State of New Jersey **Department of Education** PO Box 500 Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0500

Jersey City Community Charter School

128 Danforth Avenue Jersey City, New Jersey 07305 Phone: (201) 433-2288



New Jersey K to 12 Education

Collaborative Monitoring Report September 2022

Charter School:	Jersey City Community Charter School
County:	Hudson
Dates Monitored:	June 7, 8 and 9, 2022
Case Number:	CM-08-22

Funding Sources:

Program

Funding Award

Title I, Part A	473,691
Title I SIA	70,300
Title II, Part A	32,827
Title III	0
Title III Immigrant	0
Title IV, Part A	32,486
IDEA Part B, Basic and Preschool	125,118
CARES ESSER I	375,469
CRRSA ESSER II (includes all subgrants)	1,597,380
ARP ESSER (includes all subgrants)	0
ARP IDEA Basic and Preschool	37,824
Perkins V	0
Total Funds	2,745,095

Background

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other federal education laws require local education agencies (LEAs - school districts and charter schools) to provide programs and services to schools within their local jurisdiction. The provision of these programs and services is based on the pertinent authorizing statutes specified in each of the federal education laws.

The laws further require that state education agencies, in this case, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to monitor the implementation and execution of federal programs by the subrecipients. The monitors thereby determine whether the funds are being properly used by the charter school for their intended purposes and achieving the overall objectives of the funding initiatives.

Introduction

The NJDOE visited the Jersey City Community Charter School (JCCCS or charter school) virtually, except where noted, to monitor the charter school's use of federal funds. The NJDOE also examined related program plans, as applicable, to determine whether the school's programs are meeting the intended purposes and objectives, as specified in the current year's applications and authorizing statutes.

The goal of the monitoring is to determine whether the funds were spent in accordance with the requirement of each program, federal and state laws, and applicable regulations. The monitoring of JCCCS included staff interviews, as well as, the review of documents and records related to the requirements of these programs:

- Title I, Part A (Title I);
- Title I SIA;
- Title II, Part A (Title II-A);
- Title IV, Part A (Title IV-A);
- IDEA Part B Basic and Preschool;
- Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security Act, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund (CARES ESSER I);
- Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations ESSER Fund (CRRSA ESSER II) and applicable subgrants; and
- ARP IDEA Basic and Preschool.

The scope of work performed included the review of records and documentation such as:

- accounting records
- annual audits
- board minutes
- grant applications program plans and needs assessments
- grant awards
- payroll records
- purchase orders
- student records

The scope of work performed also included interviews with:

- instructional staff to verify implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- child study team members and speech-language specialists
- the program administrator regarding the IDEA grants

In addition, a sampling of computing devices and equipment purchased with federal funds was selected and physically examined. The results of this review are detailed in CARES ESSER I, Findings 1 (in part) and 2.

Expenditures Reviewed

The grants and programs reviewed included Title I, Title I SIA, Title II-A, Title IV-A, IDEA Basic and Preschool, and ARP IDEA Basic and Preschool from July 1, 2021 through May 25, 2022. In addition, CARES ESSER I, CRRSA ESSER II, and ARP ESSER and all applicable subgrants were reviewed from commencement of the related project periods through May 25, 2022. A sampling of purchase orders and/or salaries and wages was selected from each program and reviewed.

General Overview of Uses of Federal Funds

Title I Projects

The purpose of Title I, Part A is to provide all children with significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.

JCCCS serves grades K–8 and operates a Title I schoolwide program model. During the 2021-2022 school year, the charter school programmed and budgeted its Title I, Part A allocation for activities in the following areas:

- 1. instructional materials and supplies;
- 2. increased learning time;
- 3. in-class support programs;
- 4. extended day/year programs; and
- 5. parent and family engagement.

Title I SIA Projects

The School Improvement Award (SIA) is allocated to districts with schools, or charter schools, identified as needing comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) or targeted support and improvement (TSI). The SIA exclusively supports evidence-based practices, as defined by the ESSA, which demonstrate a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes, as reflected in studies with strong, moderate, or promising evidence of effectiveness. JCCCS is designated as needing CSI. The charter school uses its SIA for personnel costs, and materials and supplies, to offer extended learning opportunities. Students selected to participate in the Extended Day Program or Summer Academy are identified based on assessment data and teacher recommendations. If space permits, consideration is also given to parental requests.

Title II-A Projects

Title II, Part A (Title II-A) funds are used primarily for building systems of support for excellent teaching and learning while increasing student achievement consistent with the challenging state academic standards. JCCCS uses its Title II-A funds for evidence-based activities and strategies to support effective instruction and leadership to improve student achievement in the school. The charter school also implements professional development programs to promote high-quality instruction and instructional leadership with these funds.

Title IV-A Projects

Title IV, Part A (Title IV-A) funds are used primarily to provide all students with access to a well-rounded education, improve school conditions for student learning, and incorporate the use of technology to improve the academic and digital literacy of all students. According to JCCCS, *general funds* are being used to cover expenditures allocable to the Title IV-A fund award, such as:

- 1. professional development programs to train teachers on ways to use various technology programs for effective instruction in the classroom; and
- 2. after school activities, including robotics and entrepreneurship programs.

JCCCS asserts that journal entries transferring expenditures from its *general fund* to this award were recorded in the charter school's accounting records following the monitoring.

IDEA Grant

The purpose of the IDEA grant is to provide federal entitlement funds to assist with the excess costs of providing special education and related services to students with disabilities. The FY 2022 IDEA Basic and Preschool funds are being used to pay contracted service providers for Child Study Team (CST) services, as well as related services.

CARES ESSER I

The purpose of the CARES ESSER I funding is to address the impact COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools.

CARES ESSER I funds are being utilized for personal protective equipment; desk barriers; cleaning and sanitizing supplies; desk shields/barriers; temperature camera scanners; water filling stations; and educational technology such as, Chromebooks and network hardware. The charter school was also approved to expend funds on training of staff on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases.

CRRSA ESSER II

The purpose of CRRSA ESSER II funding is to provide money to LEAs to assist in: safely reopening schools, measuring and effectively addressing significant learning loss, and testing, repairing, and upgrading projects to improve air quality in buildings.

JCCCS uses CRRSA ESSER II funds to pay staff for summer school program activities, tutoring and lunch coverage to promote social distancing. In addition, JCCCS spent some of these funds on salaries for certain staff members and professional development. Most of the charter school's main allocation is budgeted for HVAC improvements at both of its buildings.

JCCCS is also expending a portion of its subgrant funds for the salary of a social worker.

ARP ESSER

At the time of the monitoring, the charter school's ARP Consolidated Grant Application had not been approved by the department.

ARP IDEA

At the time of the monitoring, JCCCS had not allocated any expenditures to its ARP IDEA Basic and Preschool awards in its accounting records.

Detailed Findings and Recommendations

The Detailed Findings and Recommendations are disaggregated into the following sections:

- 1. Multiple Grants Section findings necessitating the reversal of charges for multiple grants due to the lack of adequate supporting documentation;
- 2. Grant Specific Programmatic and Fiscal Section findings directly attributable to the federal awards covered during the monitoring; and
- 3. Administrative Section crosscutting administrative findings may be found in this section.

Multiple Grants Section

Title I, Part A and CRRSA ESSER II

Finding 1:

The charter school was requested to provide timesheets or pay forms for staff paid on an hourly basis with federal funds on the selected payroll dates listed below:

Dates	Activities	Title I, Part A	CRRSA ESSER II	Total
7/15/2021	Summer Academy		23,085.00	23,085.00
7/30/2021	Summer Academy		47,045.00	47,045.00
8/13/2021	Summer Academy	24,080.00		24,080.00
8/31/2021	Summer Academy	5,348.00		5,348.00
2/25/2022	Tutoring		5,725.00	5,725.00
	Total	29,428.00	75,855.00	105,283.00

The dates were selected based on a review of accounting and payroll records submitted for examination. The timesheets requested were not furnished for examination.

Alternatively, the charter school furnished Time and Activity Reports for Federally Funded Staff (TARFFS) for most of the employees whose payroll costs were allocated to Title I and CRRSA ESSER II for its 2021 Summer Academy. TARFFS for the following staff members were among the records submitted:

- A. Adams
- D. Agawin
- K. Alliance
- E. Brown
- J. Curry
- A. De Lumen
- G. Enobio
- A. Rivera

Please note the TARFFS alone do not constitute adequate documentation, given the accuracy of the payments disbursed cannot be verified by reviewing these records. The documentation submitted must be supplemented by:

- Board of trustee (board) meeting minutes approving charter school staff to perform the grant funded activity, the funding source, type and rate of compensation, and a not to exceed amount; and
- Records of the actual dates and hours worked.

In addition, the charter school used federal funds to pay staff members to work during their lunch breaks or other periods in the course of their workday to provide lunch coverage. The charter school initially provided timesheets for February 28, 2022. The salaries of some employees who performed this duty were funded 100% by the Title I, Part A grant. The time and activity reports (TARs) available for the Title I-funded staff members were compared to their Lunch Timesheets. This comparison disclosed some school personnel received compensation for periods already covered by their Title I salaries (duplicate pay). Examples of such periods on February 28, 2022 include:

- M. Balcazar Student lunch/recess coverage;
- A. De Lumen Science/Social Studies small group support;
- K. Holmes Social Studies/Science reading support and Remediation/small group support;
- S. Ada Science/Social Studies support; and
- O. Sweeney-Brown Science/Social Studies/Math small group support.

The charter school was subsequently asked to provide all Lunch Timesheets for the 2021-2022 school year. Similar exceptions were detected during the review of the submitted documents. In addition, some staff were improperly compensated for the full 45 minute lunch period when they actually worked less time. The timesheets furnished for one or more employees lacked any indication of the beginning and ending start times necessary for determining the accuracy of their pay. The associated duplicate pay, overstated and inadequately documented payroll costs totaling \$19,545.00 are summarized on <u>Attachment A</u>.

Pursuant to the Uniform Grant Guidance, charges to federal awards for salaries and wages must be: reasonable and necessary; allocable to the federal award; adequately documented; and based on records that accurately reflect the work performed. Timesheets or pay forms for staff paid on an hourly basis must reflect what grant-funded staff are doing, as well as when and where they are working. This documentation is necessary to verify that grant-funded staff are performing allowable Title I and CRRSA ESSER II activities.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.403(a) and §200.403(g) Factors affecting allowability of costs

Required Action(s):

The charter school is required to submit copies of the following records for examination:

Summer Academy

- TARFFS for the eight (8) individuals identified;
- The board minutes including the information mentioned; and
- Documentation of the actual dates and hours worked by all staff that implemented the Summer Academy program.

All of the documents identified above must be submitted to OFAC through the CFM Homeroom Application (App) within thirty (30) days from the date of this report of examination (ROE).

Otherwise, the charter school must upload copies of accounting records evidencing the reversal of the Title I and CRRSA ESSER II payroll expenditures totaling \$124,828.00 (\$105,283.00 and \$19,545.00). The accounting records must be submitted to OFAC through the App mentioned within the same 30 day timeframe.

Grant Specific Programmatic and Fiscal Section

Title I

Finding 1:

In its FY 2022 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application (ESEEA Application), the charter school budgeted some of its Title I, Part A funds for the salaries and benefits of nine Paraprofessionals (\$348,491.00) to implement in-class and pull-out instructional support programs.

A review of the charter school's submitted documentation disclosed no indication of board approvals for the salaries of five (5) additional staff members charged to the grant:

Name	Salary	
T. Carswell	20,496.00	
J. Curry	21,000.00	
C. Goodwin	22,860.50	
G. lannitelli	24,549.30	
K. Mitchner	21,000.00	
Total	109,905.80	

Please note that board minutes must clearly delineate the names of all staff members whose salaries and benefits will be funded with Title I, Part A funds and the percentage of time they provide allowable Title I, Part A services.

More significantly, time and activity reports for the five (5) staff members listed above were not among the documents provided, nor were alternate records such as weekly schedules furnished for examination.

Pursuant to the Uniform Grant Guidance, time and activity documentation must among other things:

- reflect what Title I-funded staff are doing, and when and where they are working;
- match the staff member's funded percentage of time providing the Title I-funded services; and
- reasonably reflect the total activity for which the employee is compensated by the LEA, not exceeding 100% of compensated activities.

This documentation is necessary to verify that Title I-funded staff are performing allowable Title I, Part A activities.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. § 200.430(i) Standards for Documentation of Personnel Expenses and §200.403(g) Factors affecting allowability of costs

Required Action(s):

The charter school must submit copies of board minutes approving the employees perform Title I, Part A work and time and activity reports for the five (5) staff members noted. In addition, the charter school is required to provide explanations and supporting records that account for the different payroll check amounts disbursed to G. lannitelli.

If the charter school is unable to provide the records for examination, the charter school is required to provide accounting records evidencing the reversal of their salaries totaling \$109,905.80 from September 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022 and *all sums incurred thereafter, including any associated benefits*, funded with Title I, Part A monies.

The required documents must be submitted to OFAC through the CFM Homeroom Application within thirty (30) days from the date of this ROE.

Recommended Action(s):

It is recommended that both charter school program and fiscal staff work collaboratively, to institute policies and procedures to ensure all:

- board minutes clearly delineate the names and position titles of all staff members whose salaries and benefits are funded with Title I, Part A monies, including their federally funded salary percentages; and
- federally funded employees prepare TARs compliant with applicable Uniform Grant Guidance requirements.

Finding 2:

As articulated in the FY 2022 ESEA Application, the comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) indicated Title I funds would address the following identified needs:

- Students' comprehension and reading levels are below grade level
- Students' performance in mathematics is below grade level

The charter school selected 'parent and family engagement' as one of its allowable uses and budgeted Title I, Part A funds for 'parent and family engagement' activities. This selected allowable use and associated budgeted costs did not align with either of the above referenced identified needs. Without a direct connection among identified needs, selected allowable uses, and associated budgeted costs, there is no evidence that implemented activities are necessary and reasonable for the proper and efficient performance and administration of the charter school's Title I, Part A schoolwide program.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1112 Local Educational Agency Plans and Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.404 Reasonable Costs and Allocable Costs

Required Action(s):

The charter school must establish policies and procedures to ensure the information in the CNA of its FY 2023 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application accurately reflects identified need(s) for the charter school's parents and families. In addition, these policies and procedures must address the ways in which the charter school will ensure a

direct connection and alignment among all identified needs, selected allowable uses, and associated budgeted costs. A copy of these policies and procedures must be submitted as part of the charter school's corrective action plan (CAP).

Recommended Action(s):

As discussed with charter school staff during the collaborative monitoring visit, it is recommended that charter school staff ensure the FY 2023 ESEA Application reflects the following information for the CNA and Title IA budget sections:

Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA):

Ensure information contained in the CNA is more specific and quantifiable in nature. This may be accomplished by providing more exact details for each identified need (e.g., grade levels, student groups and performance targets).

Budget:

Provide specific details to describe the selected expenditure category (e.g., parent and family engagement workshops to train parents on how to support their children with English Language Arts homework). Listing 'parent activities' for a description is not sufficient detail to determine if the associated budgeted cost is allowable under the Title I, Part A program.

Finding 3:

The charter school did not provide dated evidence (enumerated below) to document it held the required annual, Title I, Part A meeting for parents and families. Pursuant to ESEA legislation, a Title I-funded school must convene an annual meeting on a date at the beginning of the school year, to inform parents and families of the school's Title I, Part A program(s), the Title I, Part A legislative requirements, and the ways in which parents and families can be engaged actively in helping their children succeed academically.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1116(c) Parent and Family Engagement – Policy Involvement

Required Action(s):

The charter school must develop policies and procedures to ensure the annual, Title I meeting is held at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. A copy of these policies and procedures must be submitted as part of the charter school's CAP. Upon holding the annual 2022-2023 Title I meeting, the charter school must keep on file the following documentation as evidence of this meeting:

- 1. invitational letter/flyer;
- 2. meeting agenda;
- 3. meeting minutes; and
- 4. sign-in sheets or a list of staff and parents who attended the meeting.

Each piece of documentation must include the exact date on which the charter school held the required FY 2023 Annual Title I meeting.

Recommended Action(s):

To further enhance knowledge regarding meaningful and timely parent and family engagement, it is recommended the charter school administrators and staff review the parent and family engagement resources available on the NJDOE website at <u>Title I, Part</u> <u>A Parent Family Engagement</u>. For additional assistance, please contact the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs (OSEP) at <u>titleone@doe.nj.gov</u>.

Finding 4:

The charter school did not provide documented evidence that parents and families, as well as outside community members, participated actively and throughout the development, implementation, and evaluation of the FY 2022 Annual School Plan (ASP). Pursuant to ESEA legislation, all relevant stakeholders, including parents and families and other members of the community, must participate actively in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the charter school's ASP. In addition, the ASP did not align to the district's FY 2022 ESEA Application in the following ways:

- ASP Title I, Part A budget total did not equal the school-level allocation total as calculated in the ESEA Application;
- Identified needs in the ASP were not connected to the district's articulated needs presented in the ESEA Application; and
- SMART Goals did not always demonstrate a connection to the selected allowable uses listed in the ESEA Application.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1114(b)(2) Schoolwide Programs — Schoolwide Program Plan

Required Action(s):

For the FY 2023 ASP, the charter school must establish policies and procedures to ensure the following actions occur:

- The ASP process for the FY 2023 ESEA project period, as well as all subsequent project periods in which the school operates a schoolwide program model, meets all Title I, Part A schoolwide requirements articulated in ESEA legislation;
- Parents and families, as well as other outside community members, must be included as active participants in all annual, ASP planning team meetings throughout the development, implementation, and evaluation of the ASP;

- Measures must be established to ensure the annual ASP includes budget details to show how Title I, Part A funds will be budgeted for each articulated SMART Goal;
- The annual ASP must ensure Title I, Part A budget totals match those of the school-level allocation as articulated in the associated fiscal year ESEA Application; and
- The comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) process must ensure the identified needs and articulated SMART Goals for the annual ASP align to the identified needs and allowable uses in the associated fiscal year ESEA Application.

As part of the submission of its CAP, the charter school must include a copy of these policies and procedures regarding the development, implementation, and evaluation of the annual ASP for review by staff in OSEP.

Finding 5:

The charter school provided evidence of its combined, district-school level parent and family engagement policy for the FY 2022 ESEA project period; however, this policy:

- included outdated language and citations from the No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB] (e.g., section 1118 for parent and family engagement instead of section 1116);
- did not show a board approval date within the last school year; and
- omitted several required Title I, Part A elements.

In addition, the charter school did not provide evidence to show that the combined, district-school level parent and family engagement policy was distributed widely to parents and families. Pursuant to ESEA legislation, the charter school must:

- implement and make publicly available an updated Board approved district-school level parent and family engagement policy, annually;
- involve parents and families in the development of the written district-school level parent and family engagement policy; and
- inform parents and families of the ways in which they can further participate in the academic performance and achievement of their children.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1116 (a)(2) Local Educational Agency Policy: Written Policy and ESEA §1116(b)(1) School Parent and Family Engagement Policy

Required Action(s):

For the FY 2023 school year, the charter school must establish policies and procedures to ensure it develops and implements a combined, district-school level parent and

family engagement policy that is Board approved and posted on the charter school's website. This written, combined district-school level parent and family engagement policy must be developed and reviewed with the active engagement of parents and families, as well as be widely distributed to parents and families on an annual basis. Parents and families must be informed of the ways in which they can further participate in the academic performance and achievement of their children. In this way, parents and families are afforded opportunities to become effective partners in the charter school's ongoing parent involvement process.

The charter school must submit a copy of these policies and procedures regarding the development of a combined, district-school level parent and family engagement policy as part of the submission of its CAP, for review by staff in OSEP.

Recommended Action(s):

To further enhance knowledge regarding policies and procedures related to parent and family engagement, it is recommended that the charter school's administrators and staff review the parent and family engagement resources available on the NJDOE website at <u>Title I, Part A Parent Family Engagement</u>. For additional assistance, please contact the OSEP at <u>titleone@doe.nj.gov</u>.

Finding 6:

The charter school provided documented evidence of a written school-parent compact; however, the compact referenced inaccurate legislative citations and did not address all required Title I, Part A elements. In addition, the charter school did not provide evidence that parents and families were involved actively in the development of the compact, or how the charter school widely distributed the compact to parents and families.

Pursuant to ESEA legislation, as a component of the combined district-school level parent and family engagement policy, the charter school must develop, in collaboration with parents, a school-parent compact. This compact must outline how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). The exclusion of parents and families in the development of the school-parent compact resulted in these stakeholders being excluded from active participation in their children's educational programs.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1116(d)(1)(2) Parent and Family Engagement: Shared responsibilities for High Student Academic Achievement

Required Action(s):

For the FY 2023 school year, the charter school must establish policies and procedures to ensure the school-parent compact includes:

- 1. current information pertaining to ESEA legislative citations, terminology, and requirements;
- 2. board approval date; and
- 3. posted on the school's website.

In addition, these policies and procedures must address the following ESEA requirements:

- the school-parent compact will be developed, in collaboration with parents, to outline how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the NJSLS;
- the charter school will include parents and families in the ongoing monitoring and continued development and implementation of all elements of the written school-parent compact; and
- the school-parent compact will be distributed widely to parents and families.

The charter school must submit a copy of these policies and procedures regarding the development of a school-parent compact as part of its CAP, for review by staff in the OSEP.

Recommended Action(s):

The charter school is encouraged to review all ESEA requirements as these relate to school-parent compacts. Information related to school-parent compacts may be found on the NJDOE website at Title I, Part A Parent Family Engagement. For additional assistance, please contact OSEP at <u>titleone@doe.nj.gov</u>.

Finding 7:

The charter school provided evidence of the required Parent Right-to-Know (PRTK) letter; however, this letter referenced requirements under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), rather than the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) [e.g., highly qualified teachers, NCLB Federal website]. In addition, the charter school did not provide evidence of distribution of the letter to all parents and families.

Pursuant to ESEA legislation, all local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to notify parents at the beginning of each school year of their 'Right-to-Know' the professional qualifications of their children's classroom teachers and paraprofessionals. Parents may request, and the

charter school will provide information regarding the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teachers, including at a minimum, the following:

- Whether the student's teacher:
 - has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
 - 2. is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria have been waived;
 - 3. is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher; and
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1112(e)(1)(A) Parents Right-to-Know — Information for Parents

Required Action(s):

For the 2022-2023 school year, the charter school must develop policies and procedures regarding the content and distribution of the PRTK letter. These policies and procedures must address the following information regarding the PRTK letter:

- distributed at the beginning of each school year;
- issued in English and other languages that represent the school community;
- disseminated in an understandable format; and
- included all relevant Title I, Part A requirements.

The charter school must submit a copy of these policies and procedures as part of the submission of its CAP, for review by staff in OSEP.

Finding 8:

The charter school provided evidence of its parent notification letter to parents of English learners on the school's language instruction program; however, several ESEA requirements were missing from the letter, such as:

- date of issuance;
- the language instruction program's exit requirements; and
- the expected rate of transition into a classroom not tailored for English learners.

In addition, the charter school did not provide documentation evidencing distribution of the letter to all parents and families of English learners. Pursuant to ESEA legislation, LEAs using Title I or Title III funds to provide a language instruction educational program as determined under Title III shall, not later than thirty (30) days after the beginning of the school year, inform

parents and families of an English learner identified for participation or participating in such program of specific requirements. This notification also must reference all applicable ESEA requirements, not those previously required under NCLB (e.g., Common Core State Standards).

Citation(s):

ESEA §1112(e)(3) Parents Right-to-Know – Language Instruction

Required Action(s):

For the 2022-2023 school year, the charter school must develop policies and procedures regarding the content and distribution of the Parents Right-to-Know – Language Instruction notification. These policies and procedures must ensure all Title I, Part A requirements are met in this notification, to include:

- the timely distribution of a dated (MM/DD/YYYY) PRTK letter for Language Instruction;
- the language instruction program's exit requirements;
- the expected rate of transition into a classroom not tailored for English learners;
- the methods by which this notification will be distributed to parents of English learners (e.g., mailed letters/notifications, email notifications and notifications sent home with students); and
- the way it will establish an effective means of outreach to parents of English learners.

As part of its CAP, the charter school must include a copy of these policies and procedures, for review by staff in OSEP.

Finding 9:

The Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care policy did not address all required Title I, Part A elements and did not include a board authorization date. Pursuant to ESEA legislation, the charter school must by not later than one (1) year after the date of enactment of ESEA, develop and implement clear written procedures governing how transportation to maintain children in foster care in their school of origin when in their best interest will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of the time in foster care. The procedures shall:

- ensure that children in foster care needing transportation to the school of origin will promptly receive transportation in a cost-effective manner and in accordance with section 475(4)(A) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 675(4)(A)); and
- ensure that, if there are additional costs incurred in providing transportation to maintain children in foster care in their schools of origin, the LEA will provide transportation to the school of origin if —

- a) the LEA agrees to reimburse the local educational agency for the cost of such transportation;
- b) the LEA agrees to pay for the cost of such transportation; or
- c) the LEA and the local child welfare agency agree to share the cost of such transportation.

In addition, the charter school did not provide evidence to identify the staff member, who serves as the Educational Stability Liaison Point of Contact (POC) for the charter school.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1112(c)(5)(B) Local Educational Agency Plans – Assurances

Required Action(s):

For the 2022-2023 school year, the charter school must establish a complete set of policies and procedures regarding the educational stability of children placed in foster care, to include all required transportation procedures. These policies must be uploaded as part of the submission of the charter school's FY 2023 ESEA Application. In addition, the charter school must immediately designate a local POC, post this information on its website, and ensure this information is updated in the NJDOE county/district/school information system. As part of the submission of its CAP, the charter school must provide a copy of these policies and procedures, as well as the name of the designated POC, for review by staff in OSEP.

Recommended Action(s):

It is recommended the charter school review the Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care policy information available on the NJDOE website at <u>Educational Stability</u> <u>for Children in Foster Care</u>. For additional assistance, please contact OSEP at <u>titleone@doe.nj.gov</u>.

Finding 10:

At the time of the monitoring visit, the charter school was unable to provide evidence to verify that 100% of its instructional paraprofessionals met highly qualified requirements.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1111(g)(2)(M) Other Plan Provisions: Assurances and Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), 34 C.F.R. §200.58 Qualifications of Paraprofessionals

Required Action(s):

As part of the submission of its CAP, the charter school must include a list of all instructional paraprofessionals employed in the FY 2022 ESEA project period, to include

first and last initial of each paraprofessional, as well as the qualifications of each, for review by staff in the OSEP.

Additional Recommendations:

The NJDOE recognizes and acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic presented the charter school with many unforeseen challenges during the 2021-2022 school year. Inevitably, these circumstances impacted the charter school's Title I, Part A program, including the CNA process, development of the ASP with involvement of all relevant stakeholder groups, and updates and Board approvals of all parent and family engagement policies and notifications. The following recommendations are presented to assist the charter school in continuing to meet these challenges by further strengthening and enhancing its Title I, Part A programs and services:

- It is recommended, whenever possible, to include more than one (1) parent and more than one (1) community member as representatives on the ASP stakeholder planning team. This improves stakeholder engagement by ensuring these relevant stakeholders more actively participate in the development, implementation, and evaluation of all ASPs throughout the entire ASP process.
- 2. It is recommended the charter school include more specific information regarding grade levels, target populations, performance targets, and the identification of data sources in the CNA conducted for the charter school's FY 2023 ESEA Application, as well as the ASP to be implemented during the 2022-2023 school year. In this way, all CNA information is aligned, and shows a clearer connection to data driven decision-making and the importance of stakeholder engagement.
- 3. It is recommended the charter school's Title I Coordinator and District Homeless liaison work more collaboratively on the implementation of programs and services for students experiencing homelessness. In addition, these individuals should work jointly to determine the reserve amount of FY 2023 Title I, Part A funds for non-traditional services to homeless students.
- 4. It is recommended the charter school delete the ESEA Amendment 2 Application if this amendment is not necessary.

Title I SIA

The review of the charter school's 2021-2022 Title I SIA program yielded no findings.

Title IV-A

At the time of the monitoring, the charter school had not allocated any expenditures to its 2021-2022 Title IV-A grant. A review of JCCCS' Title IV-A expenditures will be performed in conjunction with the CAP process.

IDEA Program

Finding 1:

The charter school did not conduct meetings within 20 calendar days of receipt of a written request to the child study team or to the speech-language specialist to determine if an evaluation was warranted.

Citation(s):

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.3(e) Location, referral and identification

Required Action(s):

The charter school must ensure that identification meetings are conducted within 20 calendar days of receipt of a written request for evaluation and that required participants are in attendance. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance the charter school must conduct training for child study team members and speech-language specialists and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citation listed above.

A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review documentation from identification meetings held between October 2022 and January 2023
- review the oversight procedures

Finding 2:

The charter school did not consistently conduct all required sections of the functional assessment as a component of initial evaluations for students referred for speech-language services. Initial evaluation reports did not consistently contain observations outside of the testing situation, teacher interview, and a review of prior interventions documented by the teacher(s) or others who work with the student.

Citation(s):

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(f)4(i-vi) Evaluation

Required Action(s):

The charter school must ensure all components of the functional assessment are conducted as part of all initial evaluations. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the charter school must conduct training for speech-language specialists and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citation listed above.

A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review documentation of initial evaluations for students referred for speechlanguage services between October 2022 and January 2023
- review the oversight procedures

Finding 3:

The charter school did not consistently conduct multidisciplinary initial evaluations for students referred for speech-language services by obtaining an educational impact statement from the classroom teacher.

Citation(s):

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.5(b)6 Protection in evaluation procedures and 3.6(b) Determination of eligibility for speech-language services

Required Action(s):

The charter school must ensure a multidisciplinary evaluation is conducted for students referred for speech-language services by obtaining a written statement from the general education teacher that details the educational impact of the speech problem on the student's progress in general education. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the charter school must conduct training for speech-language specialists and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above.

A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review documentation of initial evaluations for students referred for speech-language services between October 2022 and January 2023
- review the oversight procedures

Finding 4:

The charter school did not consistently document in the IEPs of students removed from the general education setting for more than 20 percent of the school day, including students placed in separate settings, consideration of placement in the least restrictive environment. Specifically, IEPs did not consistently include supplementary aids and services considered and an explanation of why they are not appropriate.

Citation(s):

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.2 (a)8(iii) Placement in the least restrictive environment and 3.7(k) Individualized education program

Required Action(s):

The charter school must ensure when determining the educational placement of a child with a disability, the IEP team considers the general education class first and that all required decisions regarding the placement are documented in the IEP for each student removed from general education for more than 20 percent of the school day. The charter school must also ensure that for students placed in separate settings, the IEP team identifies activities to transition the student to a less restrictive environment and document them in each IEP. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the charter school must conduct training for child study team members and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. To demonstrate that the charter school has corrected the individual instances of noncompliance, the charter school must conduct annual review meetings and revise the IEPs for specific students that were identified as noncompliant. Names of the students whose IEPs were identified as noncompliant will be provided to the charter school by the monitor.

A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review the revised IEPs, along with a random sample of IEPs developed at meetings conducted between October 2022 and January 2023
- review the oversight procedures

CARES ESSER I

Finding 1:

JCCCS spent \$15,399 of CARES ESSER I funds via purchase order (PO) number 202200558 for Erated network hardware. A review of the submitted documentation for this purchase did not contain a description and listing of serial numbers for the items acquired. Without this information, it could not be determined if the items observed during the physical inspection were those actually purchased through the PO.

Pursuant to the Uniform Grant Guidance, the charter school is required to maintain records which demonstrate costs charged to the grant are:

- 1. necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the federal award; and
- 2. adequately documented.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.403(a) and §200.403(g) Factors affecting allowability of costs and EDGAR, 34 C.F.R. §76.700 Compliance with the U.S. Constitution, statutes, regulations, stated institutional policies, and applications

Required Action(s):

The charter school must submit copies of accounting records evidencing the reversal of the expenditures identified that were allocated to CARES ESSER I. Since the charter school has already submitted reimbursement for these expenditures, the charter school must reduce the expenses claimed on its next reimbursement request for this federal award by \$15,399. The required documents must be submitted to OFAC through the CFM Homeroom Application within thirty (30) days from the date of this ROE.

Finding 2:

As mentioned in the previous finding, the charter school used CRRSA ESSER I funds to buy E-rated network hardware. The invoices reflect two parts at a unit cost in excess of \$2,000. The charter school's fixed asset equipment report furnished for examination does not include the network hardware. The charter school advised purchases of fixed assets are added at the end of the year in preparation of the independent auditor's audit.

Consistent with NJDOE guidelines, equipment items are any instrument, machine, apparatus, or set of articles that exceeds the capitalization threshold of \$2,000 per unit and meets all of the following criteria:

- 1. It retains its original shape, appearance, and character with use;
- 2. It does not lose its identity;
- 3. It is nonexpendable; that is, if the item is damaged or some of its parts are lost or worn out, it is more feasible to repair the item than to replace it with an entirely new unit; and
- 4. Under normal conditions of use, including reasonable care and maintenance, it can be expected to serve its principal purpose for at least one year.

The charter school must list all equipment items, as well as any electronic devices that are less expensive to track than to replace, on inventory records, which are purchased with federal grant funds until transfer, replacement, or disposition takes place. Pursuant to the Uniform Grant Guidance, the inventory records must include the following information, at a minimum:

- 1. Description of the item/property;
- 2. Serial number, model number, or other identification number (bar code or local identifying number);
- 3. Funding source of the item/property;
- 4. Title holder (name of funding title/grant);
- 5. Acquisition date;
- 6. Acquisition cost of the item/property;
- 7. Records showing maintenance procedures to keep item/property in good condition;
- 8. Percentage of federal participation in the cost of the item/property;
- 9. Location, use, and condition of the item/property, and date information was

reported; and

10. All pertinent information on the ultimate transfer, replacement or disposition (including date of disposal and the sale of the item/property, if applicable) when the item/property is retired from service.

With respect to item 2, LEAs should utilize numbers which correspond directly or that can be referenced, to those recorded on the vendor's shipping or packaging slips in order to facilitate effective:

- Implementation of internal controls over the equipment and computing devices purchased with federal funds; and
- Monitoring and audits.

The charter school is required to update the inventory listings for new purchases of equipment and computing devices and the purging of items. A physical inventory of equipment item/property must be taken and the results reconciled with the inventory property records at least once every two (2) years. Any loss, damage, or theft must be investigated and fully documented by local law enforcement officials.

The Uniform Grant Guidance allows the use of equipment no longer needed for the original project program on other activities currently or previously supported by federal funds. Otherwise, the disposition of equipment acquired with federal grant funds must be in accordance with the grant requirements. In the absence of specific instructions of the federal grant, equipment valued at \$5,000 or less may be retained, sold or otherwise disposed of with no further federal obligation.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.313(d) Equipment; §200.403(a) and §200.403(g) Factors affecting allowability of costs; and <u>Office of Grants Management, General</u> <u>Federal Entitlement Grant Guidance</u>

Required Action(s):

Unless the charter school reverses the expenditure for this network hardware in response to the previous finding, the charter school must include the equipment on its fixed asset report following the receipt serial information from the vendor. The charter school is required to submit the revised report to OFAC through the CFM Homeroom Application within thirty (30) days from the date of this ROE.

Finding 3:

The charter school's CARES ESSER I Revenue Report does not reflect the amount of the federal award.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.302 Financial Management

Required Action(s):

The charter school is required to update its Revenue Report to reflect the dollar amount of its CARES ESSER I federal award and submit the revised report to OFAC through the CFM Homeroom Application within thirty (30) days from the date of this ROE.

CRRSA ESSER II

Finding 1:

In its FY 2022 CRRSA Consolidated Grant Application, the charter school budgeted some of its CRRSA ESSER II funds for the salaries and benefits of staff to implement summer programs and to hire an additional licensed social worker. A review of the JCCCS' accounting and payroll records disclosed the charter school also utilized this federal award to fund the salaries of the following positions during the 2021-2022 school year:

Name	Position	Salary	
A. Dobson	Gym Teacher	23,368.00	
D. Tyler	Gym Teacher	29,167.00	
E. Jefferson	Instructional Aide	28,333.00	
C. Mays	Instructional Aide	23,407.00	
J. Frangis	Reading Coach	69,300.00	
Total		173,575.00	

These positions are not addressed or articulated in the Identified Needs and Allowable Uses sections of the charter school's grant application. Board minutes authorizing the funding of these positons with the CRRSA ESSER II award and TARs for these employees were not among the documents submitted for examination. The charter school provided timecards instead that reflect the dates, beginning and ending times, and number of hours the employees worked. Please note that even if the salaries and benefits were budgeted in the grant application and authorized by its board, the related costs are not allowable due to lack of the TARs detailing the activities performed.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. § 200.430(i) Standards for Documentation of Personnel Expenses and §200.403(g) Factors affecting allowability of costs

Required Action(s):

The charter school must amend its FY 2022 CRRSA Consolidated Grant Application to identify the need(s) for the positions listed in this finding and indicate how the associated costs address one or more of the sixteen allowable uses under the CRRSA Act. The charter school is required to contact the Office of Supplemental Education Programs to schedule a meeting for assistance in the completion of its FY 2022 CRRSA amendment application. The charter school must email the OFAC documentation of such contact to <u>lisa.mccormick@doe.nj.gov</u> within thirty (30) days from the date of this ROE.

In addition, the charter school is required to provide accounting records evidencing the reversal of their salaries totaling \$173,575.00 from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 and all sums incurred thereafter, including any associated benefit costs, funded with CRRSA ESSER II monies.

If charter school has already received reimbursement for any portion of these staff member's salaries, the charter school must reduce the expenses claimed on its next reimbursement request for this federal award by that amount. The required documents must be submitted to OFAC through the CFM Homeroom Application within thirty (30) days from the date of this ROE.

ARP IDEA

At the time of the monitoring, the charter school had not allocated any expenditures to its 2021-2022 ARP IDEA Basic and Preschool grants. A review of JCCCS' expenditures attributable to these grants will be performed in conjunction with the CAP process.

Administrative Section

Finding 1:

The charter school submitted copies of polices pertaining to ESEA legislative requirements such as Supplement not Supplant, Maintenance of Effort and Comparability. The policies lacked any indication of adoption by its board and the dates. Conversely, the charter school did not have formal written procedures that address Uniform Grant Guidance requirements, including but not limited to:

- determining the allowability of costs in accordance with federal cost principles and the terms and conditions of the federal award;
- the mandatory disclosure of all violations of federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the federal award;
- minimizing the time elapsing between the transfer of funds from the department and the charter school's disbursement of payments to vendors for goods and

services (cash management or draw-down procedures); and

- the vetting of vendors for debarment and suspension before entering into procurement transactions with dollar amounts equal to or greater than \$25,000 for payment with federal funds. Verifications may be accomplished by:
 - checking the System for Award Management (SAM) Exclusions maintained by the General Services Administration and available at <u>https://sam.gov/content/home;</u>
 - \circ $\,$ collecting a certification from the entity; or
 - adding a clause or condition to the covered transaction (\$25,000 or above) with that entity (2 C.F.R. section 180.300).

Copies of evidence demonstrating performance of the requisite verifications must be kept on file.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1118 Fiscal Requirements; Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §§200.302(b)(6)-(7) Financial Management and 2 C.F.R. §§200.400 – 200.476 Subpart E - Cost Principles; §200.113 Mandatory disclosures; 2 C.F.R. §§200.317 - 327 Procurement Standards; and 2 C.F.R. §200.214 Suspension and debarment

Required Action(s):

The charter school must implement, develop and adopt board policies and written procedures which address ESEA legislative provisions and the Uniform Grant Guidance. The charter school may opt to utilize a vendor for the preparation of the requisite board policies.

Finding 2:

The charter school incorrectly used revenue code 4526 for its CARES ESSER I program. The correct revenue code is 4530.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.302(b)(3) Financial Management and The Uniform Minimum Chart of Accounts for New Jersey Public Schools and Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities (UMCOA)

Required Action(s):

The charter school must implement a process to ensure the use of revenue codes that comply with the department's prescribed UMCOA for the federal programs identified.

Finding 3:

The amounts appropriated for one or more federal grants in the charter school's accounting records could not be reconciled with corresponding amounts awarded in the EWEG system.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.302 Financial Management

Required Action(s):

The charter school must implement a process to ensure that appropriations of all federal grants are recorded appropriately in the financial records.

Finding 4:

On a few occasions, the charter school failed to issue a purchase order, prior to goods being purchased or services being rendered (confirming order). State regulations require that a *properly executed* purchase order be issued *prior* to the purchase of goods or the rendering of services.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.302(b)(4) Financial Management and N.J.S.A. 18A:18A(2)(v) Definitions "Purchase Order"

Required Action(s):

Purchase orders should be issued to all vendors prior to goods or services being provided.

Finding 5:

One or more purchase orders provided for examination lacked sufficient description of the goods or services acquired by the charter school. Pursuant to the Uniform Grant Guidance, the charter school is required to prepare:

- 1. all solicitations with clear and accurate technical descriptions of the items and/or services being procured; and
- 2. records in a manner which demonstrates compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.319(d)(1) Competition; §200.302(a) Financial Management; and §§200.400 – 200.476 Subpart E - Cost Principles

Required Action(s):

The charter school must prepare solicitations containing descriptions that sufficiently address and conform to the Uniform Grant Guidance requirements listed above.

Finding 6:

A number of purchase order voucher packets were selected and examined during monitoring. The charter school was unable to provide evidence that multiple quotes were obtained for more than one purchase order as required by:

- 1. the New Jersey Public School Contracts Law (PSCL) and charter school policy; or
- 2. procurement standards under Uniform Grant Guidance, whichever is most restrictive.

Federal procurement standards do not include all exemptions allowed under the PSCL, specifically, professional services.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §§200.317 - 327 Procurement Standards and N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-37(a) Award of purchases, contracts, or agreements

Required Action(s):

The charter school must adhere to the PSCL or applicable provisions of the Uniform Grant Guidance, whichever is most restrictive, when obtaining goods and services.

Finding 7:

The charter school is not submitting reimbursement requests for one or more federal awards on a monthly basis, or at least quarterly.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.305 Federal Payment; <u>Office of Grants</u> <u>Management, General Federal Entitlement Grant Guidance</u>; and <u>Policies and Procedures</u> <u>for Reimbursement of Federal and Other Grant Expenditures</u>

Required Action(s):

The charter school is required to submit reimbursement requests on a monthly basis, or at least quarterly. In addition, the charter school is responsible for maintaining supporting documentation for seven (7) years and for making it available to the NJDOE, the United States Department of Education, and/or their authorized representatives upon request.

The NJDOE thanks you for your time and cooperation during the monitoring visit and looks forward to a successful resolution of every finding and implementation of all required actions and recommendations contained in this report.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa D. McCormick via phone at (609) 376-3608 or via email at <u>lisa.mccormick@doe.nj.gov</u>.

Attachment A Lunch Coverage Expenditures Subject to Reversal

Title I Funded Staff with TARs	Duplicate Pay	Excess Pay	Indeterminable Nbr. of Hours Worked	Total
M. Balcazar	6,705.00			6,705.00
A. De Lumen	405.00			405.00
K. Hayes	920.00	300.00		1,220.00
K. Holmes	545.00	40.00		585.00
R. Porter			4,950.00	4,950.00
D. Rodriguez	180.00			180.00
A. Sotelo	1,870.00			1,870.00
O. Sweeney-Brown	3,450.00		180.00	3,630.00
Total	14,075.00	340.00	5,130.00	19,545.00