

SUBJECT

Odyssey Charter School Proposed Charter Amendment

APPLICABLE STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY

I.C. §33-5206(8)
IDAPA 08.02.04.302

BACKGROUND

Odyssey Charter School (Odyssey) is a new public charter school authorized by the Public Charter School Commission (PCSC). Approved to open in fall 2013, Odyssey is implementing project-based learning with just under 200 Idaho Falls students in grades 6-10.

As of December 2013, when the school presented its annual update, Odyssey's 6th grade had 49 students and no waiting list.

DISCUSSION

Odyssey will present a proposed amendment to the school's charter.

Odyssey is proposing a charter amendment that would increase the school's rate of expansion. If the amendment is approved, Odyssey will have the option to increase the 6th grade and overall enrollment caps at a faster rate beginning in 2014-2015.

The proposed enrollment cap increase would allow Odyssey to enroll 75 students (rather than 50 students) in 6th grade in 2014-2015, representing a 25 student increase in the school's overall enrollment cap. Odyssey would increase the 6th grade cap from 75 to 100 in 2015-2016, again resulting in an overall enrollment cap increase of 25 students for that school year.

The amendment would increase Odyssey's rate of growth, but not the overall enrollment cap already approved for Year 5 and thereafter.

IMPACT

If the PCSC approves the proposed amendment, Odyssey will immediately begin operating under the amended charter. If the PCSC denies the amendments, Odyssey could appeal this decision to the State Board of Education, or could decide not to proceed any further.

STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of the performance certificate development process, the PCSC approved a general standard that schools whose accountability designation falls below "good standing" will not be eligible for expansion. Odyssey does not yet have a performance certificate or formal accountability designation, and because this is Odyssey's first year of

operation, there is no academic data available for review. However, PCSC staff is concerned about Odyssey's academic, operational, and financial status.

To date, Odyssey has not achieved accreditation candidacy, which is required of new public charter high schools in Year One of operations. AdvancEd personnel recently noted that Odyssey is not yet prepared for a readiness visit, let alone the candidacy visit that is required to achieve candidacy status. If Odyssey does not achieve candidacy status, other schools to which students may transfer will not be obliged to recognize course credits earned at Odyssey.

Additionally, Odyssey is still working with the SDE to resolve thirteen (13) special education findings, many of which appear to have significantly compromised the provision of services. Board member turnover has been unusually high; ten (10) members have resigned since January 2013. Due in part to a major accounting error and lower than anticipated enrollment, Odyssey's financial situation is tenuous.

As a result of these issues, Odyssey's performance certificate, which is being presented as a separate agenda item, includes conditions the school must meet to remain in operation through its initial performance certificate term. PCSC staff suggests that an enrollment increase may be more appropriate after the conditions, if adopted as part of the performance certificate, are met.

Although additional enrollment would likely benefit Odyssey financially, PCSC staff notes that enrolling additional students would put the additional students, as well as additional taxpayer dollars, at risk in the event the school should fail to continue operations. Due to the nature of the challenges Odyssey must resolve in order to provide a strong, effective educational opportunity for students and taxpayers, staff recommends that Odyssey's proposed amendment be denied.

COMMISSION ACTION

A motion to approve the proposed charter amendments as submitted by Odyssey Charter School.

OR

A motion to deny the proposed charter amendments as submitted by Odyssey Charter School on the following grounds: _____.

Moved by _____ Seconded by _____ Carried Yes _____ No _____

April 17, 2014

Dear Charter School Commission:

March 17, 2014

The Odyssey Charter School Board of Directors proposes changing the enrollment cap in 6th grade for the 2014—2015, 2015—2016, and 2016—2017 school years. Right now, our cap for the 2014-2015 school year is 50 students and we would like to raise it to 75 students. The enrollment cap for 6th grade of the other two years is 75 students each and we would like to raise them to 100 students each. There are several reasons for this. Also, our retention rate of 6th graders has been the highest of any of the grades at 94%. Most of the 6th grade students will stay at the school for many years so they will add stability to the enrollment. An additional 6th grade would be a great asset to the school.

Our first year of enrollment had over 50 students apply for the 6th grade. We believe that our enrollment for next year will be even higher. One of the reasons is that Bonneville Joint School District No. 93, the school district where most of our students reside, had a bond election for a new middle school and high school. The bond did not pass. This means that the district will likely be moving to split sessions for the middle school, high school and possibly some elementary schools. This will create an interest greater than last year's interest in a 6th grade. We feel we can find an additional 25 6th grade students in each of the coming years.

We can easily accommodate the extra students in the subsequent grades as they move up since our enrollment caps are at 100 students per grade by the time these students progress. This means that increasing the 6th grade enrollment caps does not require increasing the enrollment caps of other grades.

We ask that the Idaho Public Charter School Commission approve this increase in 6th grade enrollment.

Signed,

Karl Peterson

Principal
Odyssey Charter School

Tab 7: Admission Procedures

Admission and Over-enrollment Procedures

Idaho Code § 33-5205(3)(j)

Odyssey Charter School has identified the following admission procedures:

Odyssey Charter School will be open to all students on a space-available basis. No student will be denied admission based on ethnicity, creed, gender, disability, or place of residence. No out-of-state students will be enrolled.

Odyssey Charter School will substantially follow the model admission procedure identified by the Idaho State Board of Education in the initial year and for every year thereafter.

Enrollment Capacity Chart

Year	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Total Capacity by Year
1 st	50	100	75	50	50	0	0	325
2 nd	50 <u>75</u>	100	100	75	50	50	0	425 <u>450</u>
3 rd	75 <u>100</u>	100	100	100	75	50	50	550 <u>575</u>
4 th	75 <u>100</u>	100	100	100	100	75	50	600 <u>625</u>
5 th	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	700

The initial enrollment caps in year 1 reflect that Jefferson Joint School District 251 starts middle school at 6th grade, so Odyssey assumes that many students from that school district will come when they start 6th grade. Other 6th grade students may come to participate in Odyssey programs that are not offered in their elementary schools. Idaho Falls, Bonneville, and Shelley school districts start middle school in the 7th grade. It is assumed that most students will enroll at Odyssey at this grade since it is the time when most students will be changing schools anyway. Smaller numbers in 8th through 12th grades reflect the assumptions that recruiting students in older grades will probably be more difficult and that Idaho Falls Joint School District's Compass Academy will be the choice of some of the high school students in the Idaho Falls School District. Students outside of Idaho Falls School District will not have the option of attending the

Odyssey Charter School