



State Charter School Accountability: School Performance Reviews

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Introduction: SCSC Accountability

The mission of the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia (SCSC) 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. Thus, all state charter schools are expected to outperform the schools they serve academically. The SCSC's accountability structure includes evaluations of both short-term and long-term performance in the areas of academic achievement, financial viability, and operational compliance. Specifically, each state charter school receives 1) annual performance evaluations to establish a school's progress toward renewal and 2) end of term comprehensive performance reviews to establish whether a school's performance over time warrants a renewal recommendation.

The SCSC is required by law to monitor and review all state charter schools and hold them accountable for their performance. The SCSC holds schools accountable through both short-term and long-term evaluations. Specifically, SCSC accountability consists of:

1. **Short-Term/Annual Evaluation:**
 - Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF) Report
 - Annual School Performance Review Process
2. **End-of-Term Comprehensive Evaluation:**
 - Charter Renewal Process

Assessment On the Comprehensive Performance Framework

The SCSC utilizes a Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF)¹ to assess each state charter school's academic achievement, financial viability, and operational compliance. The CPF and its indicators and measures are incorporated into all charter contracts as the accountability tool by which school performance is assessed. Thus, a school must meet the CPF's expectations to meet its charter contract's academic, financial, and operational goals.

CPF standings are calculated and published on an annual basis to track each school's progress toward renewal. A school's collective CPF performance track record is used to inform decision-making over the course of the charter term and at the time of the End-of-Term Comprehensive Performance Review. A school's CPF standing is a reflection of whether the school has met the requirements and goals outlined in its charter contract, applicable law, and SCSC rules and policies. More information on the SCSC can be found on the SCSC website: <https://scsc.georgia.gov/school-accountability/scsc-comprehensive-performance-framework>.

The three areas of performance covered by the CPF—academic achievement, financial management, and organizational compliance— correspond directly with the three components of a high-quality charter school application as well as the three areas on which a charter school's performance should be evaluated. In each of the three areas, the framework asks a fundamental question:

- Academic Performance: Is the educational program offering students a better educational opportunity than they would otherwise receive at a traditional public school?
- Financial Performance: Is the school financially viable?

¹ <https://scsc.georgia.gov/school-accountability/scsc-comprehensive-performance-framework>

- **Organizational Performance:** Is the organization effective, compliant, and well-run?

The results of a state charter school's annual academic, financial, and operational assessment under the CPF are provided to the school and will determine its participation in the Annual School Performance Review Process.

Annual School Performance Reviews

The SCSC utilizes Annual School Performance Reviews to notify schools of annual accountability standings. As part of the CPF report process, schools are given time, usually 2-4 weeks, to challenge their CPF score and provide documentation to support the change request. After the rebuttal timeframe, CPF scores become final, and the Annual Performance Review process begins. Schools that earned an "Approaches," "Varied," or "Does Not Meet" designation in any section of the CPF are subject to participation in the performance review process. The process consists of three tiers: 1) Notification Tier, 2) Review Tier, and 3) Probation. Each tier will include a letter highlighting areas where the school failed to meet performance expectations. The required follow-up responses, actions, consequences, and outcomes increase with each tier.

1. **Tier 1: Notification:** The Notification Letter explains that while the school did not meet performance expectations, SCSC staff have reviewed the school's information, and no further action is required at the time. However, the school is strongly encouraged to identify areas of improvement and internally employ relevant interventions.
2. **Tier 2: Review:** The Review Letter will outline areas of concern and require that the school provide a written response addressing specific deficiencies identified by SCSC staff. Responses are due no later than thirty (30) days after the date the Review Letter was sent. After reviewing the school's response, if deemed necessary, the SCSC may also employ any of the actions listed in the Required Outcomes section of this document or place the school on probation.
3. **Tier 3: Probation:** A Probation Letter will be sent to schools that meet the requirements outlined in SCSC Rule 691-2-.10 Suspension and Probation: <https://scsc.georgia.gov/rule-691-2-10> and rise to a level of concern beyond the Review Letter stage. A probation letter can be issued at the same time as a Notification Letter or Review Letter or after SCSC staff have reviewed Review Letter responses and continued concerns exist.

NOTE: Schools can be placed on probation at any time, even outside of the performance review process and timeline, if circumstances warrant such placement according to the terms listed in the relevant rule cited above.

In either the process's Review Letter or Probation Letter stage, schools must outline plans to improve performance in all deficiency areas and respond to policy and practice questions. The SCSC does not infringe upon the autonomy of state charter schools to identify specific remediation efforts; however, the SCSC expects state charter schools to acknowledge and promptly address issues of noncompliance and nonperformance.

Timeline: The annual performance review process begins each year once CPF reports are final, typically in early March, and ends once all Review Letter responses, Required Outcomes documentation, and Probation Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) are submitted and approved, ideally by the end of June. Review Letter responses and Probation CAPs are due 30 days from the letter send date.

Required Outcomes: The SCSC will take appropriate action and impose meaningful consequences on schools that do not meet standards and fall into the Tier 2: Review or Tier 3: Probation stages. Specific actions that the SCSC may take and outcomes that may be imposed include, but are not limited to:

- **Academic Progress Monitoring:** A state charter school is placed on Academic Progress Monitoring when significant concerns arise regarding the school's ability to meet the academic expectations of the Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF). It will be required to submit periodic academic updates to the SCSC, which will include interim assessment reports, narrative analyses of the state of its academic program, and an assessment calendar for the school year.
- **Directed or Limited the use of administrative withhold funds:** At the end of each fiscal year, the SCSC returns its remaining administrative withhold funds to schools on a prorated basis. If the SCSC identifies areas of noncompliance or issues of concern as part of its review, the SCSC may require that the school use the returned funds to remedy such matters. The plan for fund usage will require approval from the SCSC, and the school must sign an attestation form stating that when received, it will use the funds to carry out the plan as approved.
- **High-Risk Financial Monitoring:** If the SCSC identifies a state charter school with financial concerns, consistently does not meet financial expectations, or is currently facing financial hardship, the state charter school will be required to submit regular financial statements and documents.
- **Performance Improvement Plan:** The school may be required to develop and submit a performance improvement plan. The plan must, at a minimum, identify the circumstances that led to the school not meeting standards and provide a timeline for remediating the circumstances identified. SCSC staff may require that the plan include specific, measurable outcomes that must be met throughout or upon completion of the plan's implementation.
- **Reduction of State or Federal Funding:** If the SCSC, or another state or federal agency, identifies noncompliance with rule or law that requires the return or withholding of state or federal funding, the SCSC will cooperate with all appropriate parties and implement its contractual authorities to ensure the proper use of public funding.
- **Required Training:** If the SCSC identifies systemic failures that can be improved or eliminated through subject-specific training, the SCSC may require state charter school governing board members or staff to attend specified training. The school may be required to provide evidence of training attendance or sign an attestation form confirming future participation.
- **School Site Visit:** SCSC commissioners and staff may wish to visit the school to see operations firsthand. While there is no specific evaluation tool used on such visits, staff and commissioners may ask questions about the school's performance and processes.
- **SCSC Board Presentation:** The school may be required to attend an SCSC board meeting to answer commissioners' and staff questions about its performance and present plans for improvement. At least one Charter School governing board member and one Charter School staff member must attend the presentation.

The performance review process combined with the annual publication of school performance under the CPF creates a demonstrable record of school performance, efforts to remediate nonperformance, and the ultimate record and results of performance and remediation efforts to

guide the SCSC in imposing meaningful consequences under the charter contract, including charter renewal, nonrenewal or termination.

End-of-Term Comprehensive Performance Reviews

In the final year of a school's charter term, the SCSC will conduct an End-of-Term Performance Review of the school's academic, financial, and operational performance over the preceding charter term. Every state charter school receives a comprehensive End-of-Term Review at least every five years, even if the school's charter contract term is longer than five years. The End-of-Term Performance Review allows the SCSC to conduct an in-depth, high-stakes review of school performance and make recommendations to the SCSC board of commissioners to impose meaningful consequences as necessary, up to and including charter termination.

The End-of-Term Performance Review aims to examine the charter school's holistic performance over time. The SCSC utilizes the review to evaluate a school's overall ability to meet the goals of the charter contract and identify performance trends in academic achievement, financial viability, and operational compliance as measured through the CPF. In contrast with SCSC Annual Performance Reviews, the End-of-Term Performance review assesses a complete and comprehensive track record of performance so as to determine whether a charter school merits contract renewal, nonrenewal, or other meaningful consequences. The End-of-Term Performance Review process is also called the Charter Renewal Process². More information on the Charter Renewal Process, including a guidance document that outlines the process, can be found on the SCSC website: <https://scsc.georgia.gov/scsc-schools/charter-renewal>

The SCSC is committed to ensuring state charter schools meet academic, financial, and operational standards that promote high-quality charter schools that will provide better educational outcomes for their students. The annual publication of school performance within the CPF combined with Annual Performance Reviews provides a clear understanding of the school's outcomes in comparison with SCSC expectations to deliver the school and stakeholders an explicit outlook towards charter renewal. The SCSC upholds its commitment and statutory charge to support high-quality charter schools through its End-of-Term Performance Review that thoroughly examines a school's track record of performance under its charter contract to guide the SCSC in determining whether to renew the charter contract or impose other meaningful consequences under the contract.

² <https://scsc.georgia.gov/scsc-schools/charter-renewal>