

Public Charter School Equity Grant 2023-2024

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Executive Summary

The Public Charter School Equity Grant was created to serve student populations from racial or ethnic groups that have historically experienced academic disparities or students with disabilities. This grant aims to support students in these focal groups and bridge the gap between what districts receive in funding for the charter students versus what the charter school receives in pass-through dollars to serve the focal students.

The Public Charter School Equity Grant was established by HB 2166 in 2021 and is now codified at [ORS 327.362](#). Eligible charter schools use grants to fund activities to increase academic achievement. To be eligible for a grant, a public charter school must not be a virtual public charter school and must have a student population of at least 65%, composed of students who have historically experienced academic disparities and students with disabilities.

Each grant cycle the Department of Education publishes a list of public charter schools that meet the eligibility requirements of [ORS 327.362](#). For public charter schools that have been in operation for one or more years, eligibility is determined based on the most recent finalized Spring membership report. In January 2022, a rule change was initiated to allow eligible public charter schools in their first year of operation during a grant cycle year to be eligible using the most recent finalized Fall Membership report and the December Special Education Child Count report. This change provided new eligible charter schools with critical funds in their 2nd year of operation rather than waiting for another grant cycle to determine eligibility.

In the first year of the grant (2022-2023), the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) awarded grants to seven eligible charter schools that serve approximately 1,800 students across the state of Oregon. \$2 million was allocated for the second year of the 2021-2023 biennium to allow for implementation during the first year. For the 2023-2025 biennium, the legislature provided grant funding for both years for a total of \$4.168 million providing a slight increase for current service level funding. In the second year of the grant funding (2023-2024), the Department awarded grants to eight eligible charter schools serving approximately 1,900 students across Oregon.

Eligible charter schools implemented a wide variety of strategies to support student growth. Some strategies used for the 2023-2024 school year include:

- Increasing students' mental and physical well-being to increase attendance and academic growth.
- Coaching and professional development for teachers on restorative practices and conflict resolution.
- Counseling services to meet students' mental and behavioral needs.
- Providing core academic instruction and enrichment opportunities during summers and breaks.
- Using multi-tiered systems of supports for all students.
- Providing additional instructional aides to support small group learning.
- Providing additional behavior support over extended breaks including 1:1 work with students most in need.

- Providing additional CTE programs to boost student attendance and help them meet the necessary academic requirements to participate in these programs.
- Focusing on implementing best practices in social and emotional learning (SEL), providing lessons to resolve conflict, and engaging in social justice work. This approach aims to enhance students' emotional well-being, improve their ability to attend school, and foster academic growth.

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Background

During the 2021 regular legislative session, HB 2166, now ORS 327.362, became law. HB 2166 included a wide variety of high-priority education initiatives for Oregon. Sections 15-18 of the bill established the Public Charter School Equity Grant and authorized ODE to award grants from the Statewide Education Initiatives Account to certain eligible public charter schools.

Purpose

The purpose of the grant is to increase academic achievement, including reducing academic disparities for focal groups defined as students with disabilities¹ (they must have an IEP), or students from racial or ethnic groups experiencing academic disparities². These include American Indian, Alaska Native students, Black African American students, Hispanic and Latino students, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students, and multiracial students. While districts may identify additional racial groups, those groups are not included in the Public Charter School Equity Grant to keep eligibility measurement data consistent from school to school. This law aims to support students in these focal groups and bridge the gap between what districts receive in funding for the charter students versus what the charter school receives in pass-through dollars to serve focal students.

Alignment with Student Investment Account (SIA)

This grant is designed to align closely with the Student Investment Account (SIA) Grant programs, activities, progress markers, local optional metrics, and Longitudinal Performance Growth Targets (LPGTs) to reduce the burden and administrative redundancy to charter schools. Charter Schools may use one of the following options for measuring progress:

- LPGTs or progress markers identified in their SIA Grant Agreement or Amendment.
- Local optional metrics or targets identified in their contract with the sponsoring district.
- New LPGTs identified in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Education during the grant agreement phase.

The statute specifically requires the last two options to use reliable sources of progress markers and must include third grade reading proficiency and regular attendance rates as defined in [ORS 327.190](#). Other metrics identified in collaboration may be used.

For the 2021-2023 biennium, schools were not required to identify LPGTs because of delays due to COVID-19. For the 2023-2025 biennium, six (6) eligible charter schools established LPGTs through their Integrated Application; one new school set LPGTs with ODE during the Public Charter School Equity Grant agreement process; and one school is exempt from LPGTs since it is in its second year of operation³.

¹ [OAR 581-014-0001\(7\)](#)

² [OAR 581-014-0001\(4\)](#)

³ In alignment with Student Investment Account Grant (SIA) requirements, schools are exempt from setting Longitudinal Performance Growth Targets (LPGTs) until they have at least five years of data.

Eligibility Requirements and Grant Funding

This is a formula grant, and for charter schools to be eligible they must not be a virtual charter school and must have at least 65% of the total population composed of students from racial or ethnic groups that historically experienced academic disparities and students experiencing disability (students with IEPs).

The grant was originally written to determine eligibility based on the most recently finalized Spring Membership report which the State Board of Education added to [OAR 581-017-0768\(2\)\(a\)](#). The eligibility rules were updated to include schools in their first year of operation by utilizing fall membership data and special education child count data to determine eligibility⁴. This change was adopted into rule by the State Board of Education and allowed a newly eligible charter school to access grant funds in their 2nd year of operation instead of waiting for 3-4 years into the next grant cycle to apply.

Public Charter School Equity Grants are funded through the Statewide Education Initiatives Account of the Student Success Act. \$2,000,000 was appropriated for the first biennium (2021-23)⁵. This grant was first available in the fall of 2022 which is year two of the biennium. Grant awards are calculated based on the charter school ADMw⁶ and the difference between the State School Funding a district receives on behalf of the charter school versus what the charter school contractually receives. The Department received an allocation of \$4,168,000 for the 2023-2025 biennium which is a slight increase in funding from the first year of the grant for the current service level.

Grant Program Funding Updates

If the formula allocation exceeds the total available funds, the statute allows the Department to apply a prorated amount to determine primary and secondary ADMw amounts. In year one (1) of the grant, the eligible charter schools allocation was \$2,201,301, exceeding the available \$2 million in funding. A 90% adjusted prorated amount was applied for charter schools. In the 2023-2025 biennium, eligible charter schools allocation was \$5,248,151 which exceeded the available \$4,168,000 in funding. This required a 79% adjusted prorated amount to be applied to eligible charter schools further reducing their 2023-25 allocations.

Charter Schools typically begin with 80-90% of the funding they would receive under the weighted Average Daily Membership (ADMw) calculation due to discrepancies between state school funding and what they contractually receive from their district. As more schools become eligible for the Charter School Equity Grant, the funding pool gets divided among a larger group. This redistribution results in smaller allocations per school. Reduced funding limits support and programs designed for students historically facing academic challenges and students with

⁴ [OAR 581-017-0768\(2\)\(b\)](#)

⁵ 1st Biennium 2021-2023: 2021-22 implementation year, 2022-23 first year of funded grant; 2nd Biennium 2023-2025: 2023-24 2nd year of funded grant, 2024-25 3rd year of funded grant.

⁶ [OAR 581-017-0765\(1\)](#) The ADMw is taken from the previous year's Fall Membership derived from the 1st period cumulative average daily membership collection, the Spring Membership report derived from the 3rd period cumulative average daily membership collection, and the December Special Education Child Count Data Report.

disabilities. This negatively affects educational equity and program quality in eligible charter schools.

Grantees

For the 2023-25 biennium, ODE awarded grants to eight (8) eligible charter schools based on their focal group and special education eligibility as indicated in the table below.

2023-24 Eligible Charter Schools

Charter School	23-24 Student Population	23-24 Grades Served	23-24 Grant Award	Combined Focal Group & Special Education Eligibility (based on 2022 Spring Membership)
Four Rivers Community School - Ontario, OR	353	K-12	\$ 261,359.29	85%
HOLLA School – Portland, OR	48	K-3	\$ 72,601.98	95%
Kairos PDX - Portland, OR	245	K-5	\$ 94,298.08	80%
Kids Unlimited Academy - Medford, OR	501	K-5	\$ 718,556.72	87%
Nixyaawii Community School - Pendleton, OR	78	9-12	\$ 33,905.89	94%
Rockwood Preparatory Academy - Portland, OR	327	K-5	\$ 284,833.14	79%
Siletz Valley School - Siletz, OR	220	K-12	\$ 329,901.23	69%
Woodburn Arthur Academy - Woodburn, OR	145	K-5	\$ 246,863.68	81%

Accomplishments

Communities, students, families, organizations, educators, and staff are still experiencing complex challenges after COVID-19 disruptions. Lower academic achievement has been reflected in the statewide assessments. Despite these challenges, efforts are being made in all grantee schools to increase attendance, reduce barriers for those historically underserved, and increase academic performance. The grant required all programs to submit an annual programmatic report by August 30, 2024. Below are some of the strategies, activities, and accomplishments from the reports for our eight charter schools.

Four Rivers Community School Summary 23-24 Grant Funding: \$261,359.29

Four Rivers Community School, located in Ontario, is a Dual Language Spanish Immersion K-12 school with two main campuses (Elementary, Jr. Prep, Sr. Prep) and serves approximately 350 students. In their annual report, Four Rivers highlighted the following accomplishments:

1. Strategic Use of Grant Funds
 - Additional bilingual instructional assistants
 - Athletic Director
 - Community Engagement Specialist/Community Outreach
 - Physical Activity Opportunities
2. Improved Outcomes
 - Attendance
 - i. 2021-22: 74% Regular Attenders
 - ii. 2022-23: 82% Regular Attenders
 - iii. 2023-24: 92% Regular Attenders
 - A grant-funded athletic director has helped foster inclusivity, offering opportunities for all students to engage in sports.
 - The school now has 23 athletic teams with 67% student participation.
 - There are no pay-to-play fees, resulting in improved attendance and academic performance.
 - The school has improved its OSAA Cup (academics) ranking from 86th to 18th place in just four years.
 - Dual Language schools see more significant English Language Arts progress after 5th grade.
 - By 11th grade, Four Rivers students have an 82.6% ELA passing rate, well above the state average of 44.2%.
 - The school achieved an on-track graduation rate of over 95% in 2023-24.

HOLLA School Summary 23-24 Grant Funding: \$72,601.98

HOLLA School, located in Portland, is in its second year of operation and is adding a grade each year through 5th grade (2022-23 K-2, 2023-24 K-3) and serves approximately 48 students. In their report, the HOLLA School highlighted several significant accomplishments and key strategies supported by the grant:

1. Strategic Use of Grant Funds
 - Staffing to provide professional development and leadership
 - Staffing to plan and provide curriculum professional development
 - Classroom mentors
2. Improved Outcomes
 - In 2023-24, student retention rose by 10% improving from 89% to 99%.
 - Literacy scores improved by 26.5%.
 - By the spring term, 74.5% of K-2 students met ELA benchmarks.
 - Staff received extensive training and coaching in research-based literacy strategies, bolstering instructional quality.

- HOLLA serves a disproportionately high percentage of students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) 24-32% compared to the 15% at the district and state level.
- Staff implemented initiatives for enhanced services for students with special needs, ensuring stronger inclusivity and support.
- Average attendance remained consistent at 85% across the first two years of the school's operation.

[Kairos PDX Summary 23-24 Grant Funding: \\$94,298.08](#)

Kairos PDX, located in Portland, is a K-5 education nonprofit focused on transforming education through a model built on love and inclusion that elevates the voices of historically marginalized children, their families, and communities and serves approximately 250 students. In their annual report, Kairos PDX provided the following accomplishments related to the grant:

1. Strategic Use of Grant Funds

- K-5 Counselor
- Professional Development and coaching for classroom teachers in culturally specific and trauma-informed strategies for improved social/emotional learning
- Behavioral support staff

2. Improved Outcomes

- Established a Junior Government for 5th graders to plan school activities and design incentives for improved attendance. Attendance rates improved by 6% as a result.
- Teachers received targeted training on a robust, school-adopted literacy curriculum.
- Staff were trained in Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles, focusing on understanding and addressing disparities, disproportionalities, and patterns of predictability in student outcomes.
- Teacher self-assessments and practice evaluations were utilized to deepen skills and knowledge for reducing racial achievement gaps.
- The new school counselor significantly added to the support for students' mental and behavioral health needs.

[Kid's Unlimited Academy Summary 23-24 Grant Funding: \\$718,556.72](#)

Kids Unlimited Academy (KUA), located in Medford, serves approximately 500 students. In 2023-24 they phased out their middle grades to refine their approach and address the needs of its high proportion of Ever English Learners (EEL) and students experiencing poverty (>95%). In their annual report, KUA noted that these targeted initiatives have resulted in KUA making notable strides in supporting its diverse and economically disadvantaged student population by emphasizing academic excellence and family engagement.

1. Strategic Use of Grant Funds

- Additional instructional aides in classrooms
- Instructional Coach

- Behavior systems staff
 - English Language Development (ELD) teacher
 - Extended learning staff (summer session)
2. Improved Outcomes
- Additional staffing (math and ELA instructional coaches) supported curriculum development and math/literacy instruction. Student's math and ELD state scores demonstrated a 3-4% growth.
 - ELA state testing scores increased from 28% (2022-23) to 33% (2023-24) using new strategies.
 - The Regular Attenders rate increased from 81% in 2022-23 to 94% in 2023-24.
 - Focus on strengthening families through school activities and requiring parent involvement hours has fostered a stronger school-community connection.
 - Extended school hours have been allocated to interventions and enrichments. These targeted interventions address learning gaps, and the enrichment activities challenge students fostering deeper learning and engagement.

Nixyaawii Community School Summary 23-24 Grant Funding: \$33,905.89

Nixyaawii Community School, located in Pendleton on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, serves approximately 78 students in grades 9-12 with a culturally enriched and supportive educational approach. Their focus is on credit recovery, cultural preservation, and mental health. In their annual report, Nixyaawii Community School highlighted efforts to integrate cultural values with academic and behavioral support. These initiatives align with the school's mission to empower Native American youth while addressing socio-economic and educational challenges.

1. Strategic Use of Grant Funds
- Behavior support specialist hours for extended duty and summer support
 - Extended classroom opportunities for students for credit recovery
 - Friday extended school activities
 - Providing cultural activities
2. Improved Outcomes
- Integrating cultural arts and values with academics by providing project-based credit recovery programs offered during summer and winter breaks. These include Alaskan Outdoor Adventure, beading, dressmaking, and traditional arts.
 - These additional activities provide students with opportunities to develop skills rooted in Native American cultural traditions, fostering pride and engagement among socio-economically disadvantaged students.
 - A dedicated Behavior Specialist meets with students daily, tracking attendance and providing motivation to stay in school and graduate. School leaders identified that support as the top priority for student success.

- Attendance remains a challenge, but progress has been made. Regular Attenders rate improved from 38% in 2022-23 to 57% in 2023-24.

Rockwood Preparatory Academy Summary 23-24 Grant Funding: \$284,833.14

Rockwood Preparatory Academy, located in Portland, is committed to improving academic outcomes for its K-5 students through a targeted and evidence-based approach. Serving approximately 325 students including 43% Ever English Learners, the school uses the Direct Instruction (DI) model for its teaching and curriculum to address the learning needs of its students.

1. Strategic Use of Grant Funds

- K-5 Small Group Coordinator
- Additional instructional assistants for small groups
- Scholarships for Before and After School Programs to support behaviors and attendance

2. Improved Outcomes

- Provide increased small-group academic support in classrooms; 1:1 interventions and tutoring to increase academic achievement for students and reduce academic disparities.
- The after-school program focuses on teaching self-discipline skills, helping students to improve their regular attendance and make safer choices. Schoolwide attendance rates have grown from a baseline 61% in 2022-23 to 66% in 2023-24.
- The school's Instructional Coordinator provides individualized instruction to students with a focus on student data and outcomes. This model has demonstrated tangible academic improvements, especially in early literacy and foundational skills.
- The Instructional Coordinator supports teachers in meeting the diverse needs of students by quickly identifying which students are missing key foundational skills related to phonemic segmentation and tutoring these students with significant improvement noted in one semester.
- Professional development is provided to teachers on evidence-based instructional strategies, best practices for instruction, targeting skill gaps, and effectively engaging with our diverse student populations.
- The addition of new students with significant skill deficits continues to impact overall ELA state assessment scores, highlighting the ongoing need for focused interventions and support.

Siletz Valley School Summary 23-24 Grant Funding: \$329,901.23

Siletz Valley School, located in Siletz, serves approximately 248 students in grades K-12 with a significant population of students with disabilities and students from The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians.

1. Strategic Use of Grant Funds

- Expansion of CTE programming, equipment, and course materials for Culinary and Woodshop programs
 - Culinary instructors
 - Health/PE instructor
 - Academic support staff
 - Youth survey
2. Improved Outcomes
- The grant funded the development of a Culinary Arts program and provided more opportunities for student participation and hands-on real-world learning experiences. Last year, all students who participated in either program (Culinary Arts, Woodshop) graduated from high school on time.
 - The Culinary Arts program has been integrated with the Food Service Program and provides high-quality breakfasts and lunches cooked on-site by the Culinary Arts students. They provide catering for district and community events strengthening engagement and participation with families.
 - The Culinary Arts program incorporates a Farm-to-Table Partnership, leveraging fresh, locally sourced ingredients from the Tribal Farm.
 - Tribal Elders mentor students, teaching sustainable farming practices, growing and harvesting using a Tribal sustainability lens and cultural traditions around food. They are fostering an understanding of sharing, caring for their Elders, and the interconnectedness of food and community.
 - Critical math concepts such as measurement and ratios, along with health and safety standards are taught in the two CTE programs.
 - Experience and training in running a commercial kitchen, food truck operations, and business fundamentals (e.g., profit/loss analysis).
 - Prepares students with employable skills, enabling them to explore career opportunities and secure jobs while still in high school while fostering teamwork, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills.

Woodburn Arthur Academy Summary 23-24 Grant Funding: \$246,863.68

Woodburn Arthur Academy (WAA), located in Woodburn, serves approximately 161 students in grades K-5 using a Direct Instruction (DI) model which utilizes small-sized instructional groups for students to be placed appropriately at their skill level for math and ELA. They serve a high population of ELL and Spanish speakers who benefit significantly from this type of personalized approach to instruction.

1. Strategic Use of Grant Funds
 - Small groups teacher to allow for smaller instructional groups in the K-5 classroom
 - Social Emotional Learning (SEL) specialist
2. Improved Outcomes
 - The grant funded a full-time SEL Specialist, a key addition that has significantly contributed to improving student behavior and emotional regulation.

- The SEL specialist's support has helped reduce the number of behavior referrals, minimizing disruptions and reducing lost instructional time due to student deregulation. This allows for more consistent learning and improved classroom environments.
- Improving student attendance has been a major focus for WAA, a new Attendance and Missing Work Policy was implemented for the 2024-25 school year.
- The school has increased efforts to connect with families and track attendance daily, monitoring both class-specific and overall school attendance.
- September 2024 school data showed attendance above 70% compared to the 60% Regular Attenders rate in 2023-24.
- WAA is a highly migratory school, with students at all grade levels who may begin their education with limited proficiency in English. This presents challenges for achieving rapid progress in language acquisition and improvement in the standardized state test performance.
- Leadership and staff are dedicated to meeting students at their current reading levels and working to move them up several levels throughout the year. This personalized, level-based approach allows students to grow at their own pace, building both language and academic skills.
- Using the Direct Instruction model and providing targeted support for Spanish-speaking students, enables these students to strengthen both their language skills and academic progress.

Looking Forward to the 2025-2027 Biennium

Grant Selection and Extension

During the 2023 legislative session, \$4.168 million was appropriated for the Charter School Equity grant for the 2023-25 biennium. In spring 2023, ODE published a list of eligible schools for the grant. All seven (7) schools from the first year were eligible and one new school was added due to the rule change allowing the Fall Membership Report and December Special Education Child Count to be used for schools in their first year of operation. The 2023-25 grantees are:

- Four Rivers Community School, Ontario, OR
- HOLLA School, Portland, OR (**new grantee**)
- Kairos PDX, Portland, OR
- Kids Unlimited Academy, Medford, OR
- Nixyaawii Community School, Pendleton, OR
- Rockwood Preparatory Academy, Portland, OR
- Siletz Valley School, Siletz, OR
- Woodburn Arthur Academy, Woodburn, OR

In the spring of 2025, ODE will publish the list of eligible schools for the Charter School Equity Grant pending legislative budget approval by the end of the 2025 legislative session. The Department does not anticipate any additional schools to be eligible for funding.

Summary

The Charter School Equity grant provided new resources to charter schools serving focal groups that have historically been underserved. Funded charter schools saw growth in on-time graduation rates, attendance, community and student engagement, and some academic measures. ODE has established a baseline of performance data to compare in the 2025-27 biennium. All charter schools, except for the newest school, set longitudinal progress growth targets (LPGTs) with their 2023-25 Integrated Application and Plan. The LPGTs will be used in future years to measure progress with the addition of equity grant dollars as these grants bridge the gap between what districts receive in funding for the charter students versus what the charter school receives in pass-through dollars to serve focal students.