



THE NEW HAMPSHIRE CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

**Prepared by SchoolWorks LLC for the New Hampshire Department of Education,
Office of School Standards
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NEW HAMPSHIRE CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

OVERVIEW OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

Introduction

In compliance with New Hampshire charter school law, the Department of Education (or its agent) must conduct “first-year and periodic subsequent program audits” of the charter schools it authorizes (RSA 194-B:10). The Department proposes a plan for conduct of the audits described in this document. This plan relies on information submitted by the school as part of its quarterly and annual progress reports in order to present an accurate summary of the school’s performance to the New Hampshire Board of Education – the authorizer of the charter schools. The evidence in the school’s periodic progress reports must represent attainment of the academic, financial and organizational goals declared in the school’s charter application. The annual progress report and other information collected by the Department will provide the evidence needed to monitor each charter school’s academic performance, responsible use of public funds and likelihood of sustainability – the core areas to which charter schools are held accountable. To assure the accuracy of its audit, the Department may corroborate and augment the information submitted by the school through interviews with stakeholders, site visits and requests for confirming documents.

No later than one year before the end of the charter term, the Department will arrange to conduct a comprehensive on-site evaluation of the school. The evaluation will result in a report to guide the Department’s recommendation whether to renew the school’s charter for another term. The Department will consider the growing body of evidence from each year of the school’s operation, along with the on-site renewal evaluation, to determine if the school has adequately fulfilled the promises of its original charter.

Overview

Four questions serve as the framework for periodic assessment of the New Hampshire charter schools:

- ❖ Is the school making progress toward achieving its mission?
- ❖ Is the school responsibly using public funds?
- ❖ Is the school promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?
- ❖ Is the school sustainable?

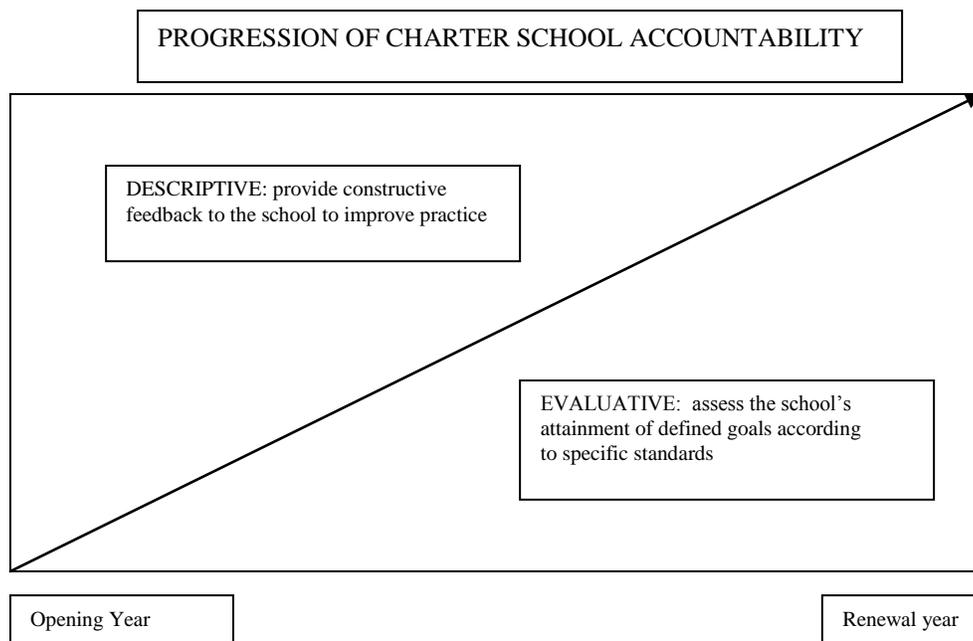
By collecting information throughout the year from charter school periodic reports and annually in the charter school’s yearly report of its progress, the Department of Education will be able to monitor school performance throughout the term of the charter. Department oversight can serve to identify schools experiencing significant successes, as well as significant challenges, and share that information in its periodic reports to the New Hampshire Board of Education. By staying alert to school performance successes, the Department can facilitate dissemination of charter school best practices. By staying alert to schools’ struggles, the Department may counsel schools to remedy their deficiencies or refer them to assistance providers with particular expertise. Frequent, regular

oversight of charter schools is credited with producing stronger charter schools with higher rates of student success (Miron, 2005¹).

Embedded within each of the framework questions are subsidiary questions that elaborate on the broad topic stated in the main question. For example, judging whether a school is sustainable requires gathering information about current and prospective enrollment, leadership and teacher stability, and the quality of governance at the school. The table below lists the framework and subsidiary questions that are descriptive of effective school performance.

Gradual increase of expectations

The accountability process developed for New Hampshire charter schools recognizes the natural evolution in the formation of a school organization. Across the life of a charter term, a charter school grows and changes, gradually increasing the richness of information it can obtain to describe its students’ progress and to assess the impact of its programs. Accordingly, the accountability system evolves from a heavy emphasis on descriptive and compliance information in the early years to more evaluative, summative judgments about the school’s success at meeting defined standards in the later years. A graphical representation of these changes over time is shown below:



¹ Miron, Gary. 2005. Strong charter schools are those that result in positive outcomes. Kalamazoo, MI: The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University. (Paper presented at AERA Annual Meeting, Montreal, Canada, April 11-15, 2005)

PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

The accountability process for New Hampshire Charter Schools is guided by three principles:

- Faithfulness to both the spirit and letter of the charter school law (Chapter 194-B)
- Adherence to the standards set by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) for transparency and rigor
- Minimal additional burden on the limited resources (personnel, time) of charter schools and the Department of Education

The New Hampshire Charter School Law

The law establishing New Hampshire charter schools includes several explicit expectations for the impact of charters on individual learners, as well as on the education enterprise statewide. RSA 194-B:1 (a) explains that the purpose of the law is to accomplish specific changes in traditional school operations by setting these expectations for charter schools:

- “I. Promote and encourage the establishment and operation of charter and open enrollment schools in New Hampshire.
- “II. Encourage school districts to allow public charter and open enrollment schools.
- “III. Encourage the establishment of public charter schools with specific or focused curriculum, instruction, methods, or target pupil groups.
- “IV. Improve pupil learning and increase opportunities for learning.
- “V. Exempt charter schools from state statutes and rules, other than where specified, to provide innovative learning and teaching in a unique environment.
- “VI. Enhance professional opportunities for teachers.
- “VII. Establish results-driven accountability for public charter schools and require the measurement of learning.
- “VIII. Make school improvement a focus at the school level.
- “IX. Encourage the establishment of public charter schools that meet the needs and interests of pupils, parents, communities, region, and the state as a whole.” (RSA 194-B:1 (a))”

At least three categories of goals are defined in the NH charter school law: (1) organizational goals, (2) academic or learning goals; and (3) programmatic goals. Charter schools are established to develop new ways to structure their systems to better serve children (organizational), to raise the level of achievement among students by adopting unique methods and materials (academic) and to appeal to specific interests that motivate students and parents to support learning (programmatic). In addition, the law declares charter schools free from many regulations governing traditional public schools, with exceptions cited in the statute related to compliance with financial, governance, health and safety, personnel and federal legislation. The accountability system described in this document

assesses charter schools' progress toward each of the expectations envisioned by the legislators in establishing the charter option for New Hampshire parents and their children.

Compliance with NACSA standards

A second set of principles underlying the design of the New Hampshire Charter Schools Accountability Process is defined by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). NACSA recommends the following standard for the authorizer's oversight activities: "A quality authorizer conducts contract oversight that evaluates performance, monitors compliance, informs intervention and renewal decisions, and ensures autonomy provided under applicable law." Quarterly and yearly review of charter school progress across the range of goals established by RSA 914-B provides a continually growing body of evidence about a school's performance and informs decisions about charter renewal at the end of the charter term.

A characteristic of the decision-making process critical to verifying that charter schools are a viable option for educating the state's children is broad-based support and acceptance. The NACSA standard for renewal decisions states, "A quality authorizer designs and implements a *transparent and rigorous* process that uses comprehensive data to make merit-based renewal decisions." (italics added) By declaring clear and comprehensive expectations for student and school performance, the charter school authorizer alerts the school and the public of the expectations for reaching organizational, academic and programmatic aims over the course of the charter commitment. Some of the specific objectives to be achieved by charters are defined by the school itself, while other objectives reflect compliance with state and federal academic expectations (Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)).

Publication and posting of the criteria and procedures for the New Hampshire Charter School Accountability Process meets the NACSA standard of transparency by providing opportunities for public review and comment on the criteria and standards used to evaluate charter school effectiveness. Feedback from charter school founders, leaders, staff, students and parents, as well as comments from traditional public school stakeholders, will inform revision and refinement of the accountability process as needed over time to better meet the needs of the public, the authorizer and the charter schools.

Minimal additional burden

The central effort in school accountability is the collection of evidence to demonstrate achievement of concrete and measurable objectives. To minimize the imposition of additional demands on charter school leaders, the New Hampshire Charter School Accountability Process incorporates existing reporting requirements into the evidence base. Few additional documents – except those defined by each charter school as measures of their unique mission objectives – are required. The challenge for charter schools will be to select those pieces of information that define the unique aspects of their program in measurable and credible terms and to report that information to the authorizer and to the public in general.

The school's presentation of its evidence of effectiveness and compliance with regulations will be collected into the *Quarterly Progress Reports* and the *Annual Progress Report* described in the charter school law (RSA194-B:5 IV a). The school's progress reports will include descriptions of the school's attainment of the objectives related to the school's mission – goals related to unique

organizational structure, specific program designs and, most important of all, the impact of the school's unique design on student academic achievement. Sustainability of the school depends on achieving and maintaining the support of parents and students at the school and its financial viability relies on responsible fiscal management. Evidence of organizational sustainability and financial responsibility are additional components of the school's progress reports.

The school has the option of commenting on other aspects of its performance in the periodic progress reports. Evidence of effective governance and management of school operations or supporting evidence about the school's sustainability over and above satisfaction surveys can be included to complement required information. In addition to the State's collection of evidence of academic achievement gathered from state assessments, the school, using results on national standardized or locally developed assessments as described in each school's charter, may offer evidence of academic progress.

OUTCOME OF THE YEARLY REVIEW OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

At least yearly, the Department of Education is required to report the status of the charter schools to the authorizer – the New Hampshire Board of Education. The report to the Board includes information on academic progress, compliance with state and federal regulations, adherence to governance rules for public schools, evidence of development of a sustainable organization, and financial accounting practices that meet accepted standards for public education agencies and organizations.

In addition to reporting to the Board of Education, the staff of the Charter School Office will provide ongoing feedback to the charter schools on the quality of their reporting, each school's compliance with accepted practices, adherence to federal and state regulations in relevant areas, and an assessment of each school's overall progress toward its unique school-defined accountability goals. A sample monitoring checklist is shown in **Appendix A**.

CONDUCT AND TIMELINE FOR THE ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

The Accountability Process for New Hampshire Charter Schools follows a cyclic timeline consistent with existing reporting schedules. The following table details the stages in the process and responsibilities at each point:

**TABLE 1: TIMELINE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY CHECKPOINTS
YEARS 1 THROUGH 4:**

Years 1 through 4	School submits:	DOE conducts:
December 1 of opening year ²	accountability plan (per RSA 194-B)	review and feedback on measurability of goals
Fall Reports:	staff qualifications (form A12A Part B)	compliance check
October 1	enrollment (form A12A Part A)	
October 15	health, fire and safety inspection reports	compliance check
	evidence of insurance coverage	compliance check
	calendar of instructional days	review to determine compliance with state requirements
Monthly (or as defined in charter)	Board minutes	review to assure effective governance practices
Quarterly	progress toward school goals ³	compare with targets in accountability plan
Nov. 15		check to see if complies with standards
Jan. 30	financial report	
Apr. 15		
June 30		
Annually	year-end summary of school performance	review and verification as needed to assess performance
August 1		
End of Year Reports	Attendance, graduation, etc. (Form A3 + others as appropriate)	
Aug. 1		
Annually	independent financial audit	request for action if any material defects
Sept. 30		

EVALUATING CHARTER SCHOOLS FOR RENEWAL

RSA 194-B:16 (VI) defines the conditions for renewal of a New Hampshire Public Charter School:

“VI. By the end of its final contract year, the charter 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.”

Assessment of the charter school’s attainment of performance targets sufficient to merit renewal of its charter will consider the school’s cumulative performance across the five years of its initial term.

² For existing charter schools as of October, 2005, Accountability Plan due dates are yet to be determined

³ Sample progress reports and reporting guidance available on DOE website.

ROLE OF THE OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY, NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

As the agent of the authorizer, the Office of Accountability of the NH Department of Education is required to carry out the monitoring duties outlined in the charter legislation. Staff members responsible for charter school oversight assure compliance with charter school reporting requirements, assess and provide feedback on the clarity and measurability of the school's accountability plan goals, and communicate school performance and progress to the Board of Education. Support and assistance for charter schools is provided by independent agencies. The Office of Accountability provides guidance in this and other documents for completion of the charter school's reporting tasks but does not offer assistance in complying with state or federal rules and regulations.

RESOURCES FOR NEW HAMPSHIRE CHARTER SCHOOLS

Schools can find guidance for complying with the accountability requirements in the appendices attached to this document, in the guidance documents posted on the NH Department of Education web site and from resources provided by the state for public school leaders and local governing boards.

DOE Web site:

<http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/curriculum/SchoolApproval/CharterSchools/CharterSchoolsHomePage.htm>

Resource document: **New Hampshire Financial Accounting Handbook for Local Education Agencies**. 1999 Edition (Revised August 2001). New Hampshire Department Of Education In Cooperation With New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration and New Hampshire Association of School Business Officials.

<http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/data/ReportsandStatistics/Data/Handbook1999EditionUpdatedAugust2001.PDF>

KEY AND SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

Table 2 on the following page lists the four key questions and relevant subsidiary questions that serve as the checkpoints for charter school accountability.

TABLE 2: Key and Subsidiary Questions

- ❖ Is the school making progress toward achieving its mission?
 - What progress has the school made toward its academic goals as defined in its accountability plan?
 - What progress has the school made toward its programmatic goals?
 - What progress has the school made toward its organizational goals?
- ❖ Is the 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 school's Board minutes indicate clear communication of accurate information about the school's financial condition?
- ❖ Is the school promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?
 - Are students at the school meeting proficiency standards as measured by state assessments?
 - Are students at the school making progress toward meeting state proficiency standards?
 - Are students at the school meeting credible internally defined measures of proficiency (see also question 1 – school-defined academic goals)?
 - Are students making progress toward any non-academic goals that the school has volunteered in its accountability plan?
- ❖ 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 LEA to facilitate high quality services to students with special educational needs?
 - Are physical facilities safe, clean and suited to the purposes of the school?
 - Is the school psychologically and emotionally safe for children and adults, free from intimidation and bullying?
 - Does the school have a viable financial plan to support its program?
 - Are there indications of sufficient 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?

APPENDIX A: MONITORING CHECKLIST FOR NH CHARTER SCHOOLS

Part I: Compliance with Reporting Requirements

To be completed by staff of the Office of Accountability, NH Department of Education.

Directions: Record the date of receipt of each document in the compliance list. Obtain copies of standard DOE public school reporting forms from the Office of Information Services according to the due dates (typically October 1, October 15 and August 1).
 Maintain a copy of this checklist in the school's file to be examined when completing the annual performance audit.

School name: _____ Date of review: _____

Primary school contact: _____ Reviewer: _____

Facilities

Item	Date Due	Date Rec'd.	Comments
Insurance coverage	<i>(before opening)</i>		
Health inspection	<i>(before opening)</i>		
Safety inspection	<i>(before opening)</i>		
Fire inspection	<i>(before opening)</i>		

Staff

Item	Date Due	Date Rec'd.	Comments
Assurance of completion of background checks	<i>Oct. 1</i>		
Certification credentials	<i>Oct. 1 (Form A12)</i>		

Students

Item	Date Due	Date Rec'd.	Comments
Enrollment reports	<i>October 1 (Form A12)</i>		
Attendance reports	<i>Aug. 1 (Form A3)</i>		

Governance

Item	Date Due	Date Rec'd.	Comments
Board minutes	<i>Periodically</i>		
Open meeting compliance (copies of meetings postings)	<i>with Annual Report (Aug. 1)</i>		

Budget and Accounting Practices, Financial Reporting

Item	Date Due	Date Rec'd.	Comments
Budget reports	<i>Quarterly</i> (Nov. 15; Jan. 30; Apr. 15; June 30)		
Audited financial statement	<i>Sept. 30</i>		

Academic Program (compliance only, not performance)

Item	Date Due	Date Rec'd.	Comments
Calendar of instructional days	<i>(before opening)</i>		
Accountability Plan	<i>(before opening)</i>		
Quarterly Progress Reports	<i>Quarterly</i> (Nov. 15; Jan. 30; Apr. 15; June 30)		
Annual Progress Report	<i>Aug. 1</i>		
Student performance results	<i>(per NECAP procedures)</i>		

Part II: Assessment of Progress

To be completed by staff of the Office of Accountability, NH Department of Education.

Directions: Review the Annual Progress Report submitted by each school to complete the assessment for Key Question 1.

Record each of the school's goals in the appropriate space on the checklist.

Make a judgment based on the evidence provided by the school whether the school has met, failed to meet, or exceeded the targets defined in its accountability plan.

Construct a summary assessment answering Key Question 1: Is the school making progress toward achieving its mission?

School name: _____ Date of review: _____

Primary school contact: _____ Reviewer: _____

Year of operation of the school: _____

KEY QUESTION 1: IS THE SCHOOL MAKING PROGRESS TOWARD ACHIEVING ITS MISSION?

❖ *What progress has the school made toward its academic goals as defined in its Accountability Plan?*

Student performance on state assessments:

Assessment Criteria <small>(from school's accountability plan)</small>	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
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Comments:

Student performance on national standardized assessments:

Assessment Criteria <small>(from school's accountability plan)</small>	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
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Comments:

Gains in student achievement:

Assessment Criteria <small>(from school's accountability plan)</small>	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
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Comments:

Student performance on credible internal assessments:

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
<i>(from school's accountability plan)</i>			

Comments:

Other academic performance goals: (from school's accountability plan)

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
<i>(from school's accountability plan)</i>			

Comments:

❖ ***What progress has the school made toward its organizational goals?***

Governance and organizational structure goals:

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
<i>(from school's accountability plan)</i>			

Comments:

Other organizational goals:

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
<i>(from school's accountability plan)</i>			

Comments:

❖ ***What progress has the school made toward its programmatic goals?***

Program goal #1: (from school's accountability plan)

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds

Comments:

Program goal #2: (from school's accountability plan)

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds

Comments:

Program goal #3: (from school's accountability plan)

Assessment Criteria

Does not meet

Meets

Exceeds

Comments:

Program goal #4: (from school's accountability plan)

Assessment Criteria

Does not meet

Meets

Exceeds

Comments:

Summary Judgment of Progress on Question 1: Is the school making progress toward achieving its mission?

KEY QUESTION 2: IS THE SCHOOL RESPONSIBLY USING PUBLIC FUNDS?

To be completed by staff of the Office of Accountability, NH Department of Education.

Directions: Review the periodic financial reports and the annual external audit submitted by each school to complete the assessment for Key Question 2.

Examine the record of financial reports to assess whether the school meets, exceeds or fails to meet the standards defined for each question. .

Construct a summary assessment answering Key Question 2: *Is the school responsibly using public funds?*

- ❖ *Has the school provided quarterly financial reports that comply with accepted standards of public school accounting?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school has complied in a timely manner with required budget reporting.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

- ❖ *Do the school's purchasing and billing practices meet acceptable standards for public school accounting?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school's budget practices follow generally accepted accounting practices for public schools.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

- ❖ *Has the school provided an annual external audit with no material defects?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school's annual financial report is submitted in a timely manner.			
The school's annual audited financial report reveals no significant material defects.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ ***Do the school’s quarterly financial reports demonstrate reasonable and prudent planning?***

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
Budget reports are clear, concise and accurate. Yearly budget planning allocates sufficient funds to support the school’s programs. Yearly budget projections generally align with monthly expenditures.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ ***Do the school’s Board minutes indicate clear communication of accurate information about the school’s financial condition?***

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
Monthly Board minutes include presentation and discussion of allocations, expenditures and balances. Quarterly reports provided to the Department of Education align with presentations to the schools’ Board of Trustees.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

Summary Judgment of Progress on Question 2: Is the school responsibly using public funds?

KEY QUESTION 3: IS THE SCHOOL PROMOTING STUDENT ATTAINMENT OF EXPECTED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS?

To be completed by staff of the Office of Accountability, NH Department of Education.

Directions: *Obtain copies of state assessment results for each of the charter schools.*

Examine the state assessment results to assess whether the school meets, exceeds or fails to meet the standards defined for each question. Review the school’s documentation of its academic performance in its Annual Progress Report.

Considering both the state assessments and federal requirements as well as the school’s internally defined performance assessment results, construct a summary assessment answering Key Question 3: Is the school promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?

❖ ***Are students at the school meeting proficiency standards as measured by state assessments?***

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
Students at the school achieve at or near state averages on state assessments.			
Students at the school achieve at the level of performance defined by the school in its accountability plan (see question 1).			
Students at the school achieve at or near the level of students in similar schools.			
Comments:			

❖ ***Are students at the school making progress toward meeting state proficiency standards?***

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
Students demonstrate average rates of growth on standardized assessments.*			
Comments:			

* maintain same percentile rank from year to year, or increase scaled scores on criterion/standards-based assessments

- ❖ *Are students at the school meeting credible internally-defined measures of proficiency (see also question 1 – school-defined academic goals)*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school demonstrates the credibility of its internal measures. Students attain internally defined targets on local assessments. <i>Comments:</i>			

- ❖ *Are students making progress toward any non-academic goals that the school has volunteered in its accountability plan?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school demonstrates the credibility of its internal measures. Students attain internally defined targets on local assessments. <i>Comments:</i>			

Summary Judgment of Progress on Question 3: Is the school promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?

KEY QUESTION 4: IS THE SCHOOL SUSTAINABLE?

To be completed by staff of the Office of Accountability, NH Department of Education.

Directions: *Review copies of the Board minutes submitted throughout the year by the charter school. Review the compliance checklist (Part I of this appendix). Examine any letters or reports received from parents or community members received by your office related to charter school operations. Verify the submission of health, safety, and fire inspection reports by the school as needed. Obtain copies of the fall and end-of-year reports submitted by the school to Information Services describing enrollment, attendance, staff qualifications and other information.*

Examine the available documentation to assess whether the school meets, exceeds or fails to meet the standards defined for each question. Review the school’s documentation of compliance and stakeholder approval provided in its Annual Progress Report.

Request additional documentation or conduct stakeholder interviews as needed to corroborate the available evidence of the school’s performance.

Considering the entire collection of evidence available, construct a summary assessment answering Key Question 4: Is the school sustainable?

❖ *Does the school’s governing board function effectively and in accordance with public meeting laws and regulations?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school provides evidence of required announcements of meetings. Board minutes demonstrate appropriate attention to public meeting rules. Comments:			

Has the school established systems to manage operations efficiently?

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school complies with requirements for reporting to state and federal agencies in a timely manner.			
The school demonstrates adherence to written policies for attendance, behavior and personnel policies.			
The school demonstrates effective policies for attending to transportation, facilities maintenance and food services.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ Are there systems in place to assure instructional quality?

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school adopts and implements clearly defined procedures for monitoring instruction and providing support for improvement.			
The school demonstrates clear and credible standards for the quality of instruction.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ Has the school established an appropriate relationship with the local LEA to facilitate high quality services to students with special educational needs?

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school provides evidence of timely and productive communication with the local LEA to assure appropriate services to students with special educational needs.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ Are physical facilities safe, clean and suited to the purposes of the school?

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school meets the criteria for safety, fire and health codes in their locale.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ *Is the school psychologically and emotionally safe for children and adults, free from intimidation and bullying?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
Discipline incidence reports indicate few or declining instances of student-to-student conflict Staff surveys show a respectful professional climate.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ *Does the school have a viable financial plan to support its program?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
Enrollment levels are consistent with budget projections.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ *Are there indications of sufficient continuing enrollment to sustain the school's program and meet its plans for growth?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
Enrollment levels are increasing over time, or consistent with the school's projections.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ *Does the school employ teachers who meet state requirements for experience and/or certification?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
Yearly reports show staff that meet qualifications for charter schools.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ *Does the school demonstrate an ability to retain skilled and qualified staff?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
Staff exit surveys reveal reasons for departure unrelated to poor leadership or poor personnel management practices. If relevant, the school has taken action to eliminate or reduce organization-related reasons for staff departures.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

❖ *Do parents report satisfaction with the school in the areas of academic programming, school-family interactions, and accurate and timely communication?*

Assessment Criteria	Does not meet	Meets	Exceeds
The school demonstrates a reasonable response rate for its parent surveys. Parents report 80% or better satisfaction with the academic programming provided by the school. Parents report at least 80% satisfaction with school–family interactions. Parents report at least 80% satisfaction with the accuracy and timeliness of school communication.			
<i>Comments:</i>			

Summary Judgment of Progress on Question 4: Is the school sustainable?

APPENDIX B: KEY AND SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS

- ❖ **Is the school making progress toward achieving its mission?**
 - What progress has the school made toward its academic goals as defined in its accountability plan?
 - What progress has the school made toward its programmatic goals?
 - What progress has the school made toward its organizational goals?
- ❖ **Is the 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 school's Board minutes indicate clear communication of accurate information about the school's financial condition?
- ❖ **Is the school promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?**
 - Are students at the school meeting proficiency standards as measured by state assessments?
 - Are students at the school making progress toward meeting state proficiency standards?
 - Are students at the school meeting credible internally defined measures of proficiency (see also question 1 – school-defined academic goals)?
 - Are students making progress toward any non-academic goals that the school has volunteered in its accountability plan?
- ❖ **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 LEA to facilitate high quality services to students with special educational needs?
 - Are physical facilities safe, clean, and suited to the purposes of the school?
 - Is the school psychologically and emotionally safe for children and adults, free from intimidation and bullying?
 - Does the school have a viable financial plan to support its programs?
 - Are there indications of sufficient 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?

APPENDIX C: RESOURCES FOR CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

The federal Department of Education hosts a web site with links to a vast range of resources on general accountability issues, particularly those related to NCLB and its requirements:

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/edpicks.jhtml?src=ln>

Resources for Constructing Accountability Plans

1. The Charter Friends Network prepared a book, *Accountability for Student Performance: An Annotated Resource Guide for Shaping an Accountability Plan for Your Charter School, 2nd Edition*. Accountability Initiative, a project of the Charter Friends National Network. 1295 Bandana Boulevard, Suite 165, St. Paul, MN 55108. info@charterfriends.org
2. The web site, US Charter Schools, lists resources on developing accountability plans from a range of sources.
<http://www.uscharterschools.org/cs/r/query/q/1573?topic=10,12,14,37,11&type=5&x-title=Accountability>
3. One of the authorizers of New York charter schools, the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, provide explicit instructions in a guidebook for collecting and reporting evidence of charter school performance.

<http://www.newyorkcharters.org/resource/index.html>

Resources for Financial Accounting, Reporting, Procedures

1. The New Hampshire Department of Revenue has provided a handbook for all public schools to detail accepted practices to demonstrate responsible use of public funds.

New Hampshire Financial Accounting Handbook for Local Education Agencies, 1999 Edition

(Revised August 2001). New Hampshire Department of Education in Cooperation With New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration and New Hampshire Association of School Business Officials.

<http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/data/ReportsandStatistics/Data/Handbook1999EditionUpdatedAugust2001.PDF>

2. The New Hampshire Center for School Reform, mentioned earlier in this document, offers guidance and links to sample tools and instruments on its website.

<http://nhschoolreform.org/>

Resources for Academic Attainment Measurement, Reporting

In addition to the references listed above, the books by Victoria Bernhardt and Nancy Love offer a variety of traditional and non-traditional ways to measure academic attainment.

Bernhardt, V. 2004. *Data analysis for continuous school improvement. Second edition*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education. ISBN 1-930556-74-8.

Love, N. 2002. *Using data, getting results: A practical guide for school improvement in mathematics and science*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc. ISBN 1-929024-33-9.

APPENDIX D: ABOUT SCHOOLWORKS LLC

SchoolWorks is a seven-year-old education consulting company based in Beverly, MA with expertise in systems, tools and professional development related to assessing the quality of education and planning for its improvement. SchoolWorks designs and implements school accountability systems, school quality reviews and improvement systems that help educators make informed choices based on the collection and analysis of data about their own performance and the performance of their students. SchoolWorks teams of experienced educators have reviewed the performance of more than 500 schools across the country and advised a number of state agencies, school districts, charter school authorizers, foundations and individual schools on approaches to school improvement to address common and unique values and beliefs about effective schooling practices.

SchoolWorks Team for the New Hampshire Charter Schools Accountability Project:

Karen Laba, Ph.D.: Karen is Director of Resource Development at SchoolWorks. Her education career began as a middle school science teacher, moving to high school science teaching and then to teaching science to preservice elementary teachers. Karen has worked as a research assistant, curriculum development coordinator and intern teacher supervisor. She earned a BA in Biology from LeMoyne College, Syracuse, New York and holds a Masters degree from the State University of New York at Cortland. In 1998, she earned her Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of New Hampshire.

Ledyard McFadden: Ledyard is the President of SchoolWorks. Ledyard taught English as a second language in Costa Rica and later at Chelsea High School in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Ledyard was a founder of the Bridge School in Chelsea, Massachusetts and the Director of Finance and Operations for City on a Hill Charter School in Boston, Massachusetts. He also served as Regional Manager for Beacon Education Management and led the school start-up process at the Plymouth Rising Tide Charter School. Ledyard holds a BA in English from Pomona College and a Masters in Education from Harvard University.

Aretha Miller: Aretha is a Project Manager at SchoolWorks. She worked as a special education teacher and literacy specialist in Boston Public Schools where she taught for eight years. Prior to joining the SchoolWorks team, Aretha was the curriculum coordinator for the Diploma Plus initiative – a nationally recognized alternative education model designed to re-engage at-risk and out-of-school youth to the learning process, at the Commonwealth Corporation’s Center for Youth Development and Education. Aretha graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish. She holds a Masters in Special Education from Lesley College.