



## SPONSOR CONNECTION JULY 2026

### Latest News for St. Aloysius Sponsored Schools

#### Reminders

- 7/1: Rapback system opens for reaffirming non-credentialed employees and bus/van drivers
- 7/1: Deadline to adopt [formal AI policies](#)
- 7/1: Complete [Community School Gifted Performance Indicator opt-in form](#)
- 7/15: Final day to [submit Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid and Student Wellness and Success Funds report](#)
- 7/15: Deadline for EMIS data collections
- 8/1: Deadline to notify district, ODEW, and sponsor of intent to transport all students from one or more districts
- 8/1: Deadline to adopt Online Day Plans
- 8/31: Deadline to submit the T2 for applicable schools



#### **FY26-27 Governing Authority and School Leader Timeline**

Click the link below to access the the timeline.

[Governing Authority & School Leader Timeline 25-27](#)

#### **Charter School Specialists Staff Directory**

Click on the link: [CSS Staff Directory](#)



#### **National Charter Schools Conference 2026**

The National Charter Schools Conference (NCSC) was held in New Orleans June 24-26.

The NCSC, hosted by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is the largest national gathering of charter school educators, advocates, and leaders.

Jon Acuff was the Keynote Speaker. Jon is a New York Times bestselling author and has sold more than one million copies and was named one of Inc.'s Top 100 Leadership Speakers.

Dave Cash, CEO and Rod Hale, President of CSS, attended the conference. The school leader and board of Cincinnati Achievement Academy also were in attendance and were able to share a few moments with our team at the conference.

## Legal Department

#### **Governing Authority and School Leader Timelines**

St. Aloysius and Charter School Specialists strive to provide transparent oversight and proactive assistance to our sponsored schools. In order to help governing authorities and school leaders plan for a successful year, we have put together an annual timeline of important deadlines. The timeline is not intended to be an all-inclusive list but rather a list representing some of the significant items that governing authorities and school leaders should be actively monitoring. You will find the timeline on our website. We also have a link in this Sponsor Connection Newsletter and will continue to have a link to this timeline in each monthly sponsor connection for the remainder of the school year.

#### **Sponsor Policy Reminder**

As required by the Ohio Department of Education and the Sponsor Evaluation System, Charter School Specialists is providing this annual reminder of the intervention policies in place to comply with the Ohio Revised Code sections. R.C. §3314.023 requires sponsors to provide monitoring, oversight, and technical assistance to community schools. R.C. §3314.023(E) states that this shall include "taking steps to intervene in the school's operation to correct problems in the school's overall performance", declaring the school to be on probationary status pursuant to section §3314.073 of the Revised Code, suspending the operation of the school pursuant to section §3314.072 of the Revised Code, terminating the contract of the school pursuant to section §3314.07 of the Revised Code, or assuming the operations of a school pursuant to Section 1.4 of the Charter Agreement as determined necessary by the sponsor.

A school may be placed on a corrective action plan, placed on probation, or suspended for the following reasons:

1. Violation of rule and/or law.
2. Violation of community school contract.
3. Excessive decrease in enrollment.
4. Financial instability.
5. Organizational/Operational deficiencies.
6. Failure to respond to reasonable requests from sponsor.
7. Failure to adequately address deficiencies from the school being placed on probation; and
8. Failure to make adequate academic progress or meet local report card measures.
9. Other Good Cause as identified by the sponsor.

Additionally, R.C. §3314.072 allows a sponsor to terminate a contract prior to its expiration if the sponsor has suspended the operation of the contract.

Charter School Specialists has developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that outline the responsibilities of the school leader, management company (if applicable), governing authority counsel, governing authority president, and other personnel related to intervention. The SOPs are available at any time on the Charter School Specialists website. By clicking the links, you may review the

A link to all of the available St. Aloysius and Charter School Specialists SOPs can be found [HERE](#).

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

As we approach the 2026 – 2027 school year, we want to take this opportunity to highlight the important roles and responsibilities that each stakeholder has in making every community school successful, accountable, and responsive to student and family needs. As this year brings many new challenges, we are confident that all of the members of our Charter School Specialists' family will work together to ensure that students across the state of Ohio have access to high performing community schools.

The document titled "[Unique Roles Defined in Ohio's Community School System](#)" clearly lays out the responsibilities of each entity involved with our community schools. This document and the roles will be covered in a training to be released this summer, prior to the start of the school year. The training will also cover the contract and will delineate the roles and responsibilities of the school. We will send a notification when this training becomes available and after that date this training will be available on our website for all of those who were not able to attend.

We all have a role in maintaining high standards for school performance, ensuring school autonomy, and protecting the interests of taxpayers and students. Our schools need to be able to answer these questions:

1. Is the educational program of the school a success?
2. Is the school financially viable?
3. Is the organization operated effectively?

Understanding the roles and responsibilities covered in the resources provided here will help us to answer those important questions.

Thank you for the work you do for your school, and we wish everyone a successful 2026-2027 school year.

## **2026-2027 Compliance Year Update**

As we officially turn the page to the 2026-2027 School Year, we would like to thank all those that made last year a successful year of compliance monitoring. We appreciate all the effort that was made to ensure everything was appropriately documented. Looking forward to the upcoming year, we have a few reminders and updates that we are excited to share.

### **Sponsor Evaluation**

The last stage to complete our sponsor evaluation for 2025-2026 will require ODEW to visit 10 randomly selected St. Aloysius schools for a brief onsite visit. Brian Dunbar and the compliance department will be in contact with all schools that are selected and will be sure to ensure each school is prepped and ready for the visit. These visits will likely occur in the first 2 weeks of August.

### **Opening Assurances**

We are currently working through updating all the required inspections, BCI/FBI background checks, insurance certificates, licenses, etc. for all schools to ensure the Opening Assurances documentation is in place prior to the first day of school.

### **Trainings**

Please ensure all required staff trainings are completed during teacher in-service, if you have any questions about the required trainings please contact your compliance coordinator.

### **Compliance Coordinator Assignments**

As we bring on a new compliance coordinator and make a few tweaks to school assignments, please note that some schools will have new compliance coordinators this year as we try to create better efficiency for your teams and ours.

### **CSS New Document Management System**

We are excited to bring a more streamlined approach to our compliance collection process as we add a document management system this year! We will be sharing more details soon on how Hub Share will help all of us!

## **Charter School Specialists Hosts Professional Development on LRE & Change of Placement in Partnership with ODEW**



On June 4, 2026, Charter School Specialists (CSS) partnered with the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) to provide a targeted professional development session focused on Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Change of Placement requirements under IDEA.

The training brought together school leaders, special education personnel, and compliance staff to strengthen their understanding of one of the most critical areas of special education compliance—ensuring that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs while following required legal and procedural safeguards when placement changes are considered. Participants engaged in discussions surrounding IDEA requirements related to LRE, the legal and procedural considerations for change of placement

decisions, differentiating disciplinary removals from changes in educational placement, and the data and documentation necessary to support placement determinations. The session also emphasized the importance of parent participation and procedural safeguards, reviewed common compliance concerns identified through state monitoring and complaint investigations, and highlighted best practices for maintaining compliance while ensuring student-centered decision-making.

### **Strong Participation and Positive Feedback**

Feedback from attendees demonstrated the value of the training:

- 100% of participants reported that the educational objectives were achieved

- 90% indicated they would likely change their practice as a result of the training
- 100% rated the presenters as knowledgeable and effective communicators
- Participants highlighted the practical examples, compliance guidance, and opportunity to ask questions specific to real-world scenarios.

Click [HERE](#) for the full survey summary

### **Building Capacity Through Proactive Professional Learning**

As schools continue to navigate increasingly complex special education requirements, proactive professional development remains essential. Sessions such as this help school teams strengthen internal systems, improve compliance practices, and ultimately support better outcomes for students with disabilities.

Charter School Specialists remains committed to providing meaningful professional learning opportunities that equip school leaders with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate federal and state requirements with confidence.

We extend our appreciation to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce for their partnership and expertise in making this training possible.

### **Looking Ahead**

This session is one example of CSS's continued investment in supporting schools through high-quality compliance-focused professional development. Additional training opportunities and resources will be available throughout the 2026–2027 school year as part of our ongoing commitment to supporting school leaders, educators, and students.

**Together, we are building stronger systems, promoting compliance, and ensuring students receive the supports and services they need to succeed.**

## Federal Programs

We are all happy to celebrate our country's 250th year, but we can also celebrate the 61 years of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, reauthorized as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)! As we open the new fiscal year FY27, we need to be aware of the new expectations for the federal consolidated grants (Title I, II, III, IV, IDEA, ECSE).

Schools accepting federal grants need to have a heightened awareness of the required role of stakeholders in these programs. Stakeholders include not only parents and students, but also school staff, community organizations, community businesses, governing boards, and other community members. How are you ensuring and documenting that these stakeholders are participating in the planning process for these grants? Are you giving out surveys, collecting the data, and analyzing it and then considering it when determining the school's One Plan and annual programs and activities?

All the stakeholders should be participating in the planning and evaluation of programs supported by federal funds. The expectation is that schools will be reporting out publicly regarding the programs that are supported with these public funds (federal funds). Schools should be reporting about these programs at the governing board meetings. The school's website should mention the grants and the programs supported with these funds and include contact information. Any event funded by these grants should be mentioned in the event notices. Please make sure to document your efforts to involve the school's stakeholders.

If you have any questions regarding federal programs, please contact Nannette Sherman at [nsherman@charterschoolspec.com](mailto:nsherman@charterschoolspec.com).

## College and Career Readiness Corner

As the saying goes, "It takes a village...."

As all educators know, establishing positive and supportive relationships with our youth is key to positive postsecondary and life success. The [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#) study illustrates, the most significant factor in supporting youth who have experienced adverse childhood experiences is having a caring, consistent, and nurturing person in that young person's life.

One particularly vulnerable group are youth who are involved in the criminal justice system. Often the juvenile justice system, while well meaning, falls short of getting kids back on a positive trajectory and avoid recidivism (being re-arrested for criminal activity). In recent years, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency (OJJDP) and the U.S. Department of Justice have made investments in the development of mentoring programs. These programs place a premium on reducing recidivism, supporting high school graduation, job training, and career planning, as well as other meaningful supports.

If you would like to learn more about the work of the OJJDP and find out more about how you can be a part of the mentorship movement, you can find more information at the link found below.

[Mentorship for Youth who Have Been Arrested or Incarcerated.](#)

## Proposed Insurance Coverage Considerations: What Charter School Boards Need to Know

*By Pat O'Neill, O'Neill Insurance*

Proposed updates to the standard insurance recommendations for Ohio charter schools are currently under review. These proposed changes are intended to better address evolving risks facing schools, including cyber incidents, student safety concerns, and employment-related claims.

The chart below compares the current insurance standards with several proposed enhancements that schools may wish to discuss with their insurance advisor.

### **What Is Changing and Why It Matters**

Coverage	Current Agreement	Proposed Changes	Notes
General Liability	\$1M/\$2M	\$1M/\$2M	Remains the foundation of the school's liability protection
Abuse Liability	Not included	\$1M	New proposed modification addressing allegations involving abuse or inappropriate conduct involving students.
Educators & Professional Liability	See E&O below	\$1M	Clarifies the existing Errors & Omissions coverage through a combined policy that typically includes Educators Legal Liability, Employment Practices Liability, and often Directors & Officers coverage.
Errors & Omissions	\$1M/\$1M	Incorporated into Educators & Professional Liability	Existing coverage is being clarified and consolidated under Educators & Professional Liability coverage.
Auto Liability	Not included	\$1M	New proposed modification addressing exposures created when employees, board members, or volunteers use vehicles on behalf of the school. Even schools that prohibit transportation or do not own vehicles may face liability when personal vehicles are used for school business. This coverage helps protect against claims arising from those situations
Directors & Officers	\$1M/\$1M	Incorporated within Educators & Professional Liability policy (where available)	Schools should review policy language with their insurance advisor.
Cyber Liability	Not included	\$1M	New proposed modification recognizing the growing risks associated with student, employee, and financial data.
Umbrella Liability	\$5M – Over General Liability only	\$5M – Over General Liability and Auto Liability	Proposed enhancement broadens excess liability protection to include Auto Liability in addition to General Liability.

### Preparing for Potential Changes

Boards and school administrators should periodically review their insurance program with their insurance advisor to ensure it aligns with the school's operations and risk profile. Reviewing available coverage options can help schools make informed decisions about safeguarding their operations, employees, students, and governing boards.

### About the Author

Pat O'Neill with O'Neill Insurance and has worked with Ohio charter schools for more than 10 years.



## Important Transportation Reminders for FY26-27

As we prepare for the upcoming school year, we wanted to remind schools who are transporting some or all of their students about deadlines and requirements.

School Governing Authorities who would like to assume transportation of all students from one or more districts need to pass a resolution assuming transportation and notify the school district(s), ODEW, and the sponsor by August 1 to be eligible for funding for FY26-27. The letter(s) need to be sent to each district that you intend to assume transportation of students. The letters need to be forwarded to ODEW at [schoolbus@education.ohio.gov](mailto:schoolbus@education.ohio.gov) and to the sponsor at [cisaac@charterschoolspec.com](mailto:cisaac@charterschoolspec.com).

If a school transports or plans to transport all or a portion of students via board owned buses/vans/alternative vehicles OR contract with a vendor for bus/van service/alternative vehicle the school must adhere to all state and federal transportation laws regarding authorized

vehicles and drivers.

It is important to remember that schools contracting with a vendor for transportation are still liable. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure the vendor is authorized by ODEW to transport students. A school should not contract with a vendor unless they verify they are compliant. Below is a list of standard documentation schools and transportation contractors should have in their files:

- IRN - transportation vendors need to have an IRN as a transportation contractor.
- Authorized vehicles that meet all safety standards for student transportation.
- proof of driver compliance (preservice certificate, background checks, Seizure training (bus drivers), blood borne pathogens training, Rapback enrollment confirmation, transportation vendor annual certificate, CDL (bus drivers), annual physicals, drug testing, annual in-service training of at least 4 hours).
- proof of insurance in the amounts specified by law.
- comprehensive policies that meet all school transportation requirements for drivers and vehicles.
- State Highway Patrol inspection and sticker for the current school year for Buses.
- proof of vehicle inspections by a qualified mechanic - quarterly for buses and twice annually for alternative vehicles (State Hwy patrol inspection does not count toward the quarterly inspections for buses).

The governing authority needs to adopt the bus stops and time schedule and put it into force not earlier than thirty days prior to and not later than thirty days after the beginning of the school. The governing authority can designate the superintendent or another designee to make subsequent changes/relocate bus stops. The bus stops/routes and schedule need to be presented to the governing authority, prior to approving. The designee will need to keep a copy of the minutes/resolutions, bus stops/routes, and schedule in their transportation records. This does not apply to alternative vehicles. Alternative vehicles are not permitted to stop on roadways. They have to pull off of the street and into the driveway to pick up a student.

All bus/van drivers must be in Rapback System that is maintained through the State Board of Education. All drivers must be re-affirmed annually in the Rapback System between July 1 and October 31. Failure to re-affirm (approve) by October 31 will result in the driver being unenrolled in Rapback and they will need to start the process over.

Schools who are currently approved and received funding for FY25-26 need to submit the T2 in DRIVES by August 31 and print a copy to keep in their files for the auditor of state.

Schools who are approved for funding or will be eligible to receive funding through an agreement with the districts, ODEW, and the sponsor beginning FY26-27, will need to ensure that they document October week ridership, routes, mileage, gas etc. for inspection by the state auditor and so that they can accurately enter the information into the T1 report in DRIVES. October count week is October 5-9 for FY26-27 but if the school is not in session for the whole week, the following week that has 5 full days in session can be used.

T1 report is due in DRIVES by November 1 for schools who currently receive or will receive funding in FY26-27. If a school needs to amend the report, they will need to notify the transportation department at [SchoolBus@education.ohio.gov](mailto:SchoolBus@education.ohio.gov) to reset it, so the changes can be made. Schools have until February 1 to make changes. Print a copy of the report and keep in the file for the auditor of state.

Schools providing all or a portion of transportation are to offer student and parent/guardian bus safety orientation at the beginning of the school year per [OAC 3301-83-09](#). Schools will:

- Offer opportunities for students, along with their parents or guardians, to meet their bus drivers, tour a bus and learn about school safety.
- Provide families with take-home materials that parents and guardians can use to encourage positive school bus behaviors.
- When possible, school bus safety orientations should be incorporated into existing school-required orientations, meetings, or assemblies.

If it is not possible to provide the bus safety orientation to students during school orientation, then they are required to provide safety instruction to all transported students in grades kindergarten through third within two weeks after the beginning of the school year. Documentation must be kept on file that shows date(s) of training, how many students were present, what handouts were given to students, bus driver signature and school designee signature.

Annually, the principal or designee in cooperation with the transportation director/supervisor will schedule and conduct 3 emergency exit drills for all students who ride school buses to and from school. Each of the following emergency procedures will be conducted at least once annually:

1. Everyone exits through the front entrance door;
2. Everyone exits through the rear emergency door; and
3. Front half exits through the front door and rear half exits through the rear door.

The drills will be supervised by at least one staff person other than the driver assigned to the route.

Drills should be held on school property when possible and not on the bus route. The driver is to remain in the bus during evacuation drills with the parking brake set, the ignition turned off, and the transmission placed in neutral or park.

ODEW has a resource page on their website for schools that has information, links, examples, transportation manual, forms, etc. To access it click on the link: <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Finance-and-Funding/School-Transportation>

If you have transportation questions, please email [SchoolBus@education.ohio.gov](mailto:SchoolBus@education.ohio.gov) or contact Carla Isaac at [cisaac@charterschoolspec.com](mailto:cisaac@charterschoolspec.com).