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For more information regarding the content of this material, please contact the Government Affairs Division by phone at 916-319-0821 or by email at gad@cde.ca.gov.



August 29, 2025

Via: Electronic Mail
ckazanis@cde.ca.gov

Ms. Cindy Kazanis, Director
Analysis, Measurement, and Accountability Reporting Division
California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Suite 5408
Sacramento, CA 95814

***Re: Request and Justification for Waiver of Federal Accountability Requirements for
Odyssey Charter School (CDS No. 19-10199-6116883) and
OCS- South (CDS No. 19-64881-0136945)***

Dear Ms. Kazanis,

Odyssey Charter School and OCS- South (“Charter Schools”) formally submits this request for a waiver pursuant to Section 8401 of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (“ESEA”), 20 U.S.C. 7861, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (“ESSA”), Pub. L. No. 114-95 of the federal accountability requirements outlined in Section 6311 of the ESEA.

On January 8, 2025, the Altadena neighborhood surrounding Odyssey Charter School was tragically destroyed by the Eaton Fire. Although the Odyssey campus buildings were spared, they sustained extensive smoke, ash, and debris damage and were deemed unsafe for occupancy. The Eaton Fire also ravaged the OCS-South campus, destroying more than 75% of classrooms, offices, and grounds, rendering the school a complete loss.

These catastrophic events displaced 470 students from Odyssey and 370 students from OCS-South, forcing all operations into three separate temporary facilities not designed for school use. This abrupt and prolonged disruption—combined with the trauma of widespread home loss and community devastation—created circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the Charter Schools and directly impacted our capacity to meet federal accountability requirements, specifically the mandate to test 95% of students in grades three through eight on the CAASPP.



On January 8, 2025, the Altadena neighborhood surrounding Odyssey Charter School campus, home to 470 students, was tragically destroyed by the Eaton Fire in Altadena. Although the campus buildings did not burn, the campus suffered extensive smoke, ash, and debris damage, and given its proximity to the burned areas of Altadena, was deemed unsafe for occupancy. The Eaton fires, unfortunately, ravaged through the OCS- South school campus, and burned over 75% of its classrooms, offices, and grounds thereby rendering the entire school a total loss.

As a result, the Charter Schools had to relocate and shift its entire operations from Altadena onto three separate temporary locations in order to provide students with an educational experience over the course of the second semester which spanned January through June 2025.

This extreme disruption in the learning process, the devastating loss of many homes and buildings in the community, and direct impact on students' and staff overall mental health and wellbeing, directly affected and hindered Odyssey's capacity to meet the required federal accountability obligation of administering the CAASPP to 95% of enrolled students in grades third through eighth. The inability to use the Charter School's campus justifies this waiver request.

Steps Taken to Meet Assessment & Accountability Requirements

Despite these extraordinary challenges, the Charter Schools made every good-faith effort to comply with federal assessment requirements:

- Administered the CAASPP to 3rd grade students using paper-pencil format due to inadequate internet capabilities at temporary sites.
- Adjusted daily instructional schedules for grades 4–8 to minimize the stress of testing in makeshift classrooms.
- Communicated with families about testing requirements and encouraged participation despite ongoing hardships.
- Provided additional staffing support to facilitate testing logistics across multiple temporary sites.

Even with these measures, it was not possible to achieve a 95% participation rate. Many families, coping with trauma and loss, requested parent-guardian exemptions from testing. These exemptions, while understandable, significantly lowered overall participation rates despite the diligent efforts of staff and administrators.



Federal Programs Affected

This waiver seeks relief from accountability requirements tied to administration of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), specifically:

- Section 1111(c)(4)(E)(i) which requires the annual measurement of the achievement of not less than 95 percent of all students, and of all students in each subgroup of students enrolled in public schools; and
- Section 1111(c)(4)(E)(ii) which requires the measurement, calculation, and reporting of the academic indicator in factoring the requirement for 95 percent student participation in the statewide assessments.

How the Waiver Will Advance Student Achievement

Granting this waiver will not diminish accountability but will ensure fairness by recognizing that the Eaton Fire created circumstances that prevented compliance despite our best efforts.

Approval will allow the Charter Schools to:

- **Focus on Student Recovery:** Redirect resources to academic and social-emotional supports for students most affected by trauma and displacement.
- **Maintain Instructional Continuity:** Use internal assessments, benchmarks, and classroom-based data to monitor growth and guide targeted interventions.
- **Sustain Equity Commitments:** Continue transparent reporting of achievement data by subgroup to families and the community, consistent with ESSA's intent.
- **Rebuild Learning Stability:** Prioritize student well-being and stability to ensure long-term academic success and resilience.

Commitment to Transparency and Accountability

The Charter Schools remain fully committed to transparency in reporting student outcomes. Preliminary CAASPP results from spring 2025 reflect that, despite the hardship, Odyssey students performed at high levels across English Language Arts, Math, and Science, demonstrating resilience and the quality of instruction provided by our educators. These results underscore that while participation fell short due to disaster-related circumstances, academic achievement remains strong.



ODYSSEY CHARTER SCHOOL
Spring 2025 CAASPP Administration
Preliminary Score Data

	ELA		MATH		CAST (Gr 5 & 8)	
# Enrolled (K-8)	299		299		299	
# Enrolled (3-8)	232		232		70	
# Tested	203		202		59	
Participation Rate	87.50%		87.07%		84.29%	

	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Level 1- Standard Not Met	18	8.9%	28	13.9%	3	5.1%
Level 2- Standard Nearly Met	23	11.3%	43	21.3%	13	22.0%
Level 3- Standard Met	65	32.0%	44	21.8%	24	40.7%
Level 4- Standard Exceeded	97	47.8%	87	43.1%	19	32.2%

OCS- SOUTH
Spring 2025 CAASPP Administration
Preliminary Score Data

	ELA		MATH		CAST (Gr 5 & 8)	
# Enrolled (TK-8)	205		205		205	
# Enrolled (3-8)	134		134		53	
# Tested	101		101		41	
Participation Rate	75.37%		75.37%		77.36%	

	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Level 1- Standard Not Met	15	14.9%	19	18.8%	3	7.3%
Level 2- Standard Nearly Met	18	17.8%	28	27.7%	15	36.6%
Level 3- Standard Met	31	30.7%	26	25.7%	15	36.6%
Level 4- Standard Exceeded	37	36.6%	27	26.7%	8	19.5%

These preliminary results offer a glimpse into the strong academic capabilities of our students, their resilience in dealing with unexpected challenges, and are a testament to the caliber of high-quality instruction provided at Odyssey Charter Schools. Despite our best efforts, however, a substantial number of families opted to request a parent-guardian exemption from testing for their student. A greater than usual parent-guardian exemptions were received and entered into the TOMS system which lowered our overall participation rate and prevented us from meeting the 95% testing requirement.



Odyssey Charter respectfully requests the California Department of Education (“CDE”) submit this waiver request to the U.S. Department of Education for consideration. Granting this waiver would provide essential support to our school community as we continue to recover from this unprecedented disaster. We deeply appreciate the CDE’s partnership and assistance with this waiver request. Please feel free to contact me at (626) 209-5633 or carlosg@ocsmail.org if you require any additional information or documentation.

On behalf of our entire community, thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carlos Garcia Saldaña, Executive Director
Odyssey Charter Schools



Odyssey Charter Schools Governing Board

A California Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, August 13, 2025; 6:00pm

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84273726268?pwd=gZ0xBVe3SPGArNICbdTmzOt7UZFeol.1>

Meeting ID: 842 7372 6268 Passcode: 97KZxe

ACCESS TO PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

Public records related to the open session agenda are distributed to the Board 24 hours before a special governing board meeting and are available to the public at (<https://odysseycharterschool.org>) Materials may also be inspected by the public at the Front Office at Odyssey Charter and OCS- South during business hours.

1. Call to Order

2. Board Roll Call

Board Member	Present	Absent
Dr. Joretta Joseph, Governing Board Chair <i>514 Stonehurst Drive, Altadena, CA 91001</i>		
Dee Bohreer, Parent Representative <i>418 Wildrose Avenue, Monrovia, CA 91016</i>		
Erin Fortin, Parent Representative, OCS- South <i>1023 Ethel Street, Glendale, CA 91207</i>		
Michael Oshea, Parent Representative, OCS- South <i>1388 Lucile Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90026</i>		
Natalia Quintana, Secretary & Parent Representative <i>2627 Deodar Circle, Pasadena, CA 91107</i>		
Dr. Mikala Rahn, Community Member <i>4381 Scandia Way, Los Angeles, CA 90065</i>		
Caitlin Reilly, Community Member <i>550 Hickory Lane, Pasadena, CA 91103</i>		
OCS Staff Attendees		
Dr. Carlos Garcia Saldana, Executive Director <i>575 W. Altadena Drive, Altadena, CA 91001</i>		

3. Public Comment

(The public may address the OCS Governing Board regarding any item within the Board's jurisdiction whether or not that item appears on the agenda.)

4. Action Items

- a. Review and consider approval of Request for Waiver of Federal Accountability Requirements for Odyssey Charter School

- b. Review and consider approval of Request for Waiver of Federal Accountability Requirements for Odyssey Charter School

5. Discussion Item

- a. Executive Director Updates

6. Adjournment

Notice

Odyssey Charter Schools is nonsectarian in its programs, admissions, employment practices, and all other operations. The school does not discriminate against any person on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability. To request disability-related accommodations under the ADA, please call Ms. Latoya Presley at (626) 229-0993 at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled board meeting.

Certification of Posting

I, Dr. Carlos Garcia Saldaña, Executive Director of Odyssey Charter Schools, hereby certify this agenda was disseminated on Monday, August 11, 2025 via email and posted to the schools website.



NOTICE OF FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY WAIVER REQUEST

Request for Waiver of State and Federal Accountability Requirements

Odyssey Charter School and OCS- South ("Charter Schools") are hereby notifying the public of its intent to submit a request for a waiver from the federal and state accountability requirements under Section 8401 of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 ("ESEA"), 20 U.S.C. 7861, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 ("ESSA"), Pub. L. No. 114-95, for the 2024-25 school year, due to the severe and ongoing impacts of the Eaton fire that has devastated our community. Specifically, the Charter School is seeking a waiver of the following sections of the ESEA:

- Section 1111(c)(4)(E)(i) which requires the annual measurement of the achievement of not less than 95 percent of all students, and of all students in each subgroup of students enrolled in public schools; and
- Section 1111(c)(4)(E)(ii) which requires the measurement, calculation, and reporting of the academic indicator in factoring the requirement for 95 percent student participation in the statewide assessments.

What is the Waiver Requesting?

We are requesting a waiver from the following federal and state accountability requirement:

- 95% of students in eligible grade levels participate in the CAASPP assessments (ELA, mathematics, science) for the 2024-25 school year

Additionally, the Charter School is requesting a waiver from federal accountability requirements specifically those related to the participation rate in the above listed assessments.

Why is the Waiver Needed?

The Eaton fire has caused significant disruption to our Charter School community, displacing students, staff, and families and severely hindering the Charter School's ability to administer the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress ("CAASPP") to 95% of all eligible students as required by state and federal law, within the mandated testing timelines.



How Will the Waiver Benefit Students?

The waiver will allow the Charter Schools to be exempt from federal accountability requirements and penalties for failing to meet the 95% participation rate in the CAASSPP assessments.

The Charter School has been able to implement greater flexibility in tailoring its instructional strategies to meet the current needs of students, and be better positioned to rebuild and strengthen its academic program to effectively support students during this recovery period. By prioritizing students' socio-emotional wellbeing focused on community, and relationships with peers and teachers, OCS- South ensures students needs are addressed by teachers and staff.

How Can the Public Provide Feedback?

The public is invited to review the details of this waiver request and provide feedback. Comments and input from parents, staff, and community members will be considered before submitting the waiver request to the California Department of Education ("CDE") and the U.S. Department of Education.

All comments should be submitted via email to waiver@ocsmail.org.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and encourage you to provide input as we work together to support our students through these challenging times.