

Hernando County School District Charter Contract Renewal-Evaluation of Indicators

Charter School: B.E.S.T. Academy	Contract Expiration Date: June 30, 2023
Final Renewal Report Date: January 3, 2023	Current Term of Charter: 2020 -2023

Overall, a summary or total of the evaluation indicators rating reflect that the charter school has received the following:

Meets the Standard Partially Meets the Standard Does not Meet the Standard

Based on the evidence provided by the charter school and verified by the Sponsor, the overall recommendation is to:

Approve the renewal of the charter Not approve the renewal of the charter

Below is a detailed report for each of the evaluation indicators based on evidence provided by the charter school. The evidence includes information obtained from the charter school and verified by the Sponsor (District) in consideration of a recommendation for renewal of the charter contract.

Section 1: Has the School Been Successful in Increasing Student Achievement

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
X		

1.a. Did the school make progress in meeting its established educational goals during the term of the charter?

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
X		

Supportive evidence requested:

- Clear quantitative evidence that the school has made satisfactory progress in student academic performance objectives.
- Evidentiary support (Response should include state assessment results for appropriate grade levels. Additional assessment data may also be used).
- A detailed plan to address overall academic performance weaknesses, if identified, as well as increased performance for specific content areas should be included.
- Data should be disaggregated and include at a minimum, grade, gender, ESE, socio-economic status, and minority populations.

Strengths:

- Increased 12 percentage points in ELA proficiency
- Increased 23 percentage points in Math proficiency and 78% of students made learning gains in Math

Concerns/Recommendations:

Continue to look at proficiency and learning gains by grade level and cohort to create a more precise continuous improvement plan.

School Comments:

1.b. Did the charter school meet statewide accountability requirements (no required Corrective Action Plan or School Improvement Plan under F.A.C.6A-1.099827)?

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
X		

Supportive evidence requested:

- Statewide accountability results for each of the past five years should be included. Please include Learning Gains and Learning Gains of the Bottom Quartile.

Strengths:

- Tested 100% of student population
- No subgroups below the 41% Federal Percent of Points Index and no significant gap between any subgroups

Concerns/Recommendations:

- None

School Comments:

1.c. Did the percent of students who were proficient or higher in reading, writing, math and science meet or exceed the state and district average?

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

Supportive evidence requested:

- Please provide a comparative summary of schools within a five-mile radius including a five-year comparison on student performance for the FSA English Language Arts and FSA Mathematics assessments, Science assessments and any End-of Course assessments. The data should include Learning Gains and Bottom Quartile Learning Gains.

Strengths:

- Math proficiency is 14 points higher than the district average and 12 points higher than the state average

- ELA proficiency is 4 points higher than the district average and even with the state at 53%

Concerns/Recommendations:

- Science decreased 33 points to 32% which is 19 points below the district and 20 points below the state average. A recommendation would be to determine the root cause of the decrease and develop a targeted plan to increase student achievement.

School Comments:

Currently there are no middle schools within a five-mile radius. As stated on page 8 under 2021/2022 data there was a significant drop due to a substitute science teacher in the classroom for the majority of the school year. The teacher who historically taught science, moved to math and data showed a significant increase in our math performance due to that change.

1.d. Did the percentage of students who were proficient or higher in reading, writing, math, and science meet or exceed that of similar district schools.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
X		

Supportive evidence requested:

- Please provide evidence related to your assessment scores by year for the past five years, including the percent of students at the unsatisfactory, partially proficient, proficient, and advanced levels.

Strengths:

- BEST earned 59% of total school grade points which is the highest middle school in our district

Concerns/Recommendations: None

School Comments:

1.e. Identification of the school’s goals for the term of the charter.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
X		

Supportive evidence requested:

- Did the school meet its student achievement objectives each year? If the school did not meet its objectives, please provide an explanation as to why and what the school will do differently in the future to help ensure goals will be met.

Strengths: BEST increased in 8/9 school grade components in the 21-22 school year and 6/9 components since the 2017-2018 school year.

Concerns/Recommendations: None

School Comments:

1.f. Over the term of the charter, was the school’s educational program and design aligned with the mission and guiding principles of the school? Please describe.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
X		

Supportive evidence requested:

- Initial charter school application (or amendments/appendices and contract including Academic Accountability Plan.

Strengths:

Concerns/Recommendations: None

Section 2: Is the School an Effective, Viable Organization?

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

2.a. Has the school competently and effectively managed its finances?

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

Supportive evidence requested:

- The school should provide a financial statement that discloses the costs of administration, instruction, and other spending categories for the charter school that is understandable to the general public that will allow comparison of such costs to other schools.
- The response should address any negative findings from independent audits, and/or budget deficits in any of the fiscal years the school has been in operation, and how the school responded.

Strengths:

- Since the new administration has started, monthly financial reports have been submitted in a timely manner.

Concerns/Recommendations:

- For Fiscal Year 2021-22, the final Profit and Loss Statement (similar to an Income Statement) reflected an overall loss of \$8,756. The charter schools checking account, which is the account used primarily for all operating costs, has been slowly decreasing to cover month to month expenditures. The Money Market/Savings account reserve has not had activity and has maintained the same account balance with the exception of minimal interest earnings for the past two years.
- The financial reporting for Fiscal Year 2022-23, as of November 30, 2022 the charter school has reported a gain of \$4,499 on the Profit and Loss Statement. However, in most months expenditures exceed revenues resulting in a very tight margin.
- The charter will need to continue efforts to boost enrollment to increase income. The charter currently has student education beyond the classroom fees. However, Student Education Beyond the Classroom (SEBC) fees should be evaluated to ensure fees collected reflect the actual cost of student activities. Additionally, financial records do not appear to reflect all student fees are paid in a timely manner.

School Comments:

There has been a great deal of change that occurred with new leadership and all new instructional staff at BEST Academy. Change has been possible due to ESSER Funds, increased enrollment, and the collection of **all** student fees. Precise planning has gone into the utilization of our ESSER funds. Grants are reimbursed and typically lag behind based on checks clearing and the requirements for submitting reimbursement requests that may impact a monthly deficit on occasion. The district has been very supportive in keeping us informed and providing assistance related to the above-mentioned concerns.

With the immediate need to get BEST Academy on track this year, year two should prove to be a year with fewer monthly spending needs.

2.b. Describe the school’s financial management systems and staffing arrangement for financial management and reporting.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
X		

Supportive evidence requested:

- Staffing plan for the next 5 years of renewal.

Strengths:

Concerns/Recommendations:

School Comments:

2.c. Describe the school’s success in achieving a balanced budget during the last five years of the contract period.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

Supportive evidence requested:

- As verified by Finance, based on previous year annual budgets (2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022).

Strengths:

Concerns/Recommendations:

- For the Fiscal Years 2018/19 & 2019/20 the charter school was unable to present a balanced budget. The charter noted new security legislation implementation created challenges in those years.
- Current Budget does not have any cushion to handle any unexpected additional expenses.

School Comments:

We are actively working to increase enrollment at BEST through a variety of targeted actions. As stated earlier, *“The Money Market/Savings account reserve has not had activity and has maintained the same account balance with the exception of minimal interest earnings for the past two years”*.

2.d. Describe the school’s financial management and oversight for the term of the new charter.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

Supportive evidence requested:

- Description of financial management and oversight.
- Charter’s Financial Policies and Procedures

Strengths:

- Has a good oversight plan in place with the reconfiguring of office staff and use of outside CPA.

Concerns/Recommendations:

- There does not appear to be a financial plan in place to increase income/revenue or a review of reducing expenditures that do not appear to be necessary for day to day operations.

School Comments:

Day to day budget is managed by the school Principal with oversight of the school board and contracted CPA. We follow the state spending guidelines of the red book which provides Florida school districts with a uniform chart of accounts for financial, cost and budgetary reporting, and forms the basis for grant budgeting and reporting. Please see Appendix 5 for our Policies and Procedures.

2.e. Provide projected budgets, estimated revenues and expenditures, and projected cash flow for the next five years of the charter renewal.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

Supportive evidence requested:

- Five Year Budget Projection

Strengths:

Concerns/Recommendations:

- The charter school needs to develop a marketing plan to increase student enrollment in addition to a financial plan to increase income and control spending.

School Comments:

The board has maintained ongoing conversations to continually improve marketing efforts and increase student enrollment. Currently, the school sends out mailers several times a year, utilizes social media and community events for increased exposure to the school’s programs, places banners throughout the community with support of local businesses, among other things.

2.f. Describe how the school has been effectively governed.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

Supportive evidence requested:

- The strength and stability of the school's governing board, along with a discussion of board turnover during the term of its charter (including reasons for that turnover), should also be detailed.
- If the charter school contracts with an Education Service Provider, please discuss the governing board's record of providing appropriate oversight, detailing specifically the steps taken to monitor the performance of the management organization. Did the board use a formal review process and what were the essential metrics? Please include copies of the final reviews.
- Identify and discuss specific board actions and systems that successfully supported the school in its efforts to improve student achievement. These may include financial, educational, or legal challenges that the school has faced.

Strengths:**Concerns/Recommendations:**

- There was no discussion of the strength and stability of the school's governing board, along with a discussion of board turnover during the term of its charter.
- Did not identify and discuss specific board actions and systems that successfully supported the school in its efforts to improve student achievement.

School Comments:

The questions that were asked in the governance section of the renewal application are answered on pages 15 and 16. The school does not have a management organization.

However, in response to the concerns/recommendations in section 2f (1), at the end of June 2021, the previous board chair resigned and encouraged several other board members to resign at the same time. The vice chair, Patricia Laird, quickly gathered additional board members to continue governance of the school. One of those new board members, Rhonda Nienhuis, was unable to complete the board training and therefore resigned. A second board member, Jason Kahler, resigned part way through the 2021-2022 school year due to conflict.

In response to concern number 3, the principal of BEST Academy has an allotted time during each board meeting to present the activities, concerns, and needs of the school. The board then discusses those items and makes decisions in the best interest of the staff and students of the school. Examples include, but are not limited to, discussion and consolidation of office staff to better serve the school, increase efficiency, and reduce expenditures. The board elected to designate funds to complete purchasing of one to one devices to enhance educational opportunities for all students as well as spend additional funds toward student reward systems and additional tutoring based on progress monitoring data. Board members further participate in all school activities including parent engagement nights (back to school night, open house, recruitment activities), student dances, the Christmas parade, and many other seasonal activities. The board supports all marketing efforts to increase student enrollment including

participation in designing and dispersing recruitment mailers, community events such as the Hernando County Fair, and photography at events for social media.

Section 3: Compliance & Faithfulness to the Terms of the Contract and of applicable Law

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

3.a. School Enrollment Process

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

Supportive evidence requested:

- Please describe how the school has established a fair and appropriate pupil enrollment process. Include a copy of your application, lottery and enrollment policies and procedures for the past five years.
- Include plan/s to increase enrollment if not at or near capacity.

Strengths:

Concerns/Recommendations:

- **Did not include a plan/s to increase enrollment**

School Comments:

As stated above, our team has ongoing conversations to continually improve marketing efforts and increase student enrollment. Currently, the school sends out mailers several times a year, utilizes social media and community events for increased exposure to the school’s programs, places banners throughout the community with support of local businesses, and participates in community activities to spread the word about BEST. Targeted recruitment nights will occur beginning in January to bring prospective students to the school and provide information to families about our program. Currently, we have a list of families planning to attend.

3.b. The charter school has fulfilled its legal obligations related to access and services to students with disabilities, including students with a 504 Plan.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
X		

Supportive evidence requested:

- Explain how the school has fulfilled its legal obligations related to access and services to students with disabilities, including students with a 504 Plan. Include information regarding special education staffing, the percentage of students receiving special education and 504 services, and the number of special education students who have left your school and their reason for leaving.

- Explain how the school has utilized the Problem-Solving/Response to Intervention process.

Strengths:

- B.E.S.T. Academy currently has a certified ESE teacher on staff providing services to students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
- B.E.S.T. Academy does attend the MTSS meetings and participates in the professional development provided by the district MTSS Coordinator.

Concerns/Recommendations:

- Further clarification is needed pertaining to the interventions provided to tier 2 versus tier 2 students. During the remediation class, it is stated that school wide areas of academic concern are addressed, but how are individual academic needs addressed. If following the Hernando County MTSS flowchart and plan, IXL is not on the Hernando County reading plan for intervention. It could be added and Kerri Littlefield, district MTSS Coordinator could assist with this process. How are interventions documented and what does the problem-solving process look like beyond just grouping students? Are the teachers providing the intervention for tier 3 reading certified or endorsed?

School Comments:

3.c. The charter school has fulfilled its legal obligations related to access and services to English Language Learners.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
X		

Supportive evidence requested:

- Explain how the school has fulfilled its legal obligations related to access and services to English Language Learners. Describe the steps the school undertakes to provide support to students who are limited English proficient. Documentation should include summaries of home language survey data and English Language assessments conducted by the school (i.e. number/percent of students assessed, number/percent found to be limited English proficient for each year of the charter).

Strengths:

- B.E.S.T. Academy does reach out to the ESOL Lead assigned to their school to provide assistance as needed to ensure that newly enrolled student registration paperwork is in alignment with District forms, and that a standard procedure is followed.

Concerns/Recommendations:

School Comments:

3.d. The charter school maintained a low number of suspensions (in-school and out-of-school) as a result of behavioral interventions, strategies, or initiative (ex. PBS).

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

Supportive evidence requested:

- Include summary data of the number of suspensions issued for the last three years of the current charter. Include both in-school and out-of-school suspensions.

Strengths:

- Mrs. Young is compliant with reporting SESIR and following the Student Code of Conduct.

Concerns/Recommendations:

- Prior to this school year with Mrs. Young as the Principal, prior school administrators were not compliant with reporting SESIR incidents or disciplines. Since Mrs. Young has become Principal, she is well versed on SESIR reporting and compliance with following the Student Code of Conduct. I see this standard as meeting the standard by the end of the school year.

School Comments:

3.e. Compliance with the Florida statutes related to Student with Reading Deficiencies and student progress.

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
	X	

Supportive evidence requested:

- Describe how the school is fulfilling its legal obligations under Florida statute to students with reading and math deficiencies.

Strengths:

- There is dedicated time in the schedule to provide interventions.

Concerns/Recommendations:

- In section 3b, states that students receive 30 minutes of remediation in Critical Thinking classes, using IXL but here in section 3e, students are provided IXL 3 times a week in Technology. Could you provide clarity on when interventions are provided? What support and interventions provided are teacher-directed?

School Comments:

Students receive teacher directed intervention daily based on school wide data during period 1(30 min x 5). Students are grouped based on grade level and school wide progress monitoring data. ELA and Math both distribute daily lessons to staff and present those throughout the week. Mini assessments and team discussion occurs to reteach or start on another standard. Critical Thinking class is fluid and students move based on data and services needed. Three times per week in Technology class students work on IXL (like iReady) lessons which are based on the students' individual needs (50 min x 3). IXL is closely monitored, rewards are given in the form of tickets and prizes are rewarded based on progress, effort, and time spent. Students have access to IXL at home for additional time.

3.f. Provide evidence of professional development activities

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
		X

Supportive evidence requested:

- Professional Development Timeline of Activities (current school year)

Strengths:

- The school is moving ahead with district coach support this year to help address identified teacher needs.
- A TOSA for PD has been assigned to best to help ensure the school receives all pertinent information and has a direct point of contact for immediate assistance.

Concerns/Recommendations:

- There has not been any documentation of PD provided to teachers at BEST within the last three years.

School Comments:

Year 2022/23 professional development has occurred as stated on page 26. We utilize HCSD professional days, district Inservice days, and faculty meetings for our training. Our staff participate in training opportunities provided by the school district. BEST staff has struggled with use of the TRACK system due to us being outside of the network. This has been corrected and we will update the TRACK System with all training that has occurred this year. District staff has been very helpful in supporting BEST with PD this year and we appreciate being included in all the emails about training opportunities.

Section 4: Legal

Meets the Standard	Partially Meets the Standard	Does Not Meet the Standard
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NA		
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Supportive evidence requested:

- Provide information concerning any and all pending and threatened legal actions involving the school, including an estimate of potential exposure.

Strengths:

Concerns/Recommendations:

School Comments: