

# Understanding and Preparing for the SCSC Renewal Process

State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia



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# SCSC Mission

The mission of the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia is to improve public education throughout the state by approving high quality charter schools that provide students with *better* educational opportunities than they would otherwise be afforded in traditional schools.

# SCSC Evaluation Metrics

- State charter schools are assessed with a Comprehensive Performance Framework that enables transparent and objective performance evaluations in the following areas: 1) academic achievement, 2) financial health, and 3) operational compliance.
  - The academic portion of the CPF incorporates various components of the CCRPI (official state accountability tool) as well as predictive indicators that control for a school's unique and/or challenging student population.
  - The financial portion of the CPF assesses short-term and long-term measures to measure the school's financial viability.
  - The organizational portion of the CPF reflects the school's ability to comply with all applicable laws (state and federal), rules and regulations.

# Academic Metrics Within the CPF

The College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI): is the official state accountability metric for public schools in Georgia.

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Schools may satisfy annual academic requirements by:

Outperforming their comparison district(s) in all relevant grade bands on at least one of the following measures:

- **CCRPI Content Mastery,**
- **CCRPI Progress (Growth),**
- **CCRPI Grade Band Score,**
- **Weighted CCRPI Score (“Single Score”),**
- **Value-Added Impact on Student Achievement**

OR by earning a “**Beating The Odds**” designation from GaDOE

# Application of Academic Evaluation Metrics

- Performance compared to different calculations of the comparison district
- Performance compared to a newly proposed attendance zone
- Performance in particular grade bands

# Comparison Districts

Starting with 2018 CCRPI scores, the SCSC will use two different calculations to generate comparison scores:

- The first comparison is the same as in previous years, the school's score is compared to score of the district(s) included in its attendance zone. If a school serves one district it is compared to that district's score. If it serves multiple districts it is compared to the simple average of those districts. If the school has a statewide attendance zone, then the school is compared to the state average.
- The second comparison looks at the districts from which the school actually enrolls students. Using the FTE System of Residency report the SCSC weighted district CCRPI scores based on the number of students enrolled from each district. Thus, whether the school's attendance includes one district, multiple districts, or statewide, the school is only being compared to the scores for districts from which it actually enrolls students. Additionally, the score is weighted based on enrollment. For instance, if a school enrolls 80% of its students from District A and 20% from District B, then the comparison score will be comprised of 80% of District A's CCRPI score and 20% of District B's CCRPI score.

A school will be considered meeting standards if it outperforms using either of the comparison calculations. This applies to all CCRPI indicators in the CPF.

# Proposed Attendance Zone

Although schools are ultimately held accountable based on comparison results from districts the school serves during the current charter term, the SCSC may consider comparison data from districts that the school proposes to serve if the charter is renewed.

- In general, state charter schools will not be granted an amendment to the charter contract in the last couple years of the charter term. This includes requests to amend the school's attendance zone. However, a school may request a different attendance during the renewal process.
- If requesting a change in attendance zone at renewal, the school should be prepared to provide a rationale for the change request and evidence of enrollment interest from the additional areas.
- Additionally, the SCSC will pull CCRPI data and compare the school's past scores to those of the proposed attendance zone. If the school consistently outperforms the districts included in the proposed attendance zone, it may be a strong candidate for renewal contingent on the attendance zone change.

# Grade Band Performance

CCRPI Content Mastery			
Grade Cluster	Charter School	Comparison District	Outperform?
E	64	70	No
M	72	71	Yes
CCRPI Progress			
Grade Cluster	Charter School	Comparison District	Outperform?
E	84	76	Yes
M	78	79	No

Does the Charter School, Meet SCSC Academic Standards?

**YES!**



# Grade Band Performance

To be meeting SCSC academic standards a school must outperform the district(s) included in its attendance zone in all relevant grade bands.

If a school serves across grade bands (i.e. K-8, 6-12, or K-12) and consistently outperforms in one grade band but not the other, the school should consider requesting a charter renewal for only the grade bands in which the school meets standards.

School	GRD	CCRPI Achievement (50 pts)				CCRPI Progress Pts (40 pts)				CCRPI Grade-band Score (100 pts)				CCRPI Single School Score (100 pts)			
		2014*	2015	2016	2017	2014*	2015	2016	2017	2014*	2015	2016	2017	2014*	2015	2016	2017
District	E	42.8	31.9	33.4	35	23.8	33.5	36.4	36.8	73.9	74.2	77.9	79.2	77.2	75.8	79.7	79.7
School	E	43.7	32.4	33.9	33.5	22.1	31.8	35.9	35.9	78.1	74.4	78.4	72.5	80.3	75.5	77.6	73.7
District	M	44.5	33.2	35	35.1	26.9	35.9	38.1	37.5	82.7	77.6	81.3	79	77.2	75.8	79.7	79.7
School	M	45.8	31.1	32.6	28.6	26.8	35.5	33	37.2	83.4	77.6	75.1	77.5	80.3	75.5	77.6	73.7

# Application of Financial Evaluation Metrics

Near-Term Measures	Sustainability Measures
Measure 1a – Current Ratio (Working Capital Ratio)	Measure 2a – Efficiency Margin
Measure 1b – Unrestricted Days Cash	Measure 2b – Debt to Asset Ratio
Measure 1c – Enrollment Variance	
Measure 1d - Default	

# Application of Financial Evaluation Metrics

- The Financial portion of the CPF measures whether schools are fiscally responsible and financially viable
  - Near term measures: the ability of the school to fulfill its short term (less than 1 year) obligations
  - Sustainability measures: the ability of the school to be solvent foreseeable future
- Most of the data used in the calculation of each financial CPF measure comes from the school's audit report
  - Exception: Measure 1c Enrollment Variance
    - This data comes from enrollment projections that every school provides to the SCSC each June and the school's October enrollment data as reported on the Data Collections section of the Georgia Department of Education's Website
      - [https://oraapp.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte\\_pack\\_enrollgrade.entry\\_form](https://oraapp.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte_pack_enrollgrade.entry_form)
    - This measure focuses on total enrollment change and not individual grades or FTE categories
- Calculations are always school specific and do not take into account the performance of other SCSC schools or school systems

# Application of Financial Evaluation Metrics

- Over the past 5 years there have been 3 statements released by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board that impact the financial CPF calculations
- These changes deal with the accounting of pensions and other post employment benefits (OPEB)
- The two measures impacted by these changes are:
  - Measure 2a, Efficiency Margin
    - The change in pension related accounts is added to this calculation to provide a more accurate picture of how a school manages its costs over multiple years
  - Measure 2b, Debt to Asset Ratio
    - The pension and OPEB liabilities are excluded from this calculation to provide an accurate assessment of the school's solvency

# Application of Operational Evaluation Metrics

- The Operational portion of the CPF measures whether schools have complied with their charter contracts and applicable laws.
- Previously, points were awarded on a pass/fail basis i.e. a school either complied or did not comply.
- Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, the CPF was amended in some areas to grant partial points (i.e. “Approaches Standard” points) for timely remediation of monitoring findings.
- Sources: GaDOE Charter School Annual Report, SEA Program Monitoring, GaDOE Data Reports, SCSC Monitoring Activities, SCSC Complaint Investigations, Reports of Noncompliance from a State/Federal Agency, and Independent Audit Reports
- SCSC Monitoring Activities include: Desk Audit, On-Site Monitoring, Follow-Up Monitoring (as needed)

# Renewal Eligibility – Previous Guidance

## STANDARD RENEWAL (5 Years)

To be eligible for a standard five-year renewal, a school must meet financial, operational and academic CPF standards at least 75% of the time (in 3 out of the first 4 years of a 5-year charter contract term).

## ABBREVIATED RENEWAL (3 Years)

To be eligible for an abbreviated three-year renewal, a school must meet financial, operational and academic CPF standards in Year 4 of the charter contract term (i.e. they cross the finish line in the right place).

- Abbreviated charter terms are only available to schools concluding their first/initial charter terms.

# Renewal Eligibility – Updated Guidance

## STANDARD RENEWAL (5 Years) – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA HAVE NOT CHANGED

To be eligible for a standard five-year renewal, a school must meet financial, operational and academic standards at least 75% of the time (in 3 out of the first 4 years of a 5-year charter contract term).

## ABBREVIATED RENEWAL (3 Years) – ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA MODIFIED

To be eligible for an abbreviated three-year renewal:

- a **tenured school** (i.e. a school concluding a second or subsequent charter term) must A) meet financial and operations standards 75% of the time AND B) perform at least as well as\* the district on any one or combination the CCRPI indicators outlined within the CPF 75% of the time.
- a **new school** (i.e. a school concluding its first/initial charter term) must A) meet financial and operational standards in Year 4 of the charter term, AND
  - B) perform at least as well as\* the district on any one or combination of the CCRPI indicators outlined within the CPF 75% of the time.

**OR**

- C) perform at least as well as\* the district on any one or combination of the CCRPI indicators in Year 4 of the charter term

**OR**

- D) outperform the district(s) on VAM or BTO in Year 4 of the charter term.

- Consecutive abbreviated charter terms will NOT be awarded.
- \*As well as the district is defined as a score than is no more that 3% below the district(s) score.

# Standard vs. Abbreviated Terms

The goal: all schools performing at a level warranting standard five-year renewals.

- The SCSC prefers to award five-year (as opposed to three-year) charter terms; however, a school must demonstrate a consistent track record of strong performance over multiple years to warrant a standard five-year renewal.

The intent of an abbreviated term:

- to reward new schools that “finished strong” (despite early struggles) by meeting standards in Year 4, and
- to provide a reprieve to tenured schools that may have encountered a unique challenge that temporarily prevented them from outperforming their comparison districts.

Important notes:

- An abbreviated term has a singular purpose: to assess a school’s ability to sustain the requisite performance level.
- An abbreviated term is NOT intended to assess the efficacy of a school turnaround effort.
- Charter schools that finish a contract term in need of “school turnaround” are not strong candidates for renewal in any form.



# COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE TRACK RECORD -- ACADEMICS

Table 1. CCRPI Performance 2014-2017

Table 2. Value-Added Model and "Beating the Odds" Comparisons, 2014-2017

School	GRD	CCRPI Achievement (50 pts)				CCRPI Progress (40 pts)				CCRPI Grade-band Score (100 pts)				CCRPI Single School Score (100 pts)			
		2014*	2015	2016	2017	2014*	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017
District	E	35.8	24.4	24.9	25.7	25.4	34.4	31.6	33.5	65.8	64.5	61.5	62.5	62.6	67.0	65.2	68.3
School	E	31.5	18.9	22.4	23.6	26.1	33.8	34.2	34.6	60.0	64.3	63.6	65.2	58.2	58.8	59.9	66.3
<b>% Difference</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>-12.0%</b>	<b>-22.5%</b>	<b>-10.0%</b>	<b>-8.2%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>-1.7%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>-8.8%</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>-7.0%</b>	<b>-12.2%</b>	<b>-8.1%</b>	<b>-2.9%</b>
District	M	35.4	26.7	27.2	28	24.6	34.2	32.6	33.9	62.4	67.9	65.6	68.6	62.6	67.0	65.2	68.3
School	M	29.5	20.1	20.2	23.1	21.6	30.9	30.2	36.5	56.8	58.7	58.7	66.6	58.2	58.8	59.9	66.3
<b>% Difference</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>-16.7%</b>	<b>-24.7%</b>	<b>-25.7%</b>	<b>-17.5%</b>	<b>-12.2%</b>	<b>-9.6%</b>	<b>-7.4%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>-9.0%</b>	<b>-13.5%</b>	<b>-10.5%</b>	<b>-2.9%</b>	<b>-7.0%</b>	<b>-12.2%</b>	<b>-8.1%</b>	<b>-2.9%</b>

**Color Codes:**

- Green = Outperformed Comparison District
- Blue = Same As District (Within 3%)
- Red = More than 3% below the district

**Notes:**

- \*For purposes of this comparison, 2014 Achievement and Progress Scores were recalculated on the same scales used for the 2015-2017 Achievement and Progress Scores. (Prior to 2015, Achievement was calculated on a 60 pt. scale, and Progress was calculated on a 25pt. scale).
- Because of the changes to the way the CCRPI was calculated, Georgia Department of Education advises that a direct comparison between 2014 and 2015 scores is limited.

School Names	GRD	Value Added Impact Score				Beating the Odds Designation			
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017
District	E	-0.0446	0.0129	-0.0165	0.0517	Did Not BTO	Did Not BTO	Did Not BTO	BTO
School	E	-0.1152	-0.0201	0.0489	0.0980				
District	M	-0.0331	0.0041	0.0257	0.0380				
School	M	-0.0143	-0.0053	0.0145	0.0898				

**For VAM Comparisons:**

- Green = Demonstrated positive value-added impact relative to comparison district (at a level that is statistically significant)
- Red: Did not demonstrate positive value-added impact relative to comparison district at a level that is statistically significant

# Renewal Timeline

Task	Projected Timeline
CPF Data Disseminated	Late December or Early January
Applications Due	Early January
Renewal Interviews	Late January
Recommendation Letters to Schools	Early February
Recommendations Posted to Website	Mid-February
Commission Vote	Late February

# SCSC Renewal Application

- The application is more streamlined than a school's original petition because its primary objective is to evaluate a school's track record of performance as measured by the CPF.
- Consists of 3 sections:
  - Applicant Information - provides contact information, identifies key components of the school and gives the applicant the opportunity to request changes if renewed
  - CPF Performance - completion of a matrix that identifies a school's academic, financial and operational performance on the CPF during the first four years of the charter contract
  - Optional Narratives - provides the school the option opportunity to identify any dynamic external events, mitigating factors and efforts to remediate previously identified performance issues.
- The application is submitted online via the SCSC Administration Portal.
  - Schools will receive notice that the application is awaiting completion and submission during their renewal cycle.

# SCSC Renewal Interviews - Format

SCSC Renewal Interviews will typically take place in late January of the renewal year.

- Interviews will last 1 hour.
- Each interview panel will consist of SCSC staff and 2-4 Commissioners.

School contingencies should include:

- a school leader (not necessarily the school principal but someone who has leadership duties at the school and can respond to academic questions);
- a business manager or financial director (not necessarily the CFO but someone—other than an ESP representative—who can speak to the school's financial operations);
- a board member who can speak to governance and operations;
- a board member who can speak to finance; and
- a board member who can speak to academics.

# SCSC Renewal Interviews – Helpful Hints

Be prepared to discuss any dynamic, external events which the school alleges impacted performance.

- Be specific, correlation does not equal causation.
- Do not point to events that are within the school's control (e.g. leadership changes; governance issues; curriculum/programmatic challenges).
- Do not cite your student population as an excuse for poor performance.

Be prepared to discuss any requested changes and how they align with the school's mission and CPF track record.

- For example, if CPF financial data demonstrates a poor track record, the school will need to explain how a request to move into a bigger facility will positively impact this track record.

Be prepared to discuss any *additional* data the school feels the SCSC should consider.

- Don't argue CPF results or state accountability metrics.
- Don't blame existing data on your student population.
- Don't use anecdotes, anecdotal data, and excuses.

Face issues (academic, operational or financial) head on.

- Commissioners need to understand that your school is able to recognize problems if/when they exist.

# SCSC Staff Recommendations

SCSC Staff anticipate bringing renewal recommendations to the Commissioners for a vote at the February SCSC meeting of the renewal year.

Recommendations will likely take 1 of 3 forms\*:

- Based on the historical track record, SCSC staff is recommending that the school be awarded a full 5-year renewal term.
- Based on the historical track record, SCSC staff is recommending that the school be awarded an abbreviated 3-year renewal term.
- Based on the historical track record, SCSC staff is recommending that the school not be renewed.

Schools receiving a three-year charter renewal, must meet performance standards in each of the 3 categories during at least 2 of its last 3 years of operation. Renewal eligibility will be determined based on two years of data from the new 3-year charter term and one year of data from the final year of the previous 5-year charter term

Schools that are not renewed will work with SCSC staff to ensure an orderly transition of students and subsequent closure by June 30<sup>th</sup> of the renewal year.

# Questions

