

2024-106 AUDIT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

Twin Rivers Unified School District and Highlands Community Charter Schools—Programs and Oversight

The audit by the California State Auditor will provide independently developed and verified information related to Twin Rivers Unified School District (TRUSD), Highlands Community Charter and Technical Schools, and the oversight provided for their various educational programs. The audit's scope will include, but not be limited to, the following activities:

1. Review and evaluate the laws, rules, and regulations significant to the audit objectives.
2. Review whether Highlands Community Charter School's (HCCS) and California Innovative Career Academy's (CICA) policies and procedures related to calculating enrollment and average daily attendance (ADA) are adequate and align with state law. Perform the following:
 - (a) Verify the accuracy of HCCS's and CICA's documentation for the past three years related to ADA and enrollment, including for students enrolled in independent study, English Language Development courses, or in courses not leading to a high school diploma. Verify the accuracy of documentation of independent study policies, including the calculation of the time value of student work products and synchronous instruction. Identify the number of students who received a high school diploma or an industry certification.
 - (b) To the extent that HCCS's and CICA's reported ADA and student enrollment numbers are inaccurate, determine the reasons for these inaccuracies and calculate the cost of any disallowed funding related to their ADAs.
3. Review and evaluate HCCS's and CICA's policies and procedures for ensuring that all instructors are appropriately credentialed for their assignments. Perform the following:
 - (a) Determine the number of credentialed instructors by type of credential.
 - (b) For a judgmentally selected number of instructors, including instructors on a local assignment option and those holding a Career Technical Education or adult education credential, verify whether each instructor had appropriate credentials and complied with other applicable requirements.
 - (c) Based on the results of the review in Objective 3(b), identify whether instructors who lacked appropriate credentials taught students and calculate the cost of any disallowed funding related to their ADAs.
 - (d) Determine whether HCCS and CICA accurately reported to the State any instances of teacher misassignment data.
4. Evaluate HCCS's and CICA's processes for ensuring that student-to-teacher ratios for both classroom-based and independent study courses comply with state requirements and their processes for ensuring students' access to adequate instructional materials and technology. Perform the following:

- (a) For a judgmentally selected number of courses, determine whether the associated student-to-teacher ratios meet state requirements and were accurately reported to applicable parties, and whether students in these courses had access to adequate instructional materials and technology.
 - (b) To the extent that ratios at CICA or in any other course do not meet state requirements, calculate any disallowed funding.
- 5. To the extent possible, evaluate HCCS's and CICA's employment policies and determine whether they adequately promote fair hiring practices, including protecting against nepotism and conflicts of interest, ensuring employees' qualifications, and guarding against whistleblower retaliation. For a judgmentally selected number of employees and consultants from the past three years, including executives, review qualifications and determine whether the schools hired any employees or consultants because of nepotism or for any other reason resulting in an unqualified employee's hire and whether the selected employees', executives', and consultants' compensation aligns with compensation for such employees in similar districts.
- 6. Review financial information from HCCS and CICA and determine whether their budgeting and expenditures—including expenditures for housing, employee travel, marketing and recruitment, and political contributions—are appropriate and align with applicable requirements, similar institutions, and best practices.
- 7. Review the charter governing HCCS and CICA and determine whether the schools failed to comply with or violated their charter or applicable state law by serving students not covered by the charter.
- 8. Assess TRUSD's processes for ensuring that charter schools, including HCCS and CICA, meet the requirements of the Education Code. Determine the extent of TRUSD's oversight efforts of HCCS and CICA since 2018 and the cost of this oversight, and review whether TRUSD has responded appropriately to information regarding alleged violations at HCCS and CICA.
- 9. Survey current and former students and employees to gain perspective on the quality of the learning experience at HCCS and CICA, the frequency of student attendance, student work products and course workload, the schools' marketing strategies, any action taken toward whistleblowers, and other areas pertaining to HCCS's and CICA's responsibilities for achieving educational outcomes in compliance with state law.
- 10. Review and assess any other issues that are significant to the audit.