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Charter school fraud reported again and again.

One-half of the charter schools that have ever been approved up to now by the state have closed.

Financial fraud, academic failure and mismanagement are among the reasons for closure.

One of the latest debacles is the Columbus-based Shepard charter school. According to the state audit, Shepard School had a negative net position of $1,533,079 in fiscal year 2024. The Columbus Dispatch article describes this matter.

When will state officials enact regulations to stop waste and corruption in the charter school industry?

Closed Columbus charter school owes state more than $46,000

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Columbus Dispatch

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A charter school in Columbus that closed in 2024 owes Ohio more than $46,000 after a state audit found it did not properly keep student enrollment and attendance records.

An audit from the Ohio Auditor of State, released Sept. 22, found that Eagle Charter Schools, also known as Shepard School, a K-5 school on Columbus' Near East Side, owes the state $46,131 and issued a finding to recover it. A review determined the school received more state funding than could be verified by student enrollment and attendance data.

More: A Columbus charter head used school cash to buy a house. He's still running the school

A finding for recovery is issued by the Auditor of State when public funds have been misspent, or property has been misappropriated.

The Dispatch could not locate contact information for the school's administrator and superintendent. The Shepard School's sponsor, Buckeye Community Hope Foundation, did not immediately return requests for comment.

Under a finding for recovery, the legal counsel for a public office is authorized to collect the public money due within 120 days. The Auditor of State is also required to notify the Attorney General of every finding for recovery. If, after 120 days, the legal counsel for the public office has not initiated legal action to recover the public money due, the Ohio Attorney General can seek recovery of the money.

According to the audit, the charter school could not provide adequate documentation for enrollments, attendance, absences, and withdrawals. The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's closing review of enrollment found that "most records were missing, and school administrators declined to participate, and all available records were given to the sponsor."

"A lack of internal controls over reporting attendance records increases the risk that the school's funding could be calculated based on inaccurate information," the audit said.

The audit shows that the Shepard School's enrollment declined from 94 students to 78 students in fiscal year 2023, and the school was only serving 31 students at the time of its closure in December 2024.

The audit also found the school had substantial debts, an operating loss of $559,952, a negative net position of $1,533,079 in fiscal year 2024, and was unable to support the attendance information used for state funding calculations.

Cole Behrens covers K-12 education and school districts in central Ohio. Have a tip? Contact Cole at cbehrens@dispatch.com or connect with him on X at @Colebehr_report