

# SCSC Accountability:

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# Academic Performance

State Charter  
Schools  
Commission  
of Georgia



# Guiding Principles of the SCSC

## *Mission Statement:*

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

## *Core Values:*

To achieve our mission and to carry out our statutory charges as an independent charter school authorizer, the SCSC conducts all business according to high standards of **transparency, accessibility, objectivity, and innovation.**

# Background

- Charter school authorizing begins with a bargain for performance.
  - Authorizers agree to entrust a charter school's governing board with public dollars and public school students and to give it broad autonomy over how it achieves agreed-upon goals.
  - In return, the school's board commits to achieving specified results, managing public funds responsibly, complying with its legal obligations, and providing a quality education to the students in its care.
- In order for this bargain of autonomy in exchange for accountability to work, it is essential that authorizers establish, maintain, and enforce high performance standards for all schools in their portfolios.

# Context

- In 2014, the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia (SCSC) engaged the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to conduct an evaluation and audit of its authorizing practices, policies, and processes.
- The primary recommendation stemming from that evaluation involved the formalization of the SCSC's emerging monitoring and evaluation processes—especially those related to high-stakes renewal decisions.
- Specifically, NACSA recommended the development of a comprehensive performance framework containing relevant and quantifiable measures by which schools can be assessed on an annual basis in the areas of academics, operations, and finance.

# What is a Performance Framework?

## A comprehensive performance framework:

- a rubric that assesses school performance in three critical areas: academic achievement, financial viability, and organizational effectiveness,
- promotes transparency and objectivity by putting the authorizer on record and schools, parents, stakeholders, and the public on notice about the performance standards that will be used to evaluate whether or not a school is successful and is living up to its end of the charter bargain, and
- protects school autonomy by clarifying through mutual agreement and in objective terms the performance data the authorizer will collect and the outcomes that it expects and will evaluate.

# What Does the Performance Framework Assess?

- The framework asks three fundamental questions:
  - Academic Performance: Is the educational program a success\*\*?
  - Financial Performance: Is the school financially viable?
  - Organizational Performance: Is the organization effective and well run?
- The answers to each of these three questions are essential to a comprehensive evaluation of charter school performance.

*\*\* The SCSC defines a academic success as a school's ability to provide students with a better educational opportunity than he/she would otherwise receive at the average traditional school within the district.*

# Academic Performance:

Is the educational program offering students a better educational opportunity than they would otherwise receive at a traditional public school?

- **State Accountability Metric: College and Career Readiness Performance Index**
  - In 2012, the CCRPI replaced the previously used Adequately Year Progress (AYP) determination in Georgia.
  - The CCRPI yields a score for each school (and for each grade band within a school) that provides the public with a quantifiable and understandable assessment of how a school is doing.
  - CCRPI scores are calculated based on a school's performance in 3 areas: academic performance, student growth, and achievement gap closure.
- **SCSC Accountability Metric: Value-Added Impact on Student Achievement**
  - The value-added model controls for observable student characteristics and prior academic performance in order to generate an "impact score" for each school.
  - The value-added method adjusts for the observable characteristics of students so that schools can be equitably compared regardless of their differing student populations.

# CCRPI and Value-Added Impact

- Both the CCRPI and the Value-Added Impact Metric are useful school-level accountability tools; however, they were created for different purposes and include different performance indicators.
- Because value-add impact scores are produced by comparing actual and predicted student performance on state standardized assessment while also controlling for student demographics, there are instances in which the two measures may produce different results.



# List of SCSC Value-Added Controls

- Prior-year test scores,
- Gender,
- Foreign-born indicator,
- Race/Ethnicity,
- ESOL enrollment,
- Free/reduced-price lunch eligibility,
- Gifted status,
- Primary-language-not-English indicator,
- Disability status (fifteen specific disability categories),
- Number of schools attended in the current year,
- An indicator for students who changed schools from the prior year,
- Number of disciplinary incidents in the prior year,
- Attendance in the prior year, and
- The difference between a student's age (in months) and the modal age of students in the same grade (i.e. "overage" in grade).

# The Framework Sections

- Overview
- Comprehensive Performance Framework, Weights and Indicators

# Frequently Asked Questions

- How and when will performance framework standards be incorporated into charter contracts?
  - Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, the performance framework will be incorporated into all charter contracts for newly approved schools.
- Will the accountability requirements differ for new charter schools versus those that have already been operating under other standards?
  - Yes. Existing schools will have the option to be evaluated A) according to the standards set forth within the performance framework OR B) according to the terms of existing charter contracts. However, upon renewal, the performance framework will be incorporated into all state charter school contracts.
- If existing schools choose to be evaluated in accordance with the framework, will amendments to existing contracts be required?
  - Yes.

# SCSC Academic Accountability: Fact or Fiction

- All state charter schools are held to the same academic standards.
- Fact. The mission of the SCSC is to authorize schools that provide better educational opportunities to students than they would otherwise have available in their local school districts. Every state charter school must meet the standard of being better than their comparison district, either in absolute performance or student growth, to be eligible for renewal.

# SCSC Academic Accountability: Fact or Fiction

- It's not enough for our state charter school to perform just as well as the district.
- Fact. The SCSC has been very clear that its commitment is for state charter schools to outperform their comparison district. The commission is adamant that to do just as well as (or worse than) a district does not improve educational opportunities in a manner that is consistent with its mission.

# SCSC Academic Accountability: Fact or Fiction

- The SCSC compares state charter schools to an entire school district rather than a portion of that district.
- Mostly Fact. A state charter school's "comparison district" will be the school's attendance zone as the school is authorized to serve any student within that area. A state charter school should be committed to serving the entire attendance zone it selected. As a result, it is held accountable for outperforming the entire area it serves. However, state charter schools are authorized to designate attendance zones that are smaller than an entire district.

# SCSC Academic Accountability: Fact or Fiction

- The SCSC does not take into account a state charter school's special population when reviewing academic performance.
- Fiction. The SCSC's Value-Added Model is specifically designed to control for student populations to allow the SCSC to measure student performance in light of a school's special population. Accordingly, schools that serve "at-risk" students, larger populations of students with disabilities, or more minority students can demonstrate they are providing a better opportunity than the comparison district through their VAM Impact Score.

# SCSC Academic Accountability: Fact or Fiction

- The SCSC considers a school's mission when evaluating the school's academic performance.
- Fiction. The SCSC's Value-Added Model, by controlling for special student populations, often captures the effect of a school's mission when evaluating school performance. For example, the VAM controls for students who are "overage in grade." This compensates schools whose mission is to serve "at-risk" students. Further, current contractual goals and the performance framework allow the school to be measured by, and receive credit for, mission-specific goals.



# What Now?

- Public Release of 2014-2015 CCRPI results in the next few weeks.
- Release of 2014-2015 Value-Add results in Spring 2016.
- 2014-2015 SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework results provided shortly thereafter.
  
- As part of its commitment to transparency, the SCSC will soon activate school report cards on its website that will allow interested stakeholders to review a school's academic performance data, including CCRPI scores and Value-Added Impact Scores.
- All information included on the report card will be high-level general information

# Questions?



SCSC.GEORGIA.GOV  
404-656-2837

Bonnie Holliday, [bonnie.holliday@scsc.georgia.gov](mailto:bonnie.holliday@scsc.georgia.gov)  
Gregg Stevens, [gregg.stevens@scsc.georgia.gov](mailto:gregg.stevens@scsc.georgia.gov)  
Terence Washington, [Terence.Washington@scsc.georgia.gov](mailto:Terence.Washington@scsc.georgia.gov)