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Contact:
charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us
(360) 725-5511

JANUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER

5 Things You Should Know

The beginning of 2021 marks the eighth year of operation for the Washington State Charter School Commission and much has been accomplished during that time. Here are five things we want to make you aware of as we embark on the new year. We are sending out newsletters on a quarterly basis, so keep an eye out to stay up to date on Commission and charter public school information.

1. A New Charter Public School in Vancouver, WA

Charter public schools are created in a rigorous application process that includes review by an 11-person, bipartisan Commission who set clear criteria for prospective charter school operators. The Commission hosted the New Charter School Application Resolution meeting on Thursday, December 17, 2020, where one non-profit, Rooted School Vancouver, was approved to open a school in the 2022-23 school year in Vancouver, WA.

To learn more about the New Charter School Application and to view Rooted School Vancouver's submitted application, please visit: <https://charterschool.wa.gov/applying/application-information/>

2. Charters Can Offer Transitional Kindergarten

Charter public schools provide education choices for families seeking resources that best empower their children to learn and thrive. To strengthen that capability, the Commission adopted its Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program at the December 2020 Commission meeting. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has defined TK as a program of kindergarten for children not yet age five who do not have access to high-quality early learning experiences prior to kindergarten. We know the importance of kindergarten readiness on both short-term academic outcomes and long-term life outcomes and are excited that charter public schools can offer this much needed support to students in their communities. The Commission has built upon OSPI's "Five Pillars of Transitional Kindergarten" while considering the unique considerations of the Charter School Act and charter public school operations. Over the course of the next months, the Commission will be developing a process for operational schools to petition the Commission to operate TK at their school.

To access the Commission's Transitional Kindergarten Policy, please visit: <https://charterschool.wa.gov/operating/transitional-kindergarten/>

To learn more about Transitional Kindergarten from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, please visit:

<https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/support-programs/early-learning-washington-state/state-funded-full-day-kindergarten/transitional-kindergarten>

3. The Commission Renews Four Charter Contracts

Every Charter public school authorized in Washington has executed a contract between a qualified provider and the Commission that outlines the roles, powers, responsibilities, and performance expectations for the school. Each charter public school is subject to regular renewals on a five-year cycle by the Commission, part of a robust accountability and transparency framework. Upon successful execution of those contracts, charter public schools can earn renewal to continue operating, ensuring that they are constantly working to uphold and improve student outcomes. Four charter public schools were renewed for a second charter contract at the January 23, 2021, Commission meeting: Rainier Prep, Spokane International Academy, Summit Olympus and Summit Sierra. These four schools were the first in Washington to be eligible for renewal since charter contracts must be renewed every five years based on positive (strong) performance academically, operationally, and financially.

To learn more about the charter school renewal process, visit:

www.charterschool.wa.gov/operating/charter-contract-renewals/

4. The Commission Continues to Engage in Educational Equity Work

The Commission is committed to closing opportunity gaps between the state's most and least privileged groups of students within the educational system. It has moral and legal obligations to cultivate charter schools where socio-economic status and protected groups status such as race, gender, language, sexual orientation, national origin, and disability cease to be a predictor of academic and life outcomes. Educational equity benefits all students and our entire community.

The Commission adopted an Educational Equity Policy in June of 2019 and will hire an outside contractor with professional expertise in diversity, inclusion and equitable outcomes and use it as the foundation to update the policy and integrate into the Commission's strategic planning process.

To learn more about the Commission's Educational Equity Policy, please visit:

<https://charterschool.wa.gov/about-the-commission/equity/>

5. Washington State Auditor Finds Commission in Full Compliance

The Office of the Washington State Auditor (SAO) published the agency's Accountability Audit Report for July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2020. The SAO's mission is to provide citizens with independent and transparent examinations of how state and local governments use public funds and develop strategies that make government more efficient and effective. The report states that "...Commission operations complied, in all material respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, and its own policies, and provided adequate controls over the safeguarding of public resources."

To view the State Auditor's full Accountability Audit Report, please visit:

<https://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch/Home/ViewReportFile?arn=1027372&isFinding=false&sp=false>

In the News & Upcoming Events

[Extend window of opportunity for new public charter schools | The Seattle Times](#)

Commission Monthly Meeting, Thursday, February 18, 2021

To view the Commission's Monthly Meeting Schedule, please visit:

<https://charterschool.wa.gov/events/meeting-schedule/>

About Washington State's Charter School Commission

Washington State's Charter School Commission was formed with the mission of creating a rigorous and comprehensive proposal process and to hold charters accountable to high standards of quality. The Commission is an independent state agency that exists to authorize and oversee high quality public charter schools throughout Washington with an emphasis on schools designed to expand opportunities for at-risk students, providing leadership and oversight that is consistent with national principles and standards of charter school authorizers and the provisions of Washington's charter school law.

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