



NEW HAMPSHIRE CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM

CHARTER RENEWAL PROCESS

GUIDELINES

**New Hampshire Department of Education
Charter School Office
101 Pleasant Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301
Phone: (603) 271-3582
Fax: (603) 271-8709**

INTRODUCTION

The renewal of a charter takes place every five (5) years. The renewal process involves a comprehensive on-site evaluation conducted by a team of qualified educators and a representative from the Charter School Office.

New Hampshire state law (Chartered Public Schools RSA 194-B) outlines the renewal requirements:

- RSA 194-B:3 (X):
“X. A school’s charter may be renewed in the same manner that a new chartered public school is formed, except that a school’s renewal term shall be for a period of 5 years.”
- RSA 194-B:16 defines the conditions for revoking or not renewing a charter:
 - I. Written petition to the state board to revoke a school's charter may be requested by the parent of any pupil currently attending that chartered public school, or by the school board of a host or receiving school district.
 - II. After reasonable notice has been provided to all affected parties, the state board may revoke a school's charter prior to the expiration of its term under the following circumstances:
 - (a) The school commits a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in its charter application and contract.
 - (b) The school fails to meet generally accepted standards for fiscal management.
 - (c) The school significantly violates the law.
 - (d) The school makes a material misrepresentation in its application or contract application.
 - (e) The school becomes insolvent or financially unstable.

III. Before revoking a school's charter, the state board shall consult with the school board and the board of trustees on the development and implementation of a remedial plan.

IV. The state board may place a chartered public school on probationary status for up to one year to allow the implementation of a remedial plan, after which, if the plan is unsuccessful, the charter shall be revoked.

V. Nothing contained in this section shall prevent the state board from immediately revoking a school's charter in circumstances posing extraordinary risk of harm to pupils.

VI. By the end of its final contract year, the chartered public school shall meet or exceed the objective academic test results or standards and goals as set forth in its application. If the school does not meet these results or standards and goals, it shall not be eligible for renewal of its charter.

VII. If a school's charter expires or is revoked, the school shall be dissolved under the provisions of its charter application and contract. If the contract provisions are silent or ambiguous as to disposition of any asset of the school, such asset shall revert to the school district in which the chartered public school is located at no cost to that district, subject to the school district's acceptance of the asset. Under no circumstances shall the school district be liable for any obligations of the dissolved chartered public school.

VIII. If a school's charter expires or is revoked, the parent of a pupil attending that school may apply to any other chartered public school eligible to receive tuition under the provisions of this chapter adopted by the school district. The pupil's sending district shall not be relieved of its obligation to educate that pupil in accordance with the district's policies.

OVERVIEW

The renewal of a public charter school takes place every five (5) years. Five-year renewal term begins on the first day the school initially opens to students. Subsequent renewal terms start on the date the New Hampshire State Board of Education authorizes the charter school to operate for another five-year term.

Before the end of the school's five-year term, the New Hampshire Department of Education (the Department) and/or designee will conduct a comprehensive on-site review, to determine if the school has adequately fulfilled the promises outlined in its charter. The on-site review consists of classroom observations or student performances/presentations along with focus group interviews with school leadership, teachers, parents, students and members of the Board of Trustees.

Before the start of the fourth year of operation, the school notifies the Department of its intent to seek renewal. A charter renewal application is submitted, by school leadership, to the Department.

For the first renewal, the "renewal application" is considered the school's fourth year annual report. Subsequent renewals are based on the annual report of the year prior to charter expiration (or, most current annual report at the time of renewal). See [New Hampshire Administrative Rules for Chartered Public Schools PART Ed 318 - Ed 318.12 Charter Renewal](#).

The school's performance described in the renewal application, prior annual progress reports, yearly assessment results and charter accountability documents collected by the Department provides, along with the comprehensive on-site review, the evidence needed to monitor progress toward the charter school's academic performance, financial and organizational goals and sustainability.

Overall findings of the school's performance and a recommendation for renewal will be presented to the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education will make the final determination to renew the charter school for another five-year term.

KEY QUESTIONS OF THE RENEWAL PROCESS

The renewal process considers the following four (4) key questions as the framework for assessing progress of a charter school:

1. Is the charter school making progress toward achieving its mission?

- *What progress has the school made toward its academic goals?*
- *What progress has the school made toward its programmatic goals?*
- *What progress has the school made toward its organizational goals?*

KEY QUESTIONS OF THE RENEWAL PROCESS (continued)

2. Is the charter school responsibly using public funds?

- *Has the school provided quarterly financial reports that comply with accepted standards of public school accounting?*
- *Do the school's purchasing and billing practices meet acceptable standards for public school accounting?*
- *Has the school provided an annual external audit with no material defects?*
- *Do the school's quarterly financial reports demonstrate reasonable and prudent planning?*
- *Do the Board of Trustees' meeting minutes indicate clear communication of accurate information about the school's financial condition?*

3. Is the charter school promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?

- *Are students meeting proficiency standards as measured by state assessments?*
- *Are students making progress toward meeting state proficiency standards?*
- *Are students meeting reasonably defined measures of proficiency (see also question 1 – defined academic goals)?*
- *Are students making progress toward any non-academic goals established within its Charter?*

4. Is the school sustainable?

- *Does the school's governing board function effectively and in accordance with public meeting laws and regulations?*
- *Has the school established systems to manage operations efficiently?*
- *Are there systems in place to assure instructional quality?*
- *Has the school established an appropriate relationship with the local school district(s) to facilitate high quality services to students with special educational needs?*
- *Are physical facilities safe, clean and suitable for the purposes of the school?*
- *Is the school emotionally safe for children and adults, free from bullying?*
- *Does the school have a viable financial plan to support its program?*
- *Are there sufficient indications of continuing enrollment to sustain the school's program and meet its plans for growth?*
- *Does the school employ teachers who meet state requirements for experience and/or certification?*
- *Does the school demonstrate an ability to retain skilled and qualified staff?*
- *Do parents report satisfaction with the school in the areas of academic programming, school-family interactions, and accurate and timely communication?*

WORK FLOW AND TIMELINES

RENEWAL PROCESS	TIMELINE
The Charter School Office (CSO) identifies charter schools that are approaching their renewal term.	Before the start of the fourth year of operation, the CSO notifies the schools to complete and submit an <i>“Intent to Renew”</i> form.
The school completes and submits an <i>“Intent to Renew”</i> form to the CSO.	The school informs the CSO of its intent to seek renewal by the start of its fourth year of operation.
The On-site Review Team Lead Evaluator(s) and/or CSO provide regular updates to the Commissioner of Education regarding the charter renewal process.	Ongoing – through the renewal process
School leadership updates charter application	School leadership submits revised application one week prior to the on-site visitation.
The On-Site Review Team Lead Evaluator(s) establishes initial contact with the School Director to schedule a date/time for the on-site visitation.	Prior to the on-site visitation
<p><u>Invitation for Written Comments</u></p> <p>The school notifies the school community of upcoming charter renewal and invites the community (i.e., email, school newsletter) to provide written comments.</p>	Written comments from the school community may be provided to the review team on the day of the on-site visitation.
<p><u>Focus Group Interviews</u></p> <p>The school makes arrangements for parents, board of trustees, staff members, and students to participate in group interviews on the day of the on-site visitation; and, arranges for a secure space for the on-site team to conduct interviews and meet during the day.</p>	Ongoing - before the on-site visitation

DAY OF THE ON-SITE VISITATION	TIMELINE
<p>The On-site Review Team conducts focus group interviews, school document review, and classroom observations or observes student performances/presentations.</p>	<p>Half day/full day is sufficient for the on-site visitation.</p>
<p>The Lead Evaluator(s) presents overall findings to the School Director.</p>	<p>End of the on-site visit</p>
AFTER THE ON-SITE VISITATION	TIMELINE TO BE DETERMINED
<p>The Lead Evaluator(s) will provide the Commissioner of Education with overall findings and discuss a recommendation for renewal.</p> <p>The Lead Evaluator(s), with assistance from the On-site Review Team, creates a draft renewal evaluation report with evidence-based findings.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>~ Timeline to be determined ~</i></p>
<p>The Lead Evaluator(s) or CSO emails the draft report to the School Director for factual review; the School Director reviews and provides feedback to the Lead Evaluator(s) and/or CSO. Factual corrections are made, if necessary.</p>	
<p>The Lead Evaluator(s) emails the final renewal evaluation report to the School Director.</p>	
<p>School leadership may provide a written response to the renewal evaluation report; the written response will be included with the final report. The final report and related documents (i.e., revised charter) will be reviewed by the Commissioner and State Board of Education.</p>	
<p>At a regularly scheduled State Board meeting, the Lead Evaluator(s) will present overall findings of the school's performance and provide a recommendation for renewal to the State Board of Education. School Director is encouraged to attend the State Board meeting.</p>	

SCHOOL DOCUMENTATION

~ RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL ~	
<p>School Documentation provided to Lead Evaluator(s) at least <u>one week prior</u> to on-site visitation (unless otherwise noted)</p> <p>Please provide school documentation by email to the Lead Evaluator(s) and CSO. On the day of the on-site visitation, please also have school documentation available in a binder for review. *If possible, the on-site team would like to take the binder at the end of the visit.</p>	
DOCUMENTATION	SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS
On-site Visitation Schedule	Include school address, contact telephone number(s), and any special parking instructions
Executive Summary (or cover letter)	Include mission statement, school goals, current enrollment numbers, student demographics and outline of modifications made to revised charter, i.e., curriculum/instruction, enrollment for the next 3-5 years, grade expansion.
Revised charter application	Please make appropriate modifications to application. Student enrollment template available upon request.
Renewal Application (annual progress report)	For the first renewal, the “renewal application” consists of the school’s fourth year annual report. Subsequent renewals are based on the annual report of the year prior to charter expiration (or the most current annual report).
Master class schedule	Clearly indicate subjects taught with name of teacher and class times
List of Board of Trustees	Specify board officers, committee memberships, terms, etc.
School Organizational Chart	Include titles to show reporting structure
~ School Documentation continued on next page ~	

SCHOOL DOCUMENTATION (continued)

DOCUMENTATION	SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS
Student portfolios and/or student work samples	Student portfolios and/or student work do not need to be emailed prior to the on-site visitation. <i>May be separate from binder</i>
Sample Report Card	
Parent/Student Handbook	
Staff Handbook	
List of Staff Members and Qualifications	Include number of years teaching and/or experience, certification and subject and/or grade level taught.
Curriculum, assessment tools and current instructional practices	
School policies	
Charter School By-laws	
Outstanding charter accountability documents requested by the CSO	Please provide documents, by email, to the CSO.

Please Note: If certain school documentation above will not be available prior to the on-site visitation, please notify the Lead Evaluator(s) and/or CSO. **If necessary, documentation may be provided on the day of the on-site visitation.

School Documentation Available for Review at the NHDOE Charter School Office	
DOCUMENTATION	SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS
Past annual progress reports	<i>Documentation available for review at the NHDOE Charter School Office.</i>
Yearly independent financial audits	
Minutes of the Board of Trustees	
Quarterly financial reports	
Evidence of insurance coverage (i.e., liability, property, workers' compensation)	
Health, fire and safety inspection reports	

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

It is the school's responsibility to inform focus group participants of the date, time and location of the interviews scheduled with the on-site visitation team.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS	DESCRIPTION
Members of the Board of Trustees	<i>It is important to have as many board members as possible.</i>
School Leadership	Administrators who are directly and primarily responsible for the academic programs and the operations of the school.
Special Education	Discussion of special education services as well as the challenges involved; this may be combined with another focus group interview.
Teachers/ Staff Members	Teachers from different grade levels/subjects. Other staff members are also welcome.
Students/Classroom Observations	Student interviews are preferred. Student performances/presentations are welcome, but not required.
Parents	Parents of children currently attending the charter school.

➤ **See Focus Group Interview Questions on next page**

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The questions below will assist the On-site Review Team in conducting interviews. Team members may also have additional questions based on the document review and data gathered throughout the renewal process.

Board of Trustees

- Describe the role and responsibilities of the Board. What areas or decisions are outside the scope of this role?
- What are the criteria used to determine whether the school is successful?
- How does the board evaluate the performance of the school director?
- What are the school's greatest challenges? What strategies are being employed to meet these challenges?
- How are new board members identified, recruited, selected, and oriented?

School Leadership

- Describe the school's mission and goals, and how they are accomplished.
- How is the curriculum developed, evaluated for effectiveness, and revised?
- What are the school's academic priorities?
- What is the school's strategy for improvement in these priority areas, and how does the school support teachers in the implementation of these strategies?
- Describe the process for supervision and evaluation of teachers. What are the expectations?
- What are the school's greatest strengths and challenges?
- Describe your relationship with the board of trustees. Does the Board evaluate your performance?
- How are students transported to and from school?
- Does the school participate in the School Lunch Program?

Teachers

- What assessments are used to track student learning?
- What are the school's academic priorities? How are priorities determined?
- What are the school's strategies for improvement in these areas, and what support is given in implementing these strategies?
- How does the school review staff performance?
- Are staff members required to follow any specific formats or procedures in teaching and lesson planning? Are lesson plans submitted for review? If so, is feedback given?
- What professional development and other forms of support are made available to staff members?
- Describe the working relationships (collaborations) between teachers and administration.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (continued)

Special Education

- Does the charter school have an effective working relationship with the sending district(s)?
- What kinds of instructional supports and services are made available to special education students at this school?
- What types of accommodations and modifications are being made in the regular education classroom for students with diverse learning needs?
- What additional academic supports and services are available to all students?

Parents/Guardians

- Why did you choose to send your child(ren) to this school?
- What does the school expect of your children academically?
- Is the school environment a safe place?
- What supports does the school offer your child(ren)?
- What is your role/involvement in the school?
- What are the school's biggest challenges?