

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

November 19, 2025

Agenda Item: Student Participation in Assessment and Chronic Absenteeism: Choice Charter School

State Board Goal: Goal 5

State Board Role/Authority: The Department of Education has the authority to schedule charter presentations for State Board consideration under Iowa Code section 256.1 (Department's authority to exercise general supervision over Iowa education) and Section 256E.3 (Department's duty to "monitor the effectiveness of charter schools"). Additionally, the State Board has the authority to make "inquiries and investigation of the charter school" under Section 256E.10(1).

Presenter(s): Thomas Mayes, General Counsel
Barbara Ohlund, Executive Officer
Division of PK-12 Learning

Attachment(s): None

Recommendation: It is recommended the State Board hear and discuss this information.

Background: The Iowa Department of Education noted significant discrepancies regarding student participation in assessment and chronic absenteeism between Choice Charter School and other online and alternative schools.

On June 19, the Department discovered a high number of students needing a Reason for No State Assessment entered into the Assessment Accountability application. Choice Charter School's response on June 19 revealed potential discrepancies in the entry/exit records, leading to the Department to investigate further.

On July 9, the Department sent a letter instructing Choice Charter School to respond by July 30. The school was directed to explain its low assessment participation rate (below 50%) and high chronic absenteeism rate (over 80%). The response required school policies and procedures, the reasons for low participation with parental documentation for excusals from participating in statewide assessments, and a plan for improving both rates.

Choice Charter School responded on July 28 with its attendance and testing policies. The school explained that its prior year's plan included 16 geographically distributed testing sites and multiple parental notifications. The school attributed the low assessment participation rate to parental refusals, though it used this classification even without formal documentation, reasoning that student participation was dependent on parental transportation. Additionally, the response cited a history of student disengagement and/or chronic absenteeism as contributing factors to both the assessment participation and chronic absenteeism rates. For the upcoming year, the school's plan includes using House File 190 to permit remote proctoring of statewide assessments.

On September 24, the Department sent Choice Charter School a letter requesting representatives to appear before the State Board of Education on November 19 to give the school an opportunity to address concerns regarding attendance and assessment participation. Choice Charter School was given the opportunity to provide presentation materials by October 29 to include in State Board materials.