

Georgia Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing Evaluation



Georgia Charter School Authorizer Evaluation

District Authorizer Evaluation Rubric | 2025

District Name: Gwinnett County Public Schools

Reviewer Name: Morgan Powell

Advanced Criteria Opt-in: Yes

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Evaluation Rubric

Authorizer Name: Gwinnett County Public Schools

Date: August 2025

SUMMARY	RATING
Category I. Authorizer Commitment & Capacity	
1. Human Resources	AD
2. Financial Resources	AD
Category II. The Petition Process	
3. Petition Application	AD
4. Petition Review	EX
5. Petition Decisions	EX
Category III. Performance Contracting	
6. Pre-Opening Period	NI
7. Performance Standards	NI
8. Contract Terms and Agreements	NI
9. Authorizer Obligations	AD
Category IV. Oversight and Evaluation	
10. Compliance Monitoring	NI
11. Intervention	NI
12. Upholds Charter School Autonomy	AD
Category V. Renewal and Termination	
13. Renewal Process	AD
14. Renewal Decisions	AD
15. Closure/Termination	AD
OVERALL RATING	AD

*see criteria for explanation of denominator adjustment

OVERALL RATING CRITERIA	
Rating	Criteria
Needs Improvement (NI)	Earned a majority NI (8 or more) across all standards
Adequate (AD)	Earned any combination of ratings across standards except as designated for NI or E
Exemplary (EX)	Earned a majority E (8 or more) and no NI across all standards
First Time Authorizer (FTA)	Charter authorizer in its first year of authorizing

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Category I. Authorizer Commitment & Capacity

Standard 1. Human Resources. The authorizer identifies appropriate personnel to carry out its authorizing obligations, including the point(s) of contact who will coordinate charter school support.

Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
The authorizer has dedicated staff to supporting the charter schools in its portfolio. Whether staff are dedicated solely to charter school authorizing or have other duties, sufficient staff time and resources are allocated for the authorizer to fulfill its obligations, in light of the number of schools in the portfolio.	1 school in the portfolio, 1 FTE. 1:1 staff to school ratio	E. Coady fulfills other duties outside of authorizing including new teacher orientation	N/A	Y
Taken together, staff have adequate experience in charter authorizing or other relevant experience (e.g., education accountability, school funding and finance, education law and legal compliance).	E. Coady: PhD Education Policy	Per GCPS: “Charter Schools receive a Cluster Superintendent (CST). Currently Dr. Melissa Walker and I [E. Coady] oversee any operational needs for New Life Academy (NLA). For future charter schools, they would also be assigned a CST. CSTs do not hold evaluative authority over charter schools as GCPS adheres to a role of support with Charter Schools not authority. Dr. Walker and I work to address any needs that arise for NLA. District leaders are asked to participate in the petition review based on their role in the district (i.e., Federal Programs, Special Education, etc.).”	N/A	Y
The roles and responsibilities of the authorizing office cover key responsibilities in a coherent structure, specifically: - Petition receipt and review, - Oversight of academic, financial, and operational performance, and - Designated point of contact for charter stakeholder inquiries.	Petitions submitted to Dr. Emily Coady (per website). Their bio reads “Her office is responsible for new school development, program innovation, and charter school authorization”	Oversight responsibilities are not organized in a coherent structure.	N/A	N

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Districts: Board members attend trainings on principles and standards. (GA Code § 20-2-2063.3)	N/A for 2025	N/A for 2025	N/A for 2025	Y (N/A for 2025)
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-1	2-3	4	AD
Evaluator Comments:				
Advanced Criteria (Optional for Evaluator Review)	Strengths	Areas of Growth		
The authorizer demonstrates its commitment to high-quality authorizing by building a healthy organization: - Organizational values (behavioral expectations) are explicit and enforced. - If applicable, authorizing is a visibly important function of the larger “parent” organization. - Staffing supports the authorizer’s goals and plans for the future.	One staff member dedicated to authorizing demonstrates a commitment to authorizing.	GCPS currently has one charter school within its portfolio – NLA. The school operates like a traditional district school in that there is no agreed upon contract between the operator and the district and CSTs (as described above) “do not hold evaluative authority over charter schools”. As a result, authorizing is embedded within the “parent” organization. As GCPS responds to the results of this evaluation, it will be important to revisit this criterion to consider how authorizing is visible within the larger district, how organizational values are explicit and enforced, and how staffing supports Gwinnet’s goals and plans which include ensuring high-quality charter schools thrive Per GCPS: “Office staff could be increased, specifically an administrative assistant or coordinator to assist in the operational tasks.” This need expressed by the GCPS team as part of this evaluation would also support the development of systems and practices identified throughout this evaluation.		
Employment and management practices attract and retain a diverse, effective team of authorizing professionals. This includes leadership and professional development, clear decision-making criteria, and effective onboarding.	Given that there is one staff member dedicated to the work of authorizing and no current open positions, there was no evidence to provide comment for attracting talent.			

Standard 2. Financial Resources. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2068.1 and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2089, the authorizer allocates the required financial resources to support charter schools, treats charter schools no less favorably than other local schools within the system unless otherwise provided by law, and provides transparency on the availability and allocation of charter school funding.

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Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
The authorizer clearly publishes and shares the calculation of current and anticipated public funding for each charter school in accordance with law, specifically: - GaDOE/SBOE/SCSC- district allotment sheets - Local Districts- allotment sheet itemizing the calculation of state, local and federal allocations to be provided.	Allotment sheet for school can be found on the website here as “Final Earning Worksheet” includes state and local funds earned. Federal allocations not included.	GCPS provided a comprehensive information for Federal Programs.” While there is a point of contact at GCPS for Federal Programs, allotments are not clearly published.	N/A	N
Budget allocations for the school reflect an administrative fee that aligns with the charter contract and applicable law.	Authorizer does not collect an administrative fee.		N/A	Y
The authorizer publishes a budget reflecting the total amount received from any authorizing fees and other sources, and how those funds are allocated internally. The authorizer publishes the administrative services provided based on the administrative fees withheld.	The authorizer does not collect an authorizing fee. Other sources of revenue are captured in general district budget documents here.		N/A	Y
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-1	2	3	AD
Evaluator Comments:				
Advanced Criteria <i>Optional for Evaluator Review</i>)	Strengths		Areas of Growth	
The authorizer’s budget is sufficient and aligned to the authorizer’s goals.	Per GCPS: “My office budget is determined through our annual budget review process. Programmatic funds are sufficient and aligned to the goals.” Given the authorizer comment, no evaluator comment is needed.		N/A	

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Category II. The Petition Process

Standard 3. Petition Application. The authorizer publishes a written petition application in accordance with state requirements and timelines. The authorizer provides reasonable and timely technical assistance and is responsive to petitioner questions.

Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
The authorizer publishes petition materials (application, timelines, process and guidance) online in an easy-to- find location.	All petition materials are found clearly on their website here .		N/A	Y
The authorizer clearly articulates petition requirements. Requirements are focused on written content rather than form (i.e. application length, font size, etc.).	The Charter Petition Guidance articulates charter school expectations which align with the Petition Template. The Guidance document also notes form requirements (75 pages, 11 point font, etc.)		N/A	Y
The authorizer publishes times and locations for petition submission that are reasonable and easy to be met by the petitioner.	Letter of intent: 10/16/24 Info session: 10/23/24 Petition Submission: 1/15 – 1/24 (between 2 and 4 PM only) In-person submission only.	The Information Session deck (slides 6 and 12) notes “You will receive electronic submission guidelines at the time of your in-person submission” – is the expectation that petitioners complete an in-person submission and electronic submission? Per GCPS: “We require a scheduled in-person submission of the 20 physical copies, and we have petitioners submit electronically as well. This year’s process was simple. Petitioners submitted one official email address that would submit all documents, and we increased the storage size for that email address in order to send	N/A	N

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		everything in a protected manner to my inbox. You can find the submission process on our website.” The submission steps described above do not align with the documentation found online (see Charter Application Package Checklist). The website and documents note that emailed copies will not be accepted.		
The authorizer publishes staff contact information for technical assistance.	Dr. Emily Coady is mentioned in petition materials as a point of contact and their email & phone number is included. The website lists the Office of Program Development and Improvement with the following phone number 678-301-7120		N/A	Y
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-1	2-3	4	AD
Evaluator Comments: *The criteria “The authorizer publishes times and locations for petition submission that are reasonable and easy to be met by the petitioner” received a “Not Met” rating due to the conflicting information provided by the authorizer and what is communicated on the website. As the authorizer aligns communications regarding submission, they could consider making submission more accessible. For example, the 2 hour window for submission between January 15 – 24 (2:00 – 4:00 PM) could present a challenge. The orientation deck provided indicates that petitioners “can sign up for a convenient date and time for an in-person delivery of hard copies starting noon on January 15th). If possible, the authorizer should consider extending this time window.				
Advanced Criteria <i>Optional for Evaluator Review</i>)	Strengths	Areas of Growth		
The authorizer conducts informational sessions about the petition process.	In 2024 an in-person information session was held 1 week following the letter of intent submission deadline. Applicants are required to attend.	Potential applicants may encounter challenges meeting the expectation of attending the in-person session at 2 PM in the middle of the week. It may be helpful to find other ways to offer this information session either virtually, sending out a recording, or offering multiple information sessions at different days/times in the week.		

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The authorizer provides clear guidance around attendance possibilities (e.g., statewide, district, or other geographic limitations), funding structure for budget development, and requirements to align petitions to demonstrated community need.	The Charter School Petition Template requests information about the attendance zone in the School Operations section. The authorizer publishes their vision and mission as well as charter school expectations which share Gwinnett’s priorities and community need. Under the Charter School Expectations section of the Petition Guidance document “Charter schools are most likely to be approved if they provide academic and organizational innovation in the public’s interest and are supported by a sound business model with demonstrated capacity to implement the plan” (pg. 3).	There may be an opportunity for the authorizer to clarify attendance possibilities with petitioners aligned with the charter school expectations listed within the Petition Guidance document. Within the Petition Guidance document (beginning on page 10), the authorizer includes instructions for how to access, complete, and submit budget documents. This link is provided on page 10 to direct petitioners to GaDOE, however the link is no longer valid. Similarly, a link is provided on page 12, however it is not accessible. The authorizer notes that the Microsoft Excel budget template contains pre-set formulas that are linked – however the Budget Template provided does not include formulas to adjust revenues based on enrollment. The authorizer’s commitment to addressing community need is not reflected in the Application Template questions. The authorizer could consider adding a question that asks petitioners about how their petition addresses community need.
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Standard 4. Petition Review. The authorizer conducts petition review in accordance with state requirements. The petition review includes an evaluation team of no fewer than three individuals with diverse expertise, with at least one of the individuals having charter school experience.				
Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
The petition evaluation team includes at least three individuals that have varied and relevant skills and backgrounds (i.e. education, finance, school governance, charter experience) trained in petition review or have completed a relevant training).	List of evaluation team was provided. Recent cycle: T Hemans – CTAE programs M Spikes – operations & support, Curriculum & Instruction L Watkins – technology & innovation N. White – Special Education	Per GCPS: I conduct an alignment meeting at the start of the review cycle with the committee as well as several touchpoints to ensure accuracy throughout the review process.	N/A	Y

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	A. Smith – Education D. Moon - Finances			
The authorizer publishes the petition evaluation criteria and the requirements for petition approval on the authorizer’s website.	Evaluation criteria and requirements for petition approval found on the website here .		N/A	Y
The review process includes an interview.	The information session clearly indicates that a 60-min interview is held with petitioners and district leadership (March 4 or 6, 2025)		N/A	Y
Petition review and interview process are free of conflict of interest.	Conflict of interest policy shared. Given that all reviewers are employed by the district, they agree to adhere to this policy.		N/A	Y
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-1	2-3	4	EX
Evaluator Comments:				
Advanced Criteria <i>(Optional for Evaluator Review)</i>	Strengths	Areas of Growth		
The authorizer trains evaluators to ensure consistent application of petition evaluation criteria. Evaluators discuss ratings and develop a list of questions to inform the interview.	The authorizer generates interview questions from the list of “Almost Met: Clarify” items that were identified by evaluators. This method helps ensure that capacity interview questions are focused on items that would help inform the overall petition decision.	While GCPS provides evaluators with an orientation to petition review, there are opportunities to ensure there is consistent application of the petition evaluation criteria. The training materials note “we do not have an approval paradigm”. Evaluation criteria communicate expectations for petitioners and support consistent review of petitions by evaluators. Therefore, it is recommended that GCPS develop evaluation criteria. In addition, GCPS may consider providing evaluators with an opportunity to align on their approach to providing ratings and comment during the orientation or other training. There are examples included in the evaluation criteria,		

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		however providing some sample petition responses for evaluators to react and rate and aligning on what rating would be provided (Met, Almost Met: Clarify, Almost Met: Revise; Not Met) and a sufficient quality evaluative comment would be beneficial.		
Standard 5. Petition Decisions. The authorizer grants charters only to petitioners that have demonstrated competence and capacity to succeed in all aspects of the school, including a strong plan for improving student opportunities and outcomes. The authorizer makes petition decisions that are free from conflicts of interest.				
Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
Board decision to approve or deny an application is made by the board within 90 days of receiving the complete application (GA Code § 20-2-2064)	Orientation deck indicates that board vote occurs around April 17, 2025 (90 days from the final submission date 1/24/25) Letter to Meliora on May 9, 2025, confirms this timeline.		N/A	Y
Authorization decisions are based on evidence tied to the petition evaluation criteria, applicable accountability metrics, and legal requirements.	Decision letters connect to the evaluation criteria and mention legal requirements. See evaluator comments for some considerations.		N/A	Y
If denied, petitioner is provided a written detailed description of deficiencies and information about how to reapply in the future.	Favor Academy of Excellence denial letter from 2023 includes language about reapplying. The Meliora School (2025) – received a written detailed description of deficiencies however there was no language related to reapplying.	Per GCPS: The Meliora School were informed of the reapply option and steps at several points during the review process from the initial information session held in October, during the panel interview in March, in public record at the April Board Work Session, and in a debrief meeting that the April Board Business Meeting.	N/A	Y
In the case of denied applications, the authorizer provides the applicant with detailed feedback to provide a public record of why the applicant was denied and assist the applicant if it wants to reapply in the future.	See comments above.	See comments above.	N/A	Y

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Recommendations are shared with petitioners at least one week prior to the authorizing board meeting.	No documentation provided.	Per GCPS: "We did not notify The Meliora School directly a week prior. The Board agenda with the committee's recommendation was posted the Sunday before."	N/A	N
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-1	2-3	4-5	EX
Evaluator Comments:				
Advanced Criteria <i>(Optional for Evaluator Review)</i>	Strengths	Areas of Growth		
Application decisions reflect rigorous consideration of the following: - The educational program's likelihood of success and the applicants' capacity for educating children well, - The business and organizational plans' viability, - The experience and capacity of the applicant team (board and proposed leaders) to implement the proposed educational, business, and organizational program, and to manage any service provider contracts.	The evaluator orientation materials ground the review process in the following questions: - Does the application present a viable and sustainable model for the charter school? - How would you rate an existing GCPS school that was implementing a similar operational and academic program? -> Would this school be in compliance? - Does this charter provide a unique opportunity for kids that GCPS is not already providing? -> What is best for Gwinnett kids and families? These questions demonstrate consideration of the educational program, business and organizational viability.	While the evidence provided within the petition decision letter is substantial, it would be beneficial to develop clearer evaluation criteria (as noted in previous areas of this evaluation) and align decision communications with the criteria.		
The authorizer board's decisions generally align with staff recommendations. Conditional approvals are only granted for making specific technical changes and not as a means to allow the applicants to further develop proposals.	Based on the evidence provided, authorizer board's decisions generally align with staff recommendations. There was no evidence of conditional approvals.	There was evidence that the recent petition decision with Meliora did not align with the staff recommendation. Meliora's petition was approved by the State Charter School Commission of Georgia.		

Category III. Performance Contracting

Standard 6. Pre-Opening Period. The authorizer establishes clear and necessary, but not overly burdensome expectations for the pre-opening period including, but not limited to, expectations regarding facilities, student enrollment and board development.

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Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
The authorizer has a pre-opening checklist or other process that clearly communicates to schools what key readiness requirements must be met to open. The checklist or process includes adequate timelines, deliverables, responsible parties, and notes which criteria may defer opening.		Per GCPS: “As we have not opened a new charter school within 5 years, we do not have an up to date pre-opening checklist”	N/A	N
Pre-opening expectations specify facility requirements that include, GaDOE Facilities Division sign off, obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy and submitting an Emergency Plan to required agencies.	While a pre-opening checklist is not provided, there are notes regarding pre-opening in the district procedures for charter schools document. Facility requirements are mentioned in Section V and generally “Advise all applicants to pass state review for initial application adequacy prior to GCPS review – Requirements as outlined in DOE’s “Information for Charter Schools” document.	See comment above.	N/A	N
Pre-opening expectations specify student enrollment requirements including a minimum and maximum threshold to operate.	While a pre-opening checklist is not provided, there are notes regarding enrollment in the district procedures for charter schools document. Section L.4. indicates “If the Charter School does not meet its projected enrollment within twenty percent (20%), the charter may be terminated due to lower than anticipated community support” (pg. 12)	See comment above. Per GCPS: “There is no maximum threshold to operate.”	N/A	N

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Pre-opening expectations specify board development requirements including required trainings, policy development and operational oversight procedures.	While not indicated in the pre-opening expectations, the District Procedures for Charter Schools document mentions governance training (Section T.7), policy development (Section T.2) and operational oversight procedures (Section T.5) Given there are no established pre-opening expectations this criterion is still considered “Not Met”	See comment above.	N/A	N
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-1	2-3	4	NI
Evaluator Comments:				
Advanced Criteria (Optional for Evaluator Review)	Strengths		Areas of Growth	
The authorizer uses the pre-opening process to build relationships, set expectations for school performance, and provide technical assistance to schools.	Unable to provide comment based on data.			
Is there a history of schools opening despite not meeting all of the pre-opening requirements? If so, why?	Unable to provide comment based on data.			
Is there a history of schools not opening on time? If so, why?	Unable to provide comment based on data.			
In cases where a school’s opening was delayed, did the authorizer make the decision early enough so that students and parents could make other arrangements?	Unable to provide comment based on data.			

Standard 7. Performance Standards. The authorizer, through the performance contract, establishes high academic, financial, and operational performance standards under which schools will be evaluated, using objective and verifiable measures of student achievement and growth as the primary measure of school quality.

Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
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Performance standards are included or referenced in the performance contract. These include clearly defined targets, thresholds or goals for each evaluation measure.	No documentation provided.	Per GCPS: “we do not hold a charter school contract with NLA as they have been in existence for nearly 20 years”	N/A	N
Evaluation measures allow for annual review.	No documentation provided.	See comment above.	N/A	N
Data sources used to evaluate performance are objective and verifiable.	Per the annual report for NLA, the Georgia Milestone Assessment is utilized to evaluate performance. Given this performance data is not utilized by the authorizer for accountability purposes, the rating of Not Met has been given.		N/A	N
The authorizer measures academic performance using a framework that includes clearly defined expectations for: • Student achievement • Student progress measures Expectations consider ALL students, including students with special needs, students with disabilities, and English Learners.	The charter school within GCPS’s portfolio reports performance via an annual report. Academic achievement is shared on page 9 of the recent report using the Georgia Milestones Assessment. Performance information can also be found on GaDOE’s website here and provides information about content mastery, progress, closing gaps, readiness and school climate. Given there are no agreed upon expectations, the rating for these criteria is “Not Met”		N/A	N

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Financial, operational and governance standards are grounded in best practice. Standards in these areas that are in addition to legal requirements are reasonable and not overly burdensome.	Given there are no agreed upon expectations, the rating for these criteria is “Not Met”		N/A	N
The authorizer measures financial performance standards that enable the authorizer to assess and monitor schools’ financial viability. These include clearly defined metric and targets to assess near-term performance and long-term financial sustainability.	Given there are no agreed upon expectations, the rating for these criteria is “Not Met”	Per GCPS: “The Business and Finance division reviews NLA’s financial data monthly through the download and again with an annual review. Rather than a rating system, we use this monthly review to flag any issues.”	N/A	N
Operational standards include measures in the following areas: educational program compliance, financial oversight, governance and transparency, protecting the rights of students and employees, and ensuring a safe school environment.	Given there are no agreed upon expectations, the rating for these criteria is “Not Met”		N/A	N
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-2	3-5	6-7	NI
Evaluator Comments: * While the CCRPI captures subgroup performance, this performance is rolled in with other performance data. As a result, it is harder to discern how an individual campuses’ subgroups are performing. It is the evaluator’s recommendation that APS include a distinct measure around the performance of English Learners and Students with Disabilities.				
Advanced Criteria <i>(Optional for Evaluator Review)</i>	Strengths	Areas of Growth		
The authorizer reviews financial data and determines, based on the circumstances of each school, whether the school presents a low, medium, or high risk for financial failure. This includes assessing whether the school maintains and implements compliant policies and procedures for expending state and federal funds and maintains an appropriate and legally compliant level of transparency regarding budgeting and finance.	Per GCPS: “The Business and Finance division reviews NLA’s financial data monthly through the download and again with an annual review. Rather than a rating system, we use this monthly review to flag any issues. For example, due to a scheduling mistake – scheduling students as ML students, we “overpaid” New Life by several hundred thousand dollars. Because we review on a monthly basis, we quickly caught the mistake and rectified it. We have had no issues as a result of our proactive process	Financial data reviews should be grounded in a set of financial performance expectations outlined in the contract. These expectations help authorizers determine risk and if/when to intervene. If/when GCPS develops a performance framework and establishes a contract with NLA and future charters, GCPS should revisit this criterion.		

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	and Mr. Forward’s sense of urgency. With future schools we would apply the same process.” The note above indicates that the authorizer is reviewing financial data and responding when an issue is identified.	
The authorizer verifies that its schools: • Adhere to applicable open meetings and records requirements. • Maintain compliant policies and procedures for serving special student populations, including students with disabilities and those identified as gifted, experiencing homelessness, or as English Learners (EL). • Adhere to the requirements of the charter contracts and applicable education laws, rules, and regulations.	GCPS’s approach provides a great deal of autonomy to the charter school within its portfolio. Charter autonomy is a key aspect of the charter bargain. See areas of growth.	Per GCPS: “New Life’s administration attends our monthly Leadership meetings to ensure they remain on top of all compliance and requirements. However, it is the duty of the charter school to adhere to all laws, regulations, and requirements. As the LEA, we uphold their autonomy by providing access to our resources but placing ownership on the principal. Mr. Forward proactively and eagerly engages in all district processes.” While GCPS notes that it is the duty of the charter school to adhere to all laws, regulations and requirements, GCPS should establish a contract with NLA to formalize the expectations. The authorizer did not provide evidence to demonstrate how they verify NLA is in compliance.

Standard 8. Contract Terms and Agreements. The authorizer executes an initial contract for a term of five years that clearly outlines the rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorizer. Agreements related to funding or in-kind services not required by OGGA §20-2-2068.1 or §20-2-2089 or that are not included in the charter contract, must be negotiated and executed in writing and signed by the local authorizer and charter school (for local charter schools) or the State Charter Schools Commission and state charter school (for state charter schools).

Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
Executes a contract with a legally incorporated, nonprofit governing board independent of the authorizer		Per GCPS: “we do not hold a charter school contract with New Life as they have been in existence for nearly 20 years.”	N/A	N

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Initial contract terms are five years as stated in 691-2-.01 of the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia.		See comment above.	N/A	N
The performance contract details the rights and responsibilities of each party regarding school autonomy, funding, oversight, performance measures, and consequences for not meeting performance measures and material terms.	Rights and responsibilities are outlined in the district procedures document however; this document is not formalized in a signed agreement per the criteria.	See comment above.	N/A	N
The authorizer provides adequate and appropriate guidance to schools regarding what kinds of programmatic or operational changes constitute material changes that require authorizer approval.		See comment above.	N/A	N
Specific services provided by the authorizer are negotiated and agreed to by both parties and are outlined in a separate written contract or service agreement, if applicable.	Menu of services and pricing can be found in the district procedures document beginning on page 28	Per GCPS: "No [there are no negotiated services between New Life and GCPS] – New Life has been a partner for almost 20 years. They are fully integrated into our system and culture."	N/A	Y
Contract and/or related agreements establish equitable per-pupil funding terms or amounts as required by state law.		See comment above.	N/A	N
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-2	3-4	5-6	NI
Evaluator Comments:				
Standard 9. Authorizer Obligations. The authorizer follows all authorizing obligations outlined in law, State Board Rule, and the charter contract.				

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Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
The authorizer's contracts include or refer to the state and federal laws and other legal requirements the school must meet.	These requirements are outlined in the district procedures for charter schools document; however, they are not contractually agreed upon.	Per GCPS: "we do not hold a charter school contract with New Life as they have been in existence for nearly 20 years"	N/A	N
A local board of education authorizer makes unused facilities (as defined by 20-2-2068.2 (h)(2)) available to local charters. The SCSC follows guidelines from the state properties commission.	Vacant space indicated by GCPS in a document provided during the desk audit. Section V.2. of the District Procedures for Charter Schools also mentions that facilities will be provided in the event of a surplus.		N/A	Y
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0	1	2	AD
Evaluator Comments:				
Advanced Criteria (<i>Optional for Evaluator Review</i>)	Strengths	Areas of Growth		
The authorizer publicly posts a current list of unused facilities concurrently with the regular charter petition process.	GCPS provides a list of unused facilities.	The list of unused facilities is not public. GCPS could consider publicly posting this information concurrently with other petition materials.		

Category IV. Oversight and Evaluation

Standard 10. Compliance Monitoring. The authorizer protects the public interest and holds charter schools accountable for their obligations of governance, management, and oversight of public funds. The authorizer defines, communicates, and effectively implements the processes, methods, and timing of collecting and reporting school performance and compliance information. The authorizer conducts school visits as appropriate and necessary, and annually publishes school performance data.

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Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
The authorizer has a documented process for oversight and evaluation that aligns with the provisions of the performance contract.	A process was not demonstrated through submitted documentation.	-	N/A	N
The authorizer has a documented process for conducting school site visits that includes a review of school performance and compliance in alignment with the contract, and/or subsequent agreements.	A process was not demonstrated through submitted documentation.		N/A	N
The authorizer clearly communicates its oversight processes, including site visits, and how information gleaned from those activities is used to hold schools accountable.	A process was not demonstrated through submitted documentation.		N/A	N
The authorizer conducts an on-site visit to each charter school at least once during the school's charter term.	A process was not demonstrated through submitted documentation.	The authorizer noted that NLA receives two site visits during each school year.	N/A	Y
Each year, the authorizer publishes a report on its website with individual and aggregate level school performance results based on evaluation measures included in the contracts, comparing academic, financial, and organizational performance of each school to established expectations.	Performance information for NLA can be found on GaDOE's website here . Given there are no established expectations, this criterion was rated "Not Met".	Per GCPS: The information found on GaDOE and GOSA is what is shared.	N/A	N
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-2	3-4	5-6	NI
Evaluator Comments:				
Advanced Criteria	Strengths	Areas of Growth		
The authorizer knows, at any given time, how a school is doing.	Per GCPS: We leverage two approaches. First, we have built a school data dashboard, and we leverage GaDOE's milestone dashboard. Second, we have intentionally built a strong relationship with New Life that allows for an "Open Door" policy. Dr. Walker and I monitor	If/when a formal contract is established between NLA and GCPS that outlines performance expectations, this criterion should be revisited.		

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	the school's performance and can schedule formal walkthroughs or informal visits at any time. We have never been denied entry or have had a reason for concern.	
The authorizer provides clear technical assistance to schools to ensure timely compliance with new or revised laws.		This practice is rooted in a charter contract, which GCPS does not have for NLA. It is recommended that GCPS create a contract that provides clear guidance as to when technical assistance is provided to schools.
The authorizer differentiates its oversight to ensure that time and resources are allocated effectively based on school performance and capacity, as well as the authorizer's goals.		This criterion requires performance expectations as set forth in a formal contract to establish oversight practices. Given that an oversight process was not demonstrated through submitted documentation it is recommended that GCPS develop documentation of their process first and then consider how they might differentiate their practices based on performance.
Site visits are structured in a way that enables the authorizer to gather the information needed to evaluate the school appropriately and that respects school autonomy.	GCPS visits NLA twice a year.	While GCPS visits NLA, there is no formal protocol for these site visits. It is recommended that GCPS develop a site visit protocol and structure that enables GCPS to gather information needed to evaluate the school appropriately that respects school autonomy. This will require a performance contract to help guide the structure of the site visit.
School leaders understand their performance status.	Based on what was shared by GCPS the district has a strong relationship with the school leader of NLA– GCPS's only charter school – and that the school leader is deeply engaged.	Per GCPS: "We stay in constant contact with Mr. Forward as we do with any of our principals. He attends all district meetings and functions, and he participates in all district data debriefs with all other principals." Like other comments made, establishing a contract that clearly describes performance expectations will assist in current and future school leaders understanding their performance status.

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Standard 11. Intervention. The authorizer gives schools evidence-based, and timely notice of contract violations or performance deficiencies and allows schools reasonable time and opportunity for remediation.				
Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
The authorizer has an intervention protocol which determines when it may intervene and what consequences are possible (from a conversation to probation or other more serious actions). The intervention protocol includes actions that result from annual reviews using the performance framework and interventions required outside of “normal” monitoring findings (i.e. parent phone calls). This protocol is clearly communicated to schools.	A protocol is not established.		N/A	N
Following each compliance site visit the authorizer provides timely written notification that includes information collected during the site visit, a summary of findings and areas needing improvement. The findings are tied directly to applicable law or contract requirements.	Documentation was not provided that demonstrated that a compliance site visit is conducted and/or that information is shared with the school.		N/A	N
The authorizer provides written notice to the school of any contract breaches or areas of noncompliance in a reasonable timeframe.	Intervention is mentioned in the District Procedures for Charter Schools (See Section A.2. “if the charter school is not in compliance with the terms of the charter, the school system shall notify the school leadership. If the compliance issue is not resolved within six months, the parents of the charter school and the GADOE shall be notified that the charter school has been placed in a probationary status pending resolution of the compliance issue” Given there is no established charter, this criterion is considered Not Met.	GCPS confirmed that NLA has not had any compliance issues or written notices.	N/A	N

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The authorizer allows the school adequate time to remedy any identified areas of noncompliance, respecting the school's autonomy to determine how to remediate the noncompliance, when appropriate.	See comment above. Six months is provided to remedy the compliance issue.		N/A	Y
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-1	2	3-4	NI
Evaluator Comments:				

Standard 12. Upholds Charter School Autonomy. The authorizer upholds charter school autonomy in school level governance, including personnel decisions, financial decisions, curriculum and instruction, resource allocation, establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals, and school operations.				
Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
The contract and the authorizer's practices recognize the school's autonomy in school governance, instructional program implementation, personnel, and budgeting.	There is no contract to review to demonstrate a recognition of the school's autonomy however the District Procedures for Charter Schools demonstrates a recognition of school autonomy.	Per GCPS [re: District Procedures document]: "This has long been the guidance document with New Life since it first opened. I have not located a signed contract, but the evidence provided are lack of compliance issues, successful renewals and the latest expansion into the middle school grades. Mr. Forward, their founder and current principal, and GCPS have a long-standing relationship where he is fully integrated into the systems and culture of GCPS. If and when we approve future charter schools, we would require an executed MOU based on this guidance document."	N/A	Y

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		“New Life has been a district partner for almost 20 years and is fully integrated into our system and culture. Mr. Forward and his staff attend any district trainings and actively seek to be part of the GCPS community. As an independent charter school, we allow them the choice to be as fully integrated as they wish. We would continue this approach with any future charter schools.”		
Specific requirements not otherwise required under state law are either included in the charter contract or charter schools are <i>notified at least one year prior</i> to the requirement going into effect.	Requirements are not outlined in a charter contract.	Per GCPS: “We expect New Life to understand and adhere to state law as an autonomous school. Mr. Forward exercises full ownership of remaining on top of all laws and requirements. We have not had an issue.”	N/A	N
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0	1	2	AD
Evaluator Comments:				

Category V. Renewal and Termination

Standard 13. Renewal and Termination Process. The authorizer clearly communicates to schools the criteria for charter termination, renewal and non-renewal that are consistent with the terms of the charter contract. The renewal process includes a written application and an opportunity for an interview.

Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
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Renewal process, criteria, and a general timeline are clearly communicated to schools well in advance of renewal and are published in a publicly accessible location. The process includes a written renewal application and an opportunity interview to make factual corrections or present supplementary evidence of performance.	Renewal documents are not publicly available on the website. The process includes a written renewal application and an interview.		N/A	N
Renewal criteria are transparent, specific and align to performance standards and expectations outlined in the charter contract.	There are no agreed upon performance standards or renewal criteria.		N/A	N
The authorizer uses a track record of performance over multiple years to make renewal determinations.	Renewal recommendation for NLA references academic and financial performance broadly. Performance standards are not articulated in a contract.	Per GCPS [re: District Procedures document]: "This has long been the guidance document with New Life since it first opened. I have not located a signed contract, but the evidence provided are lack of compliance issues, successful renewals and the latest expansion into the middle school grades. Mr. Forward, their founder and current principal, and GCPS have a long-standing relationship where he is fully integrated into the systems and culture of GCPS. "	N/A	Y
Revocation criteria are clearly communicated to schools. The authorizer provides written warning, timeline, and notice of anticipated termination prior to the end of the charter school renewal period.	The District Procedures for Charter Schools mentions termination: Section A.3.- "Any proposal for termination...shall comply with requirements of the Charter Schools Act" Section J.2. – failure to comply with legal and regulatory local, state, and federal laws and GCPS recommendations	Per GCPS [re: District Procedures document]: "This has long been the guidance document with New Life since it first opened."	N/A	Y

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	Section L.4. that low enrollment (within 20%) would result in termination. Section O.4. – Failure to meet goals, objectives and measures in the charter contract			
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating
Number of Criteria Met:	0-1	2-3	4	AD
Evaluator Comments:				
Advanced Criteria	Strengths	Areas of Growth		
<u>Expansion and Replication</u> The authorizer communicates clear processes, criteria, and standards for expansion and replication, so schools know when such applications are likely to be successful.	NLA has expanded under the guidance of GCPS. See below: Per GCPS: “The expansion was part of New Life’s latest renewal petition and evaluated with our current process. We shared with New Life that the process was to undergo the expansion with the regular renewal process. The criteria and standards were the same as any renewal process. The petition met those standards as well as a consistent history of the school leveraging our district’s lottery process for oversubscription from family demand.”	As GCPS grows its portfolio, they may consider codifying their process, criteria and standards for expansion and replication.		
Standard 14. Renewal Decisions. The authorizer bases renewal decisions on a thorough analyses of the criteria outlined in the charter contract, with objective and verifiable measures of student achievement and growth as the primary measure of school quality. The authorizer ensures the renewal decision-making processes are free of conflicts of interest. The authorizer communicates renewal decisions to the school community and public within a timeframe that allows parents and students to exercise choices for the coming school year.				
Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
Renewal/nonrenewal recommendations are provided through prompt, written notification to the school's governing board and the public within a reasonable	Renewal notification sent to NLA June 19, 2023. Board vote occurred June 15, 2023.	Per GCPS related to recommendations: “the board vote which took place	N/A	Y

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timeframe, following the availability of necessary data, as to provide parents and students time to exercise choices for the upcoming school year.		at the June 15, 2023, Board Business Meeting.		
Standard (5-year) renewal terms are only granted to schools that met established performance expectations outlined in the charter contract.	The Annual Report published on the website (June 2019) indicates New Life Academy of Excellence received a renewal term of 5 years. North Metro Academy of Performing Arts received a renewal of 1 year (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020). The Annual Report shares data related to CCRPI performance, school climate and financial efficiency. There are no established performance expectations through a contract.	2021 board documentation mentions North Metro Academy of Performing Arts withdrew their request for renewal and requested to transition from a charter school to a GCPS theme elementary school.	N/A	N
Recommendations include a detailed, objective and evidence-based explanation for the decision.	The recommendation for reauthorization of NLA provides a general overview of past performance but lacks detailed, objective, and evidence-based explanation for the decision.	Per GCPS: “North Metro was converted to a traditional district school due to low performance and student safety concerns. It remains a school of choice for families. The Board minutes reflecting the vote for conversion can be found here . Notably, the charter school’s governing board made the request to integrate as a district school.”	N/A	N
The authorizer uses policy or procedure to ensure individuals involved in the renewal decision are free from conflicts of interest.	Conflict of interest policy submitted.		N/A	Y
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating

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Number of Criteria Met:	0-1	2-3	4	AD
Evaluator Comments:				
Advanced Criteria	Strengths	Areas of Growth		
<u>Expansion and Replication</u> The authorizer evaluates the prior performance of existing schools and the organization's capacity to grow in making expansion or replication decisions.	Based on the response provided below, GCPS uses evidence of demand to make expansion decisions. Per GCPS: "The expansion was part of New Life's latest renewal petition and evaluated with our current process. We shared with New Life that the process was to undergo the expansion with the regular renewal process. The criteria and standards were the same as any renewal process. The petition met those standards as well as a consistent history of the school leveraging our district's lottery process for oversubscription from family demand."	Establishing clear performance expectations within a contract will support the authorizer in utilizing prior performance to make expansion and replication decisions. See advanced criteria under Standard 13 for additional comment.		

Standard 15. Closure. In the event of school closure, either at the conclusion of the charter term or during the charter term, the authorizer oversees and ensures the school governing board and leadership carry out a detailed closure protocol that includes the provisions outlined in the charter contract, such as ensuring timely notification to parents; orderly transition of students and student records to new schools; and disposition of school funds, property, and assets in accordance with law, rule and contract terms.

Evaluation Criteria	Documentation Review	Authorizer Debrief	School Survey	Met Criteria? (Y/N)
The authorizer has a written policy for termination procedures that ensures timely notification to parents, orderly transition of students and student records to new schools, disposition of school funds, property, and assets in accordance with law and effectively implements policy in the event of a school closure.	Documentation provided provides general termination procedures and a Closure Plan. The plan addresses all elements of the criteria.		N/A	Y
	Needs Improvement (NI)	Adequate (AD)	Exemplary (EX)	Rating

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Number of Criteria Met:	0	1		AD
Evaluator Comments:				
Advanced Criteria	Strengths	Areas of Growth		
The authorizer has a plan that establishes clear roles and responsibilities with required steps for the orderly closure of a school. The authorizer provides support for transition of students to other schools.	Given that the authorizer has not encountered the need to utilize the Closure Plan, evaluators were unable to provide feedback on the support that the authorizer provides to transition students to other schools.			