

SCSC Accountability:

Performance Framework

State Charter
Schools
Commission
of Georgia



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:

- assesses school performance in three critical areas: academic achievement, financial viability, and organizational effectiveness,
- enables charter school performance contracting to function as intended by providing both charter schools and authorizers with clarity about expected outcomes, objective evidence of achievement, and a comprehensive tool for evaluating results,
- 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,
- establishes expectations at the beginning of the school's operation so that there will be no surprises when a school is held accountable for meeting them over the course of the charter term and at renewal, 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 three areas of performance covered by the frameworks—academic achievement, financial viability, and organizational effectiveness—correspond directly with the three components of a strong charter school program.
- In each of these three areas, the frameworks ask a fundamental question.
 - 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.

Why Does the SCSC Need A Performance Framework?

- To clarify SCSC expectations for schools and stakeholders by establishing, maintaining, and enforcing high performance standards for all schools in the SCSC portfolio.
- To guide practice, assess progress, and inform decision making over the course of the charter term and at renewal or revocation.

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.

Proposed Timeline for Roll-Out

- May 2015
 - Present performance framework to commissioners.
 - Refine framework components based on commissioner feedback.
- June 2015
 - Disseminate framework to schools for review.
- July 2015
 - Conduct webinar session to review framework content with schools.
 - Conduct a technical assistance session with schools to answer questions and gather additional feedback.
- August 2015
 - Post framework on website for stakeholder review.
- September 2015
 - Present final draft to commissioners for adoption at September SCSC meeting.
 - *Additional webinars and/or technical assistance sessions will be scheduled prior to framework adoption in the event significant changes or modifications to the framework are made.*
- 2015-2016 Academic Year
 - Utilize framework for official SCSC accountability purposes.
 - Incorporate framework into charter contracts for new schools.
 - Allow existing schools to amend charter contracts to replace existing accountability measures with those outlined in the performance framework.