

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL ACCREDITATION STATUS AND NOTICE OF INTENT TO REVOKE THE CHARTER

What action did the Public Charter School Commission (PCSC) take on June 17, 2014, with regard to Odyssey Charter School (Odyssey)?

The PCSC voted unanimously to direct its staff to issue a notice of intent to revoke Odyssey's charter on the grounds that Odyssey has failed to meet Condition 2 in its performance certificate by the timeline specified.

What led to the PCSC's decision to issue a notice of intent to revoke Odyssey's charter?

Public charter schools and their authorizers are required by law to sign performance certificates. Performance certificates are legal documents clarifying the rights and duties of each party, as well as the specific quality measures to which the charter school will be held accountable.

During the process of negotiating the terms of a performance certificate, specific conditions for necessary improvements may be included, along with timelines by which such conditions must be met. Idaho Code Section 33-5209C(7) provides that "[a] charter may be revoked by the authorized chartering entity if the public charter school has failed to meet any of the specific, written conditions for necessary improvements established pursuant to the provisions of 33-5209B(1), Idaho Code, by the dates specified.

Condition 2 in Odyssey's performance certificate provides that "Odyssey will achieve accreditation candidacy status during the 2013-2014 school year. This condition must be met by June 30, 2014."

A letter issued by Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) on June 11, 2014, states that "Odyssey Charter is not approved to move to the candidacy step to procure accreditation." No additional readiness visit can be completed before fall 2014 because such visits must take place while school is in session, and Odyssey has recessed for the summer. Therefore, Odyssey cannot and will not achieve candidacy status by the June 30, 2014, deadline.

Detailed materials considered by the PCSC for the June 17, 2014, meeting are available online [here](#).

How does the accreditation process work?

Idaho statute requires that all public high schools be accredited.

The accreditation process begins when a school applies for candidacy status. Schools are directed to do some preparatory work including gathering documents as evidence of certain quality elements, then NWAC conducts a readiness visit. It is typical and desirable for a new, public charter school to achieve accreditation candidacy status during its first year of operations.

After achieving candidacy status, a school becomes eligible to proceed toward full accreditation by providing evidence to NWAC that it meets additional quality standards. Full accreditation is typically achieved during a public charter school's second year of operations.

A school in applicant status is not considered accredited. A school in candidacy status is considered accredited, as is a school that has achieved full accreditation status. A school's accreditation status is never retroactive to previous school years.

Does issuance of the notice of intent to revoke mean that Odyssey will be closed next year?

Not necessarily. Idaho statute provides that when a charter school authorizer issues a notice of intent to revoke, the school must be given a reasonable opportunity (30 days) to respond. Within 30 days of receiving the written response, the authorizer must hold a public hearing on the matter. Following that hearing, the authorizer will make a final decision regarding whether or not to revoke the charter. If revocation does occur, the school may appeal that decision to the State Board of Education.

If Odyssey's charter is revoked, Odyssey will no longer be authorized to operate a public charter school and will cease to receive funding from the state.

Will Odyssey's failure to achieve accreditation candidacy status affect students?

Students who attended Odyssey's high school classes (grades 9 and up) during the 2013-14 school year may be affected by Odyssey's failure to achieve accreditation candidacy status, because Odyssey is considered a non-accredited school.

Course credits earned at a non-accredited school may not be recognized by districts to which former Odyssey students transfer. Whether or not to recognize Odyssey's credits is a decision made by the receiving district's board of directors.

Accreditation candidacy status is not retroactive, so even if Odyssey achieves candidacy in the future, credits earned during the 2013-14 school year will still be considered to have been earned at a non-accredited school.

Students who need to re-take coursework from accredited schools may wish to consider summer school or night school options offered by their local school districts, and/or coursework available through one of Idaho's public virtual schools.

How can I learn more?

You are welcome to contact Public Charter School Commission Director Tamara Baysinger at (208) 332-1583 or tamara.baysinger@osbe.idaho.gov for additional information.