



## **Transfer Request Report Charleston Advancement Academy**

### **I. Introduction**

Charleston Advancement Academy (CAA) submitted a timely request to transfer its charter to Limestone Charter Association (Limestone) for the 2022–23 school year. Section 59-40-115 of the South Carolina Charter Schools Act allows a charter school to transfer sponsors if all parties under the contract agree to the dissolution. The South Carolina Public Charter School District (PCSD) Board of Trustees Transfer Policy provides that the Board votes on transfers annually on a case-by-case basis no later than the Board’s February meeting. The Transfer Policy requires the Board to consider performance data from (1) the most recently completed school year; (2) previous years of operation; and (3) the current school year. The PCSD Board may also consider, without limitation, the reasons for the transfer, the readiness of the receiving sponsor to accept the transferring school, and the capacity of the school to implement the transfer. After considering the required and optional information, the PCSD Board may, but is not required to, grant the transfer request.

### **II. Background**

Charleston Advancement Academy submitted a charter application to the PCSD on February 1, 2017, under the name Pathways in Education - South Carolina, and was approved by the PCSD Board of Trustees on May 20, 2017. The School entered into a ten-year charter contract beginning July 1, 2017, and expiring June 30, 2027. Charleston Advancement Academy is in North Charleston and as of the School’s 45th day, enrolled 424 students.

The mission of CAA is to provide a comprehensive alternative high school education to at-risk students which leads to students’ attainment of a diploma, acceptance to college or pursuit of a career, and culminates in each student having a positive impact in their community.

The School is an Alternative Education Campus (AEC) serving high school students until they turn 21. According to the website, students work at their own pace to complete credits. The School requires students to log a minimum of 30 hours per week in Edgenuity, an online learning platform, and of those 30 hours, 15 hours must be completed on campus. Charleston Advancement Academy’s goal is for its students to earn South Carolina state-issued diplomas.

The School is currently within the 20% demographics requirement, serving 62.97% minority students, based on the School’s 45th-day data. In comparison, Charleston County School District (CCPSD), CAA’s resident district, is 49.78% minority students. The School’s percentage of

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students identified as Pupils in Poverty (PIP) is 70.52%, while 49.78% of students served in CCPSD are identified as students in poverty. The School currently serves 48 students with disabilities, 23 with 504 plans, and 54 Multilingual Learners (MLs), also based on the School's 45th day.

### III. Annual Report

On June 14, 2022, the District provided its performance evaluation to CAA for 2020–21 and noted the following results. Please see the attached report, dated June 14, 2022, as Appendix A, "Performance Reports." As noted in the District's report, the School did **not** provide data for its goals in its 2020–21 Annual Report (Section 3.2 of the Report in Appendix A). The District observed that the graduation rate was **not** increasing or near levels required by the charter based on available data. With respect to certification requirements, the School has been compliant for the last three years. With respect to Governance, the School was **not** in compliance with public reporting requirements but complied with demographic requirements. For Finance, the District reviewed three key measures. The School met the minimal sustainable fund balance and the industry-standard cash on hand but **did not meet** the submission of a timely audit. Finally, the District noted that the School was in compliance with special education requirements, however, it did not report to the District safety-related events, namely lockdowns due to weapons or credible threats on campus.

### IV. Charter Goals

District staff reviewed the goals presented by the School in its charter. Staff identified a number of issues in reviewing the charter goals including, but not limited to:

1. Incongruencies between the goals in the charter and those included in CAA's annual report to the District;
2. Goals that are not measurable;
3. Measures or metrics without any baseline or benchmark data;
4. Measures for which the District was unable to independently verify data; and
5. Two key critical goals focused on re-engaging students to ensure they graduate and earn credits per year.

To that end, the District primarily examined the two critical goals most intensively to determine the performance of the School related to the following.

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## CAA CRITICAL GOALS

*The mission of CAA will be to re-engage students who have dropped out—or are on the verge of dropping out of—high school. CAA educational program will align with this mission, and two critical goals and objectives will help monitor and measure CAA’s success towards achieving its mission: CAA will strive to meet a target graduation rate of 65% or a goal of 80% or greater, and a target of 40% of the School’s students earning at least 6.0 credits per academic year to be on track to achieve graduation within four years.*

The District reviewed existing data relative to these two critical goals and noted the following outcomes, outlined in Tables 1 through 4.

Table 1. CAA 4-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, 2019 to 2022

	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>School (CAA)</b>	1.10%	4.40%	10.10%	8.80%
<b>District</b>	72.30%	71.20%	75.90%	71.70%
<b>State</b>	81.10%	82.20%	83.30%	83.80%

Source: [SC Report Card](#)

Table 2. Number of Credits Earned or Maintained School Year 2021–22

Grade	No. Students	6.0 CR	% Earned/Maintained
<b>9</b>	129	3	2.33%
<b>10</b>	225	5	2.22%
<b>11</b>	224	2	0.89%
<b>12</b>	125	6	4.80%
<b>All</b>	<b>719</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2.23%</b>

Source: PCSD PowerSchool Report

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Table 3. Number of Credits Earned or Maintained School Year 2020–21

Grade	No. Students	6.0 CR	% Earned/Maintained
9	47	1	2.13%
10	169	14	8.28%
11	141	22	15.60%
12	83	14	16.87%
<b>All</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>10.39%</b>

Source: PCSD PowerSchool Report

Table 4. Number of Credits Earned or Maintained School Year 2019–20

Grade	No. Students	6.0 CR	% Earned/Maintained
9	79	3	3.80%
10	138	55	39.86%
11	123	76	61.79%
12	93	57	61.29%
<b>All</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>30.61%</b>

Source: PCSD PowerSchool Report

A review of the data reveals that CAA has not met the critical goals outlined in the charter, rather graduation and credit attainment has declined.

To independently verify the performance of students with respect to the various goals and metrics, staff had difficulty due to the sheer volume of entering and exiting students. Specifically, staff noted 771 enrollments in the school year 2022 (2021–22), with possible duplicated students as well as 313 exits in the school year 2022, with possible duplicated students. There were 431 students enrolled on August 18, 2021, and 458 enrolled on June 27, 2022 (first and last day of school). Furthermore, there were 700 unduplicated students enrolled on either June 15, 2021, or June 27, 2022 (the last days of school for the two school years, respectively). Of those 700

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unduplicated students, 197 unduplicated students were enrolled on both dates, and 503 unduplicated students were **not** enrolled on both end-of-school dates. Comparing the datasets, the District found that approximately 36 students were continuously enrolled from the beginning of the 2021–22 school year through the end of the school year. Given the limited number of continuously enrolled students and without baseline or benchmark data, it is difficult to provide cogent analyses with respect to the School’s measures.

## CAA GOALS AND MEASURES

It is important to note that due to the fluidity of enrollments, the District was unable to discern which students were continuously enrolled with precision. The following information reflects publicly available data, annual report card data, or testing vendors’ data files. Where applicable, the District distinguishes between **testing vendor and public assessment data** (which reflects test scores for a particular school year) and **graduating cohort data** (which reflects the performance of the students who were in the four-year adjusted graduating cohort). Students in the cohort may or may not have taken the assessment at CAA, as scores count wherever and whenever that twelfth-grade student took the assessment (which may be as early as middle school).

### Academic Measures

*Measure 1: Percent of students that are enrolled on the 45th day of the school year and enrolled on the first day of testing, with no break in enrollment, who score at least 70 percent on the English II EOCEP assessment.*

*Measure 2: Percent of students that are enrolled on the 45th day of the school year and enrolled on the first day of testing, with no break in enrollment, who score at least 70 percent on the Algebra I assessment.*

*Measure 3: Percent of students that are enrolled on the 45th day of the school year and enrolled on the first day of testing, with no break in enrollment, who score at least 70 percent on the Biology I assessment.*

*Measure 4: Percent of students that are enrolled on the 45th day of the school year and enrolled on the first day of testing, with no break in enrollment, who score at least 70 percent in the U.S. History and Constitution EOCEP assessment.*

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According to publicly available testing data from the South Carolina Department of Education, between 21 and 42 students took an End-of-Course examination in the 2021–22 school year. Those data are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. End of Course Examination Results

Subject	Number Tested	Scored F (0-59)	Scored D (60-69)	Scored C (70-79)	Scored B (80-89)	Scored A (90-100)
Algebra	42	88.10%	11.90%			
Biology	29	82.76%	6.90%	10.34%		
English 2	21	28.57%	19.05%	28.57%	19.05%	4.76%
USHC	41	78.05%	17.07%	4.88%		

Source: [SC Department of Education Test Results](#)

The data revealed that 88% of students who took Algebra in 2021–22 scored an F with the remaining percentages scoring D. No students scored C or higher in Algebra. With respect to Biology, 10.34% of students (or roughly three students) scored a C, with the remaining scoring F and D. No students scored an A or B in Biology. There was more variance for English with roughly half of the students scoring C or higher and the other half scoring D or F. Finally, in US History and Constitution, 4.88% of students scored a C; no students scored a B or A; and the rest scored D or F. There were no distinguishable differences for subgroups, or subgroup data were not available due to small numbers of students.

For the 2020–21 school year, there were fewer than 20 students who took Algebra or English to produce public results. For Biology, 20 students were tested and 10% (n=2) scored C. No students scored B or A. Fifteen percent scored D and the remaining 75% scored F. For USHC, the District noted the following grades from 2020–21 for the 64 students who took the exam.

Table 6. 2020–21 USHC Test Results, Grade and Percentage and Number of Students

F	D	C	B	A
79.76%, 51	9.38%, 6	4.69%, 3	3.13%, 2	3.13%, 2

Source: [SC Department of Education Test Results](#)

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According to CAA’s Fall 2022 report card, of the **graduating cohort** of students, 30.5% scored C or higher in English, 15.3% scored C or higher in Algebra, and 14.2% scored C or higher in Biology. No data was available for USHC on the Fall 2022 report card.

Similarly, in the Fall 2021 report card, of the **graduating cohort** of students, 32.9% scored C or higher in English, 23.4% scored C or higher in Algebra, 18.3% scored C or higher in Biology, and 13.6% scored C or higher in USHC.

### Growth Indicators

*Measure 5: Percent of ninth grade students with pre- and post-assessments that show gains on the STAR Assessment in English and Math*

*Measure 6: Percent of US Government students who score proficient on the US Civics Exam*

*Measure 7: Percent of Non-English Proficient (NEP) and Limited English-Proficient (LEP) students to show gains on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment.*

The District does not have access to CAA’s STAR or US Civics data. With respect to the performance of LEP, the school was rated “Average” on the Report Card issued in the Fall of 2022.

### College and Career Readiness Indicators

*Measure 8: Percent of 11th grade students, who have been enrolled for at least 90 instructional days, who score “college-ready” on the ACT or Accuplacer assessments.*

According to ACT testing vendor files, two students took the ACT in Spring 2022; neither scored 20 or higher (the score deemed “college ready”). The District did not find any students from the ACT testing vendor files who took the ACT in the 2020–21 school year. Three students took the ACT in 2019–20, but none of those students scored 20 or higher.

According to CAA’s report card released in Fall 2022, two students in the **graduating cohort** of 215 students scored 20 or higher on the ACT. In the Fall 2021 report cards, the data indicate that one student in the **graduating cohort** scored 20 or higher on the ACT. The District has no data for Accuplacer assessments.

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*Measure 9: Percent of 12th grade students, who have been enrolled for at least 90 instructional days, who score Gold or above on the WIN assessment or at least 31 on the ASVAB.*

According to publicly available assessment data, 33 students completed the “Ready to Work” (career readiness assessment) in the 2021–22 school year. Of those 33 students, 33.3% (n=11) received **no** certificate and 66.7% (n=22) received a certificate. Of the 22 students who received a certificate, 48.5% scored bronze, 18.2% scored silver, and no students scored gold. There were no publicly available data for the 2018-19 school year, and no assessments were administered in 2019–20. (Source: [SC Department of Education Ready to Work Data](#))

According to CAA’s report card released in Fall 2022, 28 students in the **graduating cohort** of 215 scored silver or higher on the career readiness assessment. For the Fall 2021 report card, the data indicate that four students in the **graduating cohort** scored silver or higher on the career-readiness assessment.

According to the ASVAB testing vendor files, three students took ASVAB, and of those, only one student scored above 31 in the 2021–22 school year. There were no testing vendor files for 2020–21 or 2019–20 for CAA.

According to CAA’s report card released in Fall 2022, two students in the **graduating cohort** of 215 scored 31 or higher on the ASVAB. According to the Fall 2021 report card, one student scored 31 or higher on the ASVAB; and one student scored 31 or higher on the ASVAB from the 2020 report card.

### Graduation Rate Indicators

*Measure 10: Percent of students that enrolled in CAA prior to their senior year (as measured by credits attained) that are in the four-year adjusted cohort to either graduate or re-enroll the following year.*

*Measure 11: Percent of students that enrolled in CAA prior to their senior year (as measured by credits attained) that are in the five-year adjusted cohort to either graduate or re-enroll the following year.*

Measures 10 and 11 do not have a clear measure of success, rather they are indications of the number of students who could be in each cohort. Additionally, the measure of the students is by the number of credits earned prior to their enrollment with CAA. Based upon a review of report

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card data and an analysis of enrollment data in PowerSchool, the District found that for the school year 2021–22, 19 students graduated out of a cohort of 215. Of those 19, three students enrolled prior to their senior year. For the 2020–21 school year, 18 students graduated out of a cohort of 178, with three students enrolling prior to their senior year.

*Measure 12: Percent of students entering CAA as seniors (by credits) to graduate within 12 months of enrolling in the school.*

Given the fluidity of enrollments, the District does not have concrete data on the percentage of seniors who graduated within 12 months of enrollment. The District does note, as outlined above, that there were 19 graduates included in the 2021–22 report card, with three entering prior to their senior year and the remaining 16 entering during their senior year. With that said, however, the District is unable to discern if those seniors graduated within 12 months of enrollment.

#### Student Engagement Indicators

*Measure 13: Average number of credits toward graduation achieved by students each term.*

Based upon PowerSchool Reports, the District noted the following with respect to earned credits.

2021-22: 1.50 Credits earned on average, per year  
2020-21: 2.14 Credits earned on average, per year  
2019-20: 3.19 Credits earned on average, per year  
2018-19: 3.36 Credits earned on average, per year

Source: PCSD PowerSchool Report

*Measure 14: Percent of students that enroll in CAA after a gap in school attendance of 40 days or more to finish the school year with CAA and either graduate (including summer graduates) or re-enroll the following year (i.e. is present on the 45th instructional day).*

Given the fluidity of enrollment, the District does not have concrete data, however, does observe that many students enroll, unenroll, then re-enroll.

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## V. Report Card Data

The overall school rating was Unsatisfactory on the 2021–22 report card serving grades 9-12, and 453 students. English Learners’ Progress was Average. Academic Achievement was Unsatisfactory. College and Career Readiness was Unsatisfactory. Preparing for Success metric was Unsatisfactory. The Graduation Rate was Unsatisfactory. Due to federal waivers for the 2019–20 and 2020–21 school years, no report card ratings were given. Report card data for the 2018–19 school year reveal that CAA received no overall rating, but was rated as Unsatisfactory for Academic Achievement, Preparing for Success, and Graduation Rate. (See [screportcards.com](http://screportcards.com)).

## VI. Financial

District staff reviewed the School's recent financial status. The School has experienced steady enrollment increases since its inception and continues to project steady enrollment gains. July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022 financials reflect a net change in fund balance in the amount of \$1,534,366. June 30, 2022, Financial Statements show a cash balance of \$3,325,872. The school had an FY 2022 ending fund balance of \$3,452,637. The School had one financial finding in its FY 2022 financial statements. Additional prior year findings and financial information are outlined in the chart below.



Table 7. CAA Financial Data

	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>ADM</b>	153.92	363.53	446.85	452.69
<b>WPU</b> s	203.52	472.64	580.03	601.05
<b>Cash Balance</b>	\$126,014	\$1,435,749	\$2,271,675	\$3,452,637
<b>Days Cash on Hand</b>	28	180	270	365
<b>Fund Balance</b>	\$122,475	\$617,111	\$1,918,271	\$3,452,637
<b>Fund Balance %</b>	8%	23%	74%	138%
<b>Instruction %</b>	39%	26%	44%	45%
<b>Support %</b>	61%	73%	51%	43%
<b>Findings</b> (See Appendix C)	2	2	1	1

## VII. Compliance

### Federal Programs

Based on the 2022 Federal Programs Monitoring and Support Continued Growth Index (CGI), CAA is currently a Tier 2 school in terms of federal programs compliance. Tier 2 is a status that equates to low risk. Some strengths found within the CGI were a clean State consolidated monitoring audit from the previous year, 2021–22, as well as compliance with educator-certified staffing percentages per the Charter Act. Some weaknesses found within the CGI were compliance submissions submitted past due 40% of the time and reimbursement submissions rejected 27% of the time. Charleston Advancement Academy is currently receiving support from the District federal programs team to include mandatory attendance at all District federal programs training, including the Federal Programs University, and quarterly check-ins led by District staff. These quarterly check-ins with District staff are one on one with the School, and CAA is provided with information such as detailed balances, outstanding task support, reimbursement feedback, and unclaimed fund discussions. Staff from CAA have participated in these events.

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### Special Populations

Based on the 2022 Special Education Capacity & Growth Index (CGI), CAA is currently a Tier 3 (high level of support) due to a changeover in the school Special Education Coordinator. Noted strengths include timeliness of required submissions, service provider certifications, and IEP compliance sampling for the 2021–22 school year. Weaknesses of note for 2022–23 include appropriate special education certifications and proper caseload ratios from the first semester but have since been corrected. The School is currently receiving support from our Special Education staff to include heightened compliance monitoring, monthly technical assistance training, and weekly check-ins. These weekly check-ins with District staff are one-on-one, and CAA staff have participated in these check-ins.

Based on the 2022 Multilingual Learner Capacity & Growth Index (CGI), CAA is currently a Tier 2 (moderate level of support). Some areas of strength found for 2021–22 were the School's policies and procedures, staff development, and PowerSchool coding. A weakness for 2021–22, which increased CAA's required support, was not following the state-mandated timelines for parent notification, the establishment of plans, and implementing services/accommodations for new students. The School is currently receiving support from District staff to include monthly technical assistance training and monthly check-ins. These monthly check-ins are one-on-one, and CAA staff have participated in these check-ins.

### VIII. Impact of the Transfer on PCSD Students and Families

Not applicable to this transfer request.

### IX. Reasons for Transfer

The School's stated reasons for transfer are stated in its transfer request correspondences dated September 30, 2022, June 6, 2022, and December 7, 2022, and attached here as Appendix B.

### X. Readiness of the Receiving Sponsor to Accept the Transferring School

Limestone is in its first year sponsoring charter schools in operation. For the school year 2022–2023, Limestone accepted three transfers, two from the Charter Institute at Erskine (Institute), and one from Orangeburg Consolidated School District. Transfers are scheduled to be effective at the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1 when the transferring sponsor ceases receiving funding for the school and the receiving sponsor begins receiving funding.

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Email correspondence between Limestone and the Institute references special education data just beginning to be transferred in September 2022, well after school had started. Further, correspondence between the Institute and Limestone indicates Institute staff continued to provide assistance to Limestone in the transfer process until October 7, 2022. Additional correspondence between legal counsel for Limestone and legal counsel for the Institute indicate the transfer process included disagreement about significant issues such as each sponsor’s responsibilities and duties. These disagreements appear to have impacted student services because student records appear not to have been transmitted in a timely fashion, for example.

#### XI. Capacity of the School to Implement the Transfer

As of the date of this report, CAA is operating with an Interim Director, which has placed three of its administrative leaders on leave with pay. The School closed one of its campuses January 3 to January 6, 2023, without explanation. At a special called board meeting held on January 9, 2023, CAA revealed that it was rescinding the lease it signed for another facility. The status of its facility agreements is unclear to the District. The CAA Board also approved a recruiting process for a new school leader.

Following the most recent board election, the District received numerous concerns from CAA faculty and staff. It also received some concerns from parents and students. District staff aggregated the concerns into a letter requesting a response from CAA. The letter from the District and the response from CAA are attached here as Appendix B, “Transfer Correspondence.”

#### XII. Conclusion

The PCSD Board Policy does not limit the Board to consideration of the information included in this Report. Charleston Advancement Academy has been provided a copy of this Report and may submit rebuttal materials by 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 17, 2023. The School’s rebuttal materials will be shared upon receipt by District staff.



Respectfully submitted,

January 12, 2023

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris", written in a cursive style.

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Chris G. Neeley  
Superintendent, PCSD

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John R. Payne", written in a cursive style.

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John R. Payne  
Deputy Superintendent, PCSD