

**DENY THE RENEWAL OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL AGREEMENT WITH  
ACADEMY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY CHARTER SCHOOL****THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING DECISION:**

Deny the renewal of the Charter School Agreement with Academy of Communication and Technology Charter School. Information pertinent to this denial is stated below.

**CHARTER SCHOOL:** Academy of Communications and Technology (ACT)  
4319 W. Washington  
Chicago, Illinois 60624  
(773) 626-4200  
Contact Persons: Sarah Howard, School Leader

**OVERSIGHT:** Charter Schools Office  
125 S. Clark, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Chicago, IL 60603  
773-553-1535  
Contact Person: Genita C. Robinson, Director

**ORIGINAL AGREEMENT:** The original Charter School Agreement (authorized by Board Report 97-0122-EX4) with the ACT Charter School is for a term commencing July 1, 1997 and ending June 30, 2002. In 2002, ACT was renewed (authorized by Board Report 02-0123-EX3) for a two-year term commencing July 1, 2002 and ending June 30, 2004. As a condition of this two year renewal, ACT was required to reach eight benchmarks of academic progress outlined by the Charter School Office Review Committee ("Committee"). The Charter School Agreement authorizes the operation of a single facility Charter School focusing on communications and technology for students in grades 6-12. The school has a current enrollment of approximately 299 students. The Agreement incorporates an accountability plan whereby the school is evaluated by the Board each year based on numerous factors related to its academic, financial and operational performance.

**CHARTER RENEWAL PROPOSAL:** The ACT Charter School submitted a renewal proposal on December 8, 2003 to continue the operation of the school under the same mission and educational programs at its current location.

**CHARTER EVALUATION:** The Charter Schools Office Review Committee ("Committee") has reviewed and evaluated ACT's renewal proposal as well as the school's past academic, financial and operational performance. The Committee has determined that ACT has failed to meet or make reasonable progress towards achieving the academic, financial and operational standards contained in the Agreement's accountability plan.

Because ACT serves both elementary and high school levels, two sets of performance data are available. In reviewing the school's academic performance on both the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the ISAT assessments, the school has shown limited improvement over the last four years. While ITBS scores increased from 16.8% reading at the national norm in 2000 to 29.8% in 2003, ISAT scores have shown more limited gains of 18.8% of students meeting or exceeding state standards in 2000 as compared to 21.6% in 2003. CPS neighborhood schools performed better on 6 of the 7 elementary student performance measures reviewed, including ITBS reading scores, ITBS reading and math gains, ISAT composite scores, ISAT score change from prior year, and attendance.

At the high school level, the school has posted consistently low academic results on the TAP and Prairie State assessments. In 2003, ACT's Prairie State results recorded 12.1% of students meeting or exceeding State standards. ACT has consistently struggled with an extremely low graduation rate. In 2003, their graduation rate was 42%. Student retention has also been an area of difficulty for the charter school. In the class of 2002, out of the 31 freshmen and students that subsequently transferred in, only one graduated from ACT. Similarly, in the class of 2003, out of the 65 freshmen and students that subsequently transferred in, only 11 graduated from the charter school. In non-academic areas, the school has maintained solid financial management and operational compliance.

As a condition of their two-year renewal, ACT was required to reach most, if not all, of the following student achievement goals:

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|---|----------------------|
| 1) 25% of students at national norms on the ITBS reading      | Met (29.8%)          |
| 2) 25% of students at national norms on the ITBS math         | Met (30.6%)          |
| 3) Average gain of at least 1.0 year on the ITBS in reading   | Did not meet (0.9)   |
| 4) Average gain of at least 1.0 year on the ITBS in math      | Did not meet (0.9)   |
| 5) 25% of students meeting or exceeding standards on the ISAT | Did not meet (21.6%) |
| 6) 25% of students meeting or exceeding standards on the PSAE | Did not meet (12.1%) |
| 7) High school attendance rate of at least 85%                | Met (87.0%)          |
| 8) Retention of 75% of freshmen at ACT in successive years    | Met (75%)            |

When the Committee reviewed ACT's performance, the charter school had only met four of these goals. Therefore, the Committee has determined that the school's past performance does not warrant a renewal and unanimously recommends that ACT's charter renewal request be denied.

**AUTHORIZATION:** Authorize the Director of Charter Schools to issue a letter notifying the Illinois State Board of Education of the action(s) approved hereunder.

**LSC REVIEW:** Approval of Local School Councils is not applicable to this report.

**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION:** Not applicable.

**FINANCIAL:** Not applicable.

**GENERAL CONDITIONS:** Not applicable.

Approved:

Barbara J. Eason-Watkins  
Chief Education Officer

Respectfully submitted:

Arne Duncan  
Chief Executive Officer

Within Appropriation:

  
John Maiorca  
Chief Financial Officer

Approved as to Legal Form:

  
Ruth Moscovitch  
General Counsel