

Distance Education Flexibility for SY2021 and Beyond

Rationale:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in March of 2020, all public schools in the state of Utah were moved to online or distance-based learning. This model has continued through the end of the 2019-2020 academic year.

In looking ahead to the 2020-2021 academic year and beyond, the Utah State Charter School Board (SCSB) is exploring ways to meet the various needs of schools, communities, and students in these unprecedented times. The Mission Statement of the SCSB is “Advancing choice, innovation, and student success through rigorous authorizing and supportive oversight.” SCSB staff proposes to use these unprecedented circumstances as an opportunity to fulfill this mission statement by providing schools short-term flexibility in the mode of delivery of instruction and providing opportunity for successful practices to continue.

Currently, each public charter school is authorized to operate under a Charter Agreement held with the SCSB. Many Charter Agreements may prohibit or hinder different mechanisms of instructional delivery. We propose providing schools flexibility in their model for a specified amount of time, with defined expectations in order to continue the model beyond the specified amount of time. Each school will still be held to such elements in their current Charter Agreement, such as maximum enrollment, grades served, current district served, and the location for which they have been approved to operate. Schools are to not use this short-term flexibility to expand their service area. Schools will also be held to all laws, rules regulations, and directives applicable to all public schools.

This flexibility offered to all charter schools authorized by the SCSB will continue through at least SY2021, as dictated by circumstances. At the end of the general flexibility offered to all schools (either at the end of SY2021 or the end of SY2022), successful models will be allowed automatic amendments to their Charter Agreements, thus allowing them to continue using the innovative models they have developed, and thus fulfilling the vision of the SCSB to ensure that “Every student has access to an excellent education that meets their unique learning needs.”

Required Student Academic Outcomes for Continued Program Authorization	
Performance Comparison Between Authorized Program and Distance Program	Students in the distance program are performing at or above the performance of their peers in the authorized program in at least math and ELA/reading.
Performance Comparison to 10 Surrounding Schools	Students in the school (distance program and authorized program) are performing at or above the average or median performance of the 10 nearest comparable schools (in terms of grade levels or school type) on state accountability.