal for the Career Advancement Charter

Note: An Authorizer may only deny pursuant to EC 47607.2(b) upon making written findings that: (1) The charter school has failed to meet or make sufficient progress toward meeting standards that provide a benefit to pupils of the school; AND (2) Closure is in the best interest of the pupils; AND (3) The decision provided greater weight to the performance on measurements of academic performance.

Written factual findings specific to this particular petition along with supporting facts are presented in the next section of this report.

The review team established that the Career Advancement Charter has met the criteria for renewal. While the school has not outperformed all state academic indicators, student growth as evidenced by verified data, including DataQuest, has shown clear and convincing evidence that the students have grown academically. Additionally, the charter school has presented a sound educational program, they are likely to successfully implement the educational program, the petition contains the required affirmations in Ed Code 47605(e), and there is no evidence of fiscal or governance factors or that they are not serving all pupils.

The petition was found to contain a reasonably comprehensive description of all elements, and the review team has concluded that the petition is fully compliant.

Santa Cruz County Office of Education Findings of Fact

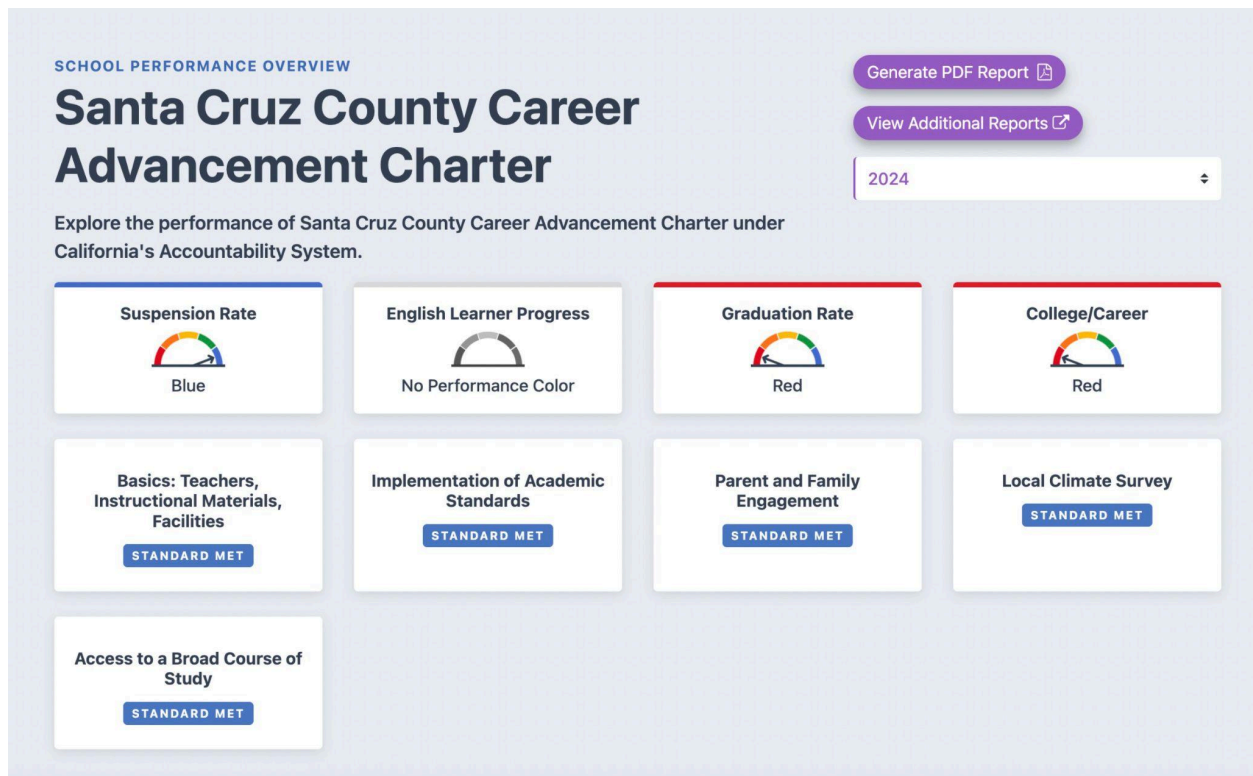
Finding 1:

CAC is designated by CDE as Middle Performing under EC 47607.2(b) Evaluation Purposes 3 Middle Performing EC 47607.2(b) The school was not found eligible for high performing under EC 47607(c) nor low performing under EC 47607.2(a); therefore, the chartering authority:

A. Shall consider schoolwide performance and performance of all subgroups on the Dashboard, while providing greater weight to performance on measurements of academic performance in determining whether to grant a charter renewal.

As an ages 18 and older charter school, the California School Dashboard for CAC consists of just the four following indicators: Graduation Rate Indicator; Suspension Rate Indicator; College/Career Readiness Indicator, and Local Indicators.

Since students entering Career Advancement Charter are those who have not had success completing traditional high school programs, their graduation rate and college/career indicator rates underperform the state and are in red for growth and performance. This is to be expected from the unique population the school serves. The school has demonstrated in their petition the steps they are taking to improve these indicators, and as described, their local indicator CASAS data show improvement.



B. Shall also consider clear and convincing evidence with verified data showing either: 1. The school achieved measurable increases in academic achievement, as defined by at least one year's progress for each year in school OR 2. Strong postsecondary outcomes, as defined by college enrollment, persistence, and completion rates equal to similar peers.

Verified data were utilized in this renewal consideration [EC 47607.2(c)]. The charter school has met the renewal criteria specified in EC 47607.2(b). In reviewing the schoolwide performance

and performance of all numerically significant student groups on the California School Dashboard and the verified data provided by the charter school, CAC has provided clear and convincing evidence that the school is making one year's progress through their DataQuest data. Although not verified data, CASAS local student performance data has also shown growth for CAC students.

Finding 2: The charter school has sufficient finances to remain viable and has met other accountability requirements. They have limited deficit spending in the coming years along with an expanding population. Therefore, this level of spending is not likely to cause fiscal challenges for the school.

Finding 3: The charter is serving all students and expansion is likely to allow the charter to continue serving a student population who have not been successful in traditional high school settings. The demographics of the student population represent students across our county and the school has clear procedures for enrolling students. Moreover, the material revision of expanded campuses and increasing numbers of students is likely to fill an existing need not served by other programs.

Recommendation

Based on the evidence provided in the charter petition, the Santa Cruz COE Charter Board Committee recommends the petition for Career Advancement Charter renewal be approved. As a middle performing charter, they are eligible for a 5 year renewal until June 30, 2030.