

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

June 18, 2026

Agenda Item: Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School Renewal Performance Report

State Board Goal: Goal 5

State Board Role/Authority: Per Iowa Code section 256E.10, the Iowa State Board of Education is responsible for monitoring each charter school's performance and compliance to determine whether the school's contract should be renewed up to and not to exceed five years.

Presenter(s): Tina Wahlert, Division Administrator
Division of PK-12 Learning

Barbara Ohlund, Executive Officer
Division of PK-12 Learning

Attachment(s): One

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board approve Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School's Renewal Performance Report.

Background: Pursuant to Iowa Code section 256E.10, the State Board is required to issue the renewal performance report and renewal application guidance annually by June 30 to charter schools whose contracts will expire during the following school budget year. The charter school is then provided 60 days to respond to the report and submit any corrections or clarifications.

The required report synthesizes the school's performance data and identifies any concerns. The renewal performance report is organized into four main categories: (1) Academic Performance, (2) Operations and Governance Performance, (3) Finance Performance and (4) Supplemental Data.

Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School Renewal Performance Report

A report issued by the Iowa State Board of Education

June 18, 2026



State of Iowa
Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 E. 14th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

State Board of Education

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Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School

Location: Storm Lake Community School District
Grades: 12
Education Service Provider: N/A

Required Actions

- Discontinue charging tuition and fees when charter students retake college level classes.
- Submit narrative addressing repeated audit findings, why they were experienced and remediation plans.

Continuous Improvement Recommendations

- Continue collaborative structures, data-sharing, governing board professional development on charter governance and staff licensure verification processes.
- Update charter-specific goals using current data.
- Review grades 9-10 individual career and development plans to increase awareness of associate degree opportunities while in high school.
- Document consent process for fifth-year seniors remaining in the charter program.
- Develop succession planning for key roles to preserve institutional knowledge and partnerships.

Table 1: Performance Assessment Scores¹

Category	Percent
Academics ²	50%
Operations and Governance	78%
Finance	73%
Supplemental Data	100%
Overall Performance	71%

Table 2: Performance Assessment Scoring Summary

Level	% points earned	Performance Description
5	90-100%	This level indicates one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School data is exceeding expectation. • Document review and school visit results identify no corrective actions. • Performance is at low risk and limited concern.
4	80-89%	This level indicates one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School data is meeting expectation. • Document review and school visit results identify no or limited minor corrective actions. • Performance is at low risk and limited concern.
3	70-79%	This level indicates one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School data is slightly below expectation. • Document review and school visit results identify corrective and/or continuous improvement actions that need response over time. • Performance is at slight risk and concern.
2	60-69%	This level indicates one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School data is below expectation. • Document review and school visit results identify substantial corrective actions that need immediate and ongoing response. • Performance is at moderate risk and concern.
1	<59%	This level indicates one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School data is significantly below expectation. • Document review and school visit results identify critical corrective actions that need immediate response. • Performance is at high risk and substantial concern.

¹ For more information about Performance Framework criteria, refer to this [document](#).

² A fifth-year senior-only charter, the school lacks ESSA data, receiving the ESSA designation of Priority from the district.

Introduction

Under Iowa Code section 256E.10, the Iowa State Board of Education (State Board) determines whether a charter contract should be renewed for up to five years based on evidence of school performance under the charter contract, including academic, operations and governance and financial performance. This evidence is gathered through the performance assessment and site visit process and culminates in individual Charter Renewal Performance Reports issued by the State Board on June 30 for each charter up for renewal. Schools submit a charter response, including a response to required and recommended actions, additional evidence of achievements, improvements and proposed plans for the next contract term within 60 days of receiving the report. Next, schools submit a Charter Renewal Application, including their charter response, by October 1. Upon receipt of the application, the State Board has 60 days, or until December 1, to issue a final renewal decision by formal resolution, including the rationale for approval, conditional renewal or revocation. High-performing schools in full compliance may qualify for expedited renewal.

The charter school renewal process provides a comprehensive evaluation of a school’s performance, integrating quantitative data, qualitative observations and stakeholder perspectives. The six steps are detailed in **Table 3. Renewal Process Timeline.**

Table 3: Renewal Process Timeline

Step 1 Performance Assessment	Step 2 Site Visit	Step 3 State Board Renewal Report	Step 4 Charter Response	Step 5 Charter Renewal Application	Step 6 State Board Decision
March	April	May-June (6/30)	July-August (8/30)	September- October (10/1)	November- December (12/1)
Purpose: Evaluate the school’s academic, operational, and financial performance to identify strengths, concerns and areas for improvement that inform renewal decisions.	Purpose: Gather qualitative evidence and assess how the school implements its mission and operations in practice.	Purpose: Synthesize performance assessment data and site visit findings into a clear review of strengths, concerns and key evidence for renewal decision-making.	Purpose: Require the school to submit a written response addressing its individual Renewal Performance Report issued by the State Board.	Purpose: Require the school to submit a renewal application that includes its response to the individual Renewal Performance Report issued by the State Board.	Purpose: Determine whether to renew, renew with corrective action or revoke the charter contract based on the evidence presented.

Note: The charter school renewal process doesn't replace other compliance monitoring, review or accountability processes at the Iowa Department of Education (Department).

The Department renewal process team is responsible for reviewing performance assessment data, identifying areas of inquiry for the site visit process, participating in site visits and reviewing and revising the Renewal Performance Report prior to its presentation to the State Board. **Table 4: Renewal Process Team Members** identifies the Department personnel involved in the charter renewal process and their respective roles and responsibilities.

Table 4: Renewal Process Team Members

DOE Member	Position	Division
Tom Bredfield	Education Program Consultant	School Improvement
Kassandra Cline	Bureau Chief School Business Operations	Chief of Staff
Stephanie Edler	Administrative Consultant	School Business Operations
Kyle Morin	Administrative Consultant	School Improvement
Barbara Ohlund	Executive Officer 4	PK-12 Learning Division
Stacie Stokes	Education Program Consultant	School Improvement

Renewal Performance Report Structure

The performance assessment is organized into four main categories:

1. Academic Performance
2. Operations and Governance Performance
3. Finance Performance
4. Supplemental Data

The following are the results (Background, Key Points, Strengths, Compliance Corrective Actions, Recommendations for Continuous Improvement) for each category of the performance assessment reviewed during the renewal process.

Academic Performance

Background

This section includes review of the school's current Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) designation on its Iowa School Performance Profile, the attainment of their charter-specific goals, information from classroom observations conducted during the school visit and findings from focus group interviews with students, prospective students, leadership, instructional staff, support staff, the governing board and parents.

Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School is a partnership between Storm Lake Community School District, Iowa Central Community College and Buena Vista University. Its mission is to provide affordable, accessible higher education to students - particularly those facing language or economic barriers - to improve graduation and college completion rates by providing an optional fifth year. Students may defer graduation with parental consent to earn college credentials or professional certifications. Highlights of the school include:

- **Targeted Support:** It focuses on disadvantaged youth who may not otherwise pursue a college degree.
- **Extended Experience:** It offers a tuition-free fifth year of study focused on 11 options for Trade and Industrial, six options for Health, four options for Agriculture and Business fields and additional options for pre-professional career fields.
- **Early Preparation:** Students begin planning in eighth grade, using concurrent enrollment and dual credit to earn college credit and certifications.
- **Student Impact:** In the FY24–FY25 period, students earned 523 college credits through 124 concurrent enrollment courses.

The optional fifth year provides an opportunity for students to gain valuable qualifications towards their career goals at no personal cost. Students and parents from the focus group conversations stated they appreciate the opportunity and extensive support provided to students through the well-organized partnership among the charter school, Iowa Central Community College and Buena Vista University. Students and parents emphasized that the fifth year provides a supportive transition from high school to college-level coursework by offering additional staff check-ins, flexible online, hybrid and face-to-face course options tailored to student needs and transportation to and from the Fort Dodge campus to help eliminate barriers to participation.

Academic Key Points

- Charter Goal Achievement: 100% (5/5 goals met, FY26)
- 523 college credits earned (FY24–FY25)
- 124 concurrent enrollment courses completed
- Individualized supports increasing postsecondary attainment
- Chronic absenteeism, Attendance growth and Average daily attendance were at or above state averages
- *Iowa School Performance Profile Ranking: **Priority**³*

Strengths

Annual report data indicate that the charter school has successfully attained the five school-specific goals that were identified. These goals include:

1. Increasing the number of first-generation, low socio-economic status, English learners and non-Caucasian students attaining advanced postsecondary degrees/certificates or college credits
2. Providing a more rigorous/relevant college/prep curriculum
3. Raising Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED)/Iowa Assessment scores in Reading, Mathematics and Science
4. Increasing the number of dual-credit/concurrent enrollment credits earned
5. Ensuring all students have individual learning plans

³ Due to a limited data set, the ESSA designation from the resident high school was assigned to the charter school.

Classroom observations conducted during the school visit confirmed implementation of the school's mission and vision within its core programming. Students receive extensive hands-on experience in multiple fields, allowing for career exploration and skill development while also participating in college level coursework. One example observed during the visit was a student-led housing construction project in which students were responsible for carpentry, electrical and housing design in the construction of a single-family home. This was one of several homes completed through the charter term and later sold to local homeowners, further strengthening the charter school's connection to the Storm Lake community.

Focus group participants shared multiple examples of former students who completed the program and continued on to successful careers in fields such as nursing, engineering, electrical services and welding. Additionally, some former students have returned to the charter school to serve as instructors, applying the skills they gained through the program.

Current and prospective students described pursuing a variety of academic pathways, including nursing, dental hygiene and transfer-oriented general education coursework. Students also reported receiving strong individualized support throughout enrollment and coursework, highlighting the charter school's role in expanding access to career-focused and postsecondary opportunities.

Focus group participants credited the charter coordinator and local administration with strong program implementation and effective alignment between the high school and postsecondary partners, supporting smooth student transitions. Participants highlighted several key program components, including introductory events for eighth-grade students, campus tours, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) information sessions and individualized college and career planning meetings.

Compliance Corrective Actions

The school has no compliance corrective actions in this area.

Note: The charter school carries a current ESSA designation of "Priority," derived from Storm Lake High School. Because the school serves only grade 12 students, it does not generate a fully independent data set; under Iowa's accountability plan, the feeder school's designation is therefore applied.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

The school site visit confirmed that the charter school's academic programming is achieving its identified mission and vision.

Recommendation: Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School is encouraged to continue its current structures and supports, including daily coordination among partners and the use of the advisory committee as a substantive program-refinement body. These practices have enabled local administration and the coordinator to contribute to the school's strong performance.

As previously noted, Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School successfully achieved all five of the charter-specific goals.

Recommendation: Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School is encouraged to use current data sets to develop new or revised charter-specific goals for the upcoming charter term.

Student and parent focus groups indicated that some students would benefit from additional time to complete an associate's degree or other postsecondary credential while continuing to receive academic and transitional support. It is also understood that the charter previously operated under a two-year model.

Recommendation: In response to this feedback, Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School may consider reviewing each student's individual career development plan, in alignment with Iowa Administrative Code chapter 281-49, with students and their parents during the freshman and sophomore years to ensure the opportunities to earn an associate's degree while still in high school are understood.

Operations and Governance Performance

Background

This section includes review of the school's submitted artifacts indicating the adoption and implementation of key governance, operational, special education and English learner policies and procedures. The school's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act-Differentiated Accountability (IDEA-DA) designation, student retention rate, classroom observations and focus group interviews with the governing board, charter advisory committee, leadership, instructional and support staff, parents and students are also represented.

Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School serves fifth-year seniors seeking an additional year of study in the trades or associate and bachelor's degree opportunities. The charter school is overseen by five elected governing board members who also serve on the Storm Lake Community School District Board of Education. Governing policy and bylaws have been adopted to ensure alignment between the operation of the charter school and the school district. The school also works with a charter advisory committee consisting of representatives from Iowa Central Community College and Storm Lake High School who collaborate to review multiple data sets and make recommendations to assure the charter program meets the needs of students.

The charter school is included in the district-wide Level 3 IDEA-DA designation assigned to Storm Lake Community School District. However, Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School provides individualized support to ensure all students can successfully access and participate in programming. Special education and English learner services follow the adopted Service Delivery Plan and Lau Plan in coordination with stakeholders from the partner colleges. Students receive individualized course-selection guidance and ongoing support coordinated among the charter school coordinator, the high school counseling team and the community college's academic support staff.

Operations and Governance Key Points

- Governance (18/18) and operations (33/34) criteria requirements met
- Aligned policies supporting mission/vision
- Governing board engaged in ongoing professional development
- 100% student retention rate
- *IDEA-DA Designation: Level 3⁴*

Strengths

Document submissions and school visit interviews confirm that the school and its governing board are compliant with conduct, policy, Lau Plan and District Developed Service Delivery Plan requirements. Governing board members evaluate data provided by local administration to monitor performance and plan initiatives for the school program. Additionally, the governing board engages in ongoing professional learning opportunities to remain current on legislative priorities and best practices in school board governance.

Governing board members reported continuous interaction with the administration, the local community and the advisory committee to understand the impact of Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School on the community. The advisory committee meets formally twice a year and informally as needed, and describes concrete program changes resulting from its data review — including the addition of a charter orientation and a junior-year campus preview at the Fort Dodge campus.

Multiple focus groups noted that students requiring additional services received individualized support in aligning course selection with learning needs, both prior to and during enrollment. Course instructors, local administration and the coordinator were consistently described by students, prospective students, parents and advisory members as accessible and responsive—affirming postsecondary plans while easing students' transition into the charter program.

Student retention rates have increased across all demographic subgroups, demonstrating the appeal and sustained impact of the charter school. The school's most recent three-year retention data shows 100% retention across every reported subgroup including English learners, students with individualized education

⁴ The IDEA-DA designation is applied at the district level and represents the Storm Lake Community School District.

programs (IEPs), students from families receiving free and reduced-price lunch and every reported racial and ethnic subgroup. This data highlights strongly aligned administration, governing board, impactful school programs and established community trust.

Compliance Corrective Actions

The following corrective actions were identified during the performance assessment process for immediate remediation:

The document review revealed that Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School failed to produce documentation demonstrating compliance with Iowa Code subsection 256F.4(2)(c), which requires Iowa's charter schools to be free of tuition and application fees. Specifically, Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School maintains a policy requiring students to pay tuition and additional course fees for any course they fail or withdraw from and subsequently retake during their charter year.

Required Action: To comply with Iowa Code subsection 256F.4(2)(c), Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School should discontinue charging student tuition costs, remove all related language from school handbooks and prepare for potential financial reimbursement.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

There is strong coordination between the coordinator, principal, support personnel and charter advisory committee. The coordinator additionally serves on the charter advisory committee, further strengthening this collaborative process.

Recommendation: Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School is encouraged to continue the current data-sharing and collaborative arrangements observed during the site visit, including daily or near-daily communication among the coordinator, the principal and the partner-institution coordinators; the embedded student-alert system; and the use of the advisory committee as a substantive program-refinement body.

Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School uses the elected Storm Lake Board of Education as the governing board for the charter school. Under such a system, the elected officials need expertise in both traditional school district board governance and charter school board governance.

Recommendation: Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School, therefore, is encouraged to have the governing board continue seeking and engaging in ongoing professional development specific not only to school board governance, but also to charter school management, including the legal, fiscal and accountability dimensions of charter school operations.

As mentioned earlier, in order to participate in the charter school, students must defer graduating as fourth-year seniors and elect to take a fifth year.

Recommendation: Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School is encouraged to document the consent process by which students and families elect to defer graduation and enroll as fifth-year seniors in the charter program resources for families (i.e., written documentation of the election, signed by the student and the parent or guardian).

Finance Performance

This section includes review of the results from the school's most recent annual audit, financial performance over the charter term, five-year projected budget and actual student enrollment rates compared to projections. Findings from focus group interviews with school administration and financial officers are also represented.

Finance Key Points

- The Certified Annual Report, Annual Transportation Report and Special Education Supplement were submitted to the Department timely each year FY21–FY25.
- The annual audit report was filed timely each year FY21–FY25.
- Annual Fiscal Risk Assessment Ratings
 - FY25 Rating: Low
 - FY24 Rating: Moderate
 - Primary factors: Audit findings, material weakness
 - Secondary factors: None
 - FY23 Rating: Requires Follow up
 - Primary factors: Audit findings, material weakness
 - Secondary factors: Decreasing enrollment

Compliance Corrective Actions

The following corrective actions were identified during the performance assessment process for immediate remediation:

Required Action: Submit a narrative addressing each of the repeat audit findings, including the district's understanding of why the audit findings were experienced and the work being done to address systemic issues and district processes to address each finding.

Financial Reporting and Audit Findings

FY25 Audit Findings:

- Segregation of duties
- Preparation of financial statements
- Material weakness: Internal control deficiencies for multiple federal programs

FY24 Audit Findings:

- Segregation of duties
- Preparation of financial statements
- Material weakness: Internal control deficiencies for multiple federal programs
- Certified enrollment

FY23 Audit Findings:

- Segregation of duties
- Preparation of financial statements
- Material weakness: Internal control deficiencies for multiple federal programs
- Certified enrollment

FY22 Audit Findings

- Segregation of duties
- Preparation of financial statements
- Material weakness: Internal control deficiencies for multiple federal programs

FY21 Audit Findings

- Segregation of duties
- Preparation of financial statements
- Material weakness: Internal control deficiencies for multiple federal programs
- Certified enrollment
- Deficit net fund position – Enterprise Fund, Community Education

Five-Year Projection

- The school did not provide a projected ending balance from FY26, so the beginning balance of FY27 is unknown.
 - It is unclear how the FY27 beginning balance would change the remainder of the projected values.
- The school is projecting an increasingly negative balance over the five years.
- The district's unspent balance at the end of FY25 is \$21.5 million. The district has committed to supporting the charter high school with the funding received for other students that goes unexpended each year.

Table 5: Five-Year Projections

Five-Year Projections	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
Projected Staff	1	3.67	3.67	3.67	3.67
Projected Enrollment	55	55	55	55	55
Total Revenue	\$524,998	\$529,787	\$534,623	\$539,508	\$544,441
Total Expenditures	\$606,033	\$624,214	\$642,940	\$662,228	\$682,095
Net Revenue/Expenditures	(\$81,035)	(\$94,427)	(\$108,317)	(\$122,720)	(\$137,654)
Prior Year Surplus/Deficit	Not Reported	(\$81,035)	(\$175,462)	(\$283,778)	(\$406,499)
Remaining Balance	(\$81,035)	(\$175,462)	(\$283,779)	(\$406,499)	(\$544,153)

Supplemental Data

Background

This section includes review of the school's current staff retention, properly licensed and endorsed teachers and areas of expertise of the current governing board members.

The charter program is staffed primarily by Storm Lake High School concurrent enrollment instructors and Iowa Central Community College faculty, with the coordinator supporting cross-institution calibration. Several instructional staff members have served within the charter for extended portions of their respective tenures at the partner institutions.

Supplemental Data Key Points

- Properly endorsed teachers and staff retention at 100%
- Board expertise in academics, policy, finance and operations

Strengths

Data review indicates a 100% staff retention rate, providing sustainability amongst programming infrastructure, student support and continuous improvement efforts. All relevant teaching staff serving the charter hold proper certification and endorsements for the courses they teach, with the school's properly-endorsed-teacher rate at 100% across the most recent three-year period.

The governing board interview indicated that members hold expertise in critical areas necessary for effective school operations and governance while also engaging in ongoing professional development. The governing board president is a retired teacher who has served on the Storm Lake Community School District Board of Education since 2012, providing extensive experience in educational governance. Three additional members bring academic expertise, including a current college professor, while another member contributes expertise in community programming and minority populations. This diversity of experience has fostered effective partnerships with school administration and the local community, with stakeholders demonstrating strong understanding of and commitment to the charter school's mission.

Compliance Corrective Actions

The school has no compliance corrective actions in this area.

Recommendations for Continuous Improvement

As mentioned above, Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School has a current proper endorsement rate of 100% among staff.

Recommendation: Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School staff are encouraged to continue the effective staff policy and procedures regarding verifying staff licensure and certification.

The charter school's governing board currently benefits from member expertise in academic, policy, finance and operations.

Recommendation: Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School's governing board is encouraged to continue to seek a balance in background expertise (academic, policy, finance, operations) in member recruitment and continue its ongoing professional development specific to not only school board governance but also charter school management.

The site visit revealed that long staff tenure and continuity of the coordinator position have a significant positive impact on the coordinated environment described above.

Recommendation: Storm Lake/Iowa Central/Buena Vista Early College Charter High School is encouraged to develop a succession plan for the coordinator role and for other key positions, ensuring the institutional knowledge and partnership relationships that currently support the program are preserved across staffing transitions.

Appendices

1. **Renewal Process and Performance Assessment Overview**
 - A brief description of the full charter school renewal process, including criteria from the adopted performance framework and the corresponding rubric used in the performance assessment

2. **Charter Renewal Application Guidance**
 - A companion document for charter schools seeking renewal, including guidance on completing the application form and instructions for the formal school response to the Renewal Performance Report issued by the Iowa State Board of Education.