WASHINGTON CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL: A GUIDE FOR AUTHORIZERS AND SCHOOLS

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WASHINGTON CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL GUIDE

CONTENTS

l.	Introduction	2
II.	What is Charter Renewal?	2
III.	Authorizer Communication	4
IV.	Evaluating Performance	5
V.	Renewal Process	6
1.	Performance Report	6
2.	Renewal Application Guidance	7
3.	Public Comment	9
4.	Renewal Inspection: A Focused Approach	10
5.	Inspection Transparency	12
6.		
7.	Recommendation for Renewal	14
8.	Recommendation for Nonrenewal	14
VI.	Renewal Decisions	14
VII.	Renewal Contracting	15
VIII.	Nonrenewal: Wind Down and Closure	16
APP	ENDICES	18



I. INTRODUCTION

This guide provides Washington State charter school authorizers and charter schools a sample road map for the substance and process of making renewal decisions consistent with Washington law, national best practice, and Washington authorizer and charter school feedback. It is intended to serve as a resource and guide that authorizers revise, modify, and adapt as needed for their particular circumstances.

The Washington State Charter Schools Association (WA Charters) was awarded the federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant in October 2019. In addition to awarding sub-grants to eligible schools, WA Charters supports the ongoing iterations of authorizing practices such as charter renewal and expansion/replication using CSP funds. For this project, \$10,000 of CSP funds were used to further iterate the charter renewal process for Washington state authorizers.

II. WHAT IS CHARTER RENEWAL?

The renewal process and decision fulfill one of the fundamental promises and commitments of the charter school idea. In order to receive a charter, an applicant must demonstrate that the plan meets identified educational needs, promotes a diversity of educational options, and is likely to be successful. Once approved, rather than having a presumption that it will operate in perpetuity, the charter school has a contract to operate for a defined period. Though many public school rules and regulations apply to charter schools, charters have greater flexibility to manage the educational program, school calendar and schedule, school budget, and staffing. In exchange for this flexibility or autonomy, charter schools are accountable to the authorizer for their outcomes.

Charter schools operate subject to performance frameworks that establish the educational, organizational, and financial standards by which the authorizer evaluates the school.² Performance review happen on an ongoing basis as the authorizer formally evaluates a school's performance each year. But high stakes decisions to revoke a charter mid-term typically require with substantial organizational mismanagement, malfeasance, or catastrophic performance failure. In terms of consequences, there may be little practical differentiation between a school performing very well and one performing very poorly until the respective charter contracts come up for renewal.

¹ See R.C.W. §§ 28A.710.090(1) (providing that charters meet identified needs and promote diversity of options), 28A.710.140(3) (granting charters only to applicants that are "likely to open and operate successful charter public school.").

² RCW § 28A.710.170 (Charter contracts – Performance framework).



At renewal, Washington authorizers have the responsibility to assess the degree to which a school is meeting its obligations to children, families, and the community. The decisions are based on expectations established through law, the charter contract, and the performance framework. If the school is meeting its obligations, it earns contract renewal. The charter school law establishes the bases for which an authorizer may decide not to renew the contract.³ It also establishes a minimum academic performance threshold below which an authorizer *may not* – barring extraordinary circumstances – renew a contract.⁴

³ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.200(1).

⁴ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.200(2) (prohibiting renewal of schools in the bottom quartile of the state's achievement index).



III. AUTHORIZER COMMUNICATION

Schools' experience of the renewal process often correlates with the quality of authorizer communications. Authorizers should schedule orientations and presentations for schools at key stages such as publication of renewal application guidance and initiation of renewal inspections. The authorizer should also consider providing schools regular updates by email. Finally, authorizing staff should be available to respond to school inquiries. The authorizer's availability and responsiveness to informal questions from schools about particular aspects of the process may be just as important as the quality of more formal presentations. These communications may not affect renewal outcomes, but they can significantly impact schools' appreciation of the process as well as their understanding and acceptance of the results. Conversely, schools need to be attentive and responsive to the renewal process and to the authorizer's expectations for that process.

The authorizer can provide a framework for strong communications by establishing a **process timeline** aligned to statutory requirements (See attached sample Renewal Process Calendar) and conducting an orientation for renewal schools. The timeline should include key dates for which the authorizer is responsible (e.g., renewal guidance publication), for which the school is responsible (e.g., renewal application deadline), and that are applicable to both authorizer and school (e.g., renewal inspections, renewal decision). In addition, it is helpful for the timeline to include relevant external dates such as State Auditor's Office audits or state release of school performance data.



IV. EVALUATING PERFORMANCE

Renewal amounts to an authorizer's decision about whether the school has met the terms of its charter contract. The performance framework is the backbone of that decision. It establishes the "academic and operational performance indicators, measures and metrics that will guide an authorizer's evaluations of a charter school." The law specifies some of the required academic elements of the performance framework such as measures and metrics for proficiency and growth. The framework must also address financial performance and sustainability, and governance (sometimes referred to as organizational performance).

Objectivity. At renewal, the authorizer's evaluation of performance should be objective. Objectivity comes through adherence to the indicators, measures, and metrics set out in the performance framework. With respect to academics, these objective standards are typically anchored by the state accountability system. With respect to finances, there are professional standards and metrics that authorizers can reference for evaluating financial performance and sustainability. The standards for governance are based in the school's compliance with applicable law and the governing board's adherence to its legal and fiduciary duties as a nonprofit and as a public entity.

Context and Additional Measures. While maintaining objectivity, the authorizer's evaluation of performance should also be contextual. One source of context is understanding the school's development over time. For example, the authorizer should consider whether academic outcomes are trending up or down and may weight recent performance more heavily than earlier, startup performance. Context may also require the authorizer to consider external circumstances. For example, the suspension of standardized assessments due to Covid-19 severely limited the traditional academic performance information available to schools and authorizers for renewal decisions in 2020-21. In response, authorizers needed to consider valid and reliable interim performance measures. Sometimes additional quantitative or qualitative measures may help provide a more complete picture of performance, especially when they are linked to distinctive elements of a school's program. Ideally, authorizers has worked with schools to develop such measures as part of the contracting process and has incorporated them into schools' respective performance frameworks.

⁵ R.C.W. § 28A.710.170(1).

⁶ R.C.W. §§ 28A.710.170(2)(a)-(b).

⁷ R.C.W. §§ 28A.710.170(2)(g)-(h).



V. RENEWAL PROCESS

This section identifies the key stages or components of the renewal process. The discussion aligns with the sequence presented in the sample Renewal Process Calendar (Attachment 1).

1. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The authorizer's Performance Report initiates the renewal process.8

Performance summary. The report should summarize the school's performance record to date based on the charter contract, in general, and the performance framework, in particular. ⁹ It should summarize performance in three primary areas: 1) academic outcomes; 2) financial performance and sustainability; and 3) governance (organizational performance).

Weaknesses and Concerns. It is important that the report identify weaknesses and concerns that *might* adversely impact the authorizer's renewal decision or the length of a renewal term.¹⁰

Eligibility for Renewal. If the school's current performance falls in the bottom quartile of schools in the Washington achievement index developed by the state board of education, ¹¹ then the Performance Report should contain a statement that the school is *not currently eligible* for contract renewal. ¹² The authorizer should still permit the school to apply for contract renewal. The application provides an opportunity for the school to present "exceptional circumstances" that would warrant renewal notwithstanding the performance status. ¹³

Absent a bottom-quartile determination, a school is eligible for contract renewal. Eligibility does not, however, indicate anything about the likelihood of the school's earning renewal or about any terms or conditions that the authorizer may place on renewal.

No Recommendation. The Performance Report *should not* contain a recommendation regarding charter renewal because the authorizer does not yet have all information relevant to that decision. Additional information that should inform the renewal decision include the school's

⁸ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.190(2).

⁹ See WAC § 108-40-080.

¹⁰ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.190(2).

¹¹ See R.C.W. § 28A.657.110.

¹² See R.C.W. § 28A.710.200(2). ("[A]n authorizer may not renew a charter contract if, at the time of the renewal application, the charter school's performance falls in the bottom quartile of schools on the Washington achievement index developed by the state board of education...")

¹³ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.200(2).



renewal application; the renewal inspection; and new or updated academic, financial, and operational performance data.

Timing. May 1 of pre-renewal year (year 4 of school operation) (suggested).

Additional Resources. See Sample Performance Report (Attachment 2)

2. RENEWAL APPLICATION GUIDANCE

The authorizer's Renewal Application Guidance provides schools with the information they need to apply for contract renewal.

The renewal application should be **much narrower** in scope than the application that groups submit for starting a new charter school. The authorizer has already accumulated a body of information that should be the primary basis for its renewal decision and will also be visiting the school to see it in operation. Thus, rather than requiring **duplicative** descriptions of the school's program or outcomes, the application requirements should focus more narrowly on the following elements:¹⁴

Overview. Provides a renewal overview consistent with applicable law.

Timeline. Presents the authorizer's timeline for the renewal decision process.

Submission Requirements. Presents the authorizer's submission requirements including the due date (recommended 30 days from publication), formatting requirements such as margins, font size, etc.; page limitations; requirements for attachments or appendices, etc.

Notice of Intent Template. Provides the school with a template for use in communicating to the authorizer the school's intent to apply for the renewal of its charter contact.

Cover Sheet. On the cover sheet the school provides basic school information including school name, current location, grades served, and contact information.

Executive Summary. The executive summary requests the school's mission and vision, current student demographics, and overviews of the educational program, leadership, governance, and community relationships.

Record of Performance (including a Response to the Performance Report).

¹⁴ RCW §§ 28A.710.190(2)-(3)



This section provides an opportunity for the school to correct and clarify the performance record contained in the Performance Report as required by law. ¹⁵ The authorizer should ask schools to reference the specific criteria and benchmarks in the Performance Framework to which the information applies. Schools should also include relevant information about interim assessments or progress reports; evidence of performance on school-specific goals; changes undertaken at the school to improve outcomes; and evidence of progress for any areas in which the school has not previously met or is not currently meeting the performance standard.

Consistent with the Performance Report, the authorizer should organize the school's discussion of its record of performance to align with the three statutory categories: 1) academic outcomes; 2) financial performance and sustainability; and 3) governance (organizational performance).

The school has thirty days to respond to the authorizer's Performance Report. ¹⁶ If the authorizer issues the Renewal Application Guidance and the Performance Report concurrently, the school can incorporate its response to the Performance Report into the discussion of school performance.

Exceptional Circumstances. If the authorizer has determined through the Performance Report that the school is *not currently eligible* for contract renewal because the school's performance falls in the bottom quartile of schools in the Washington achievement index developed by the state board of education,¹⁷ then the authorizer should require the school to present in its discussion of performance any *exceptional circumstances* that the school believes warrant renewal consideration notwithstanding its bottom-quartile performance status.¹⁸

Plans for a new charter contract term. This section provides schools the opportunity to detail their plans for the next charter term. Schools should identify any anticipated changes to the school's educational program, governance model, and financial outlook. More specifically, this section should require schools to identify any proposed changes that would have a material impact on the program or operations of the school and that would require contract modification. The authorizer may request additional information as needed to sufficiently assess the impact and planning for such changes.

Note on Essential Program Terms. If the current contract already defines the essential terms of each school's educational program, schools should review those terms and state whether they continue to be applicable or whether there should be changes based on the evolution of the

¹⁵ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.190(2) ("The charter school has thirty days to respond to the performance report and submit any corrections or clarifications for the [performance] report.").

¹⁶ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.190(2).

¹⁷ See R.C.W. § 28A.657.110.

¹⁸ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.200(2).



program during the current term or changes planned for the new contract term. If one or more of the current program terms are no longer applicable, the school should articulate the set of program terms that it considers essential for the school going forward. If the authorizer and the school have not yet identified essential program terms, contract renewal is an appropriate time to do so. For additional guidance, see Essential Program Terms Guidance (Attachment 3)

Material changes. Renewal can be an opportune time for schools to design and move forward with material changes such as adding grades or moving to a new, long-term facility. These changes require authorizer approval. Although technically, the renewal decision is about the school as it currently exists, it is usually beneficial to both the authorizer and the school to make decisions on proposed material changes as part of the decision rather than separately. The renewal process already provides means (renewal application, inspection, etc.) for the authorizer to gather relevant information; the school will have clarity about how to move forward; and both parties will know how the renewal contract -- which must be signed within 90 days from the renewal decision -- may need revision.

Charter contract review. As part of issuing the Renewal Application Guidance, the authorizer should provide each school with its current charter contract. The authorizer should ask schools to review their respective contracts and reference relevant parts that may no longer be applicable or may need revision to align with plans for a new charter contract term. Schools should indicate their initial proposals for modification as part of addressing their plans for a new charter term. This work will facilitate the contracting process for schools following a renewal decision.

Timing. The authorizer should publish Renewal Application Guidance by May 1 of the prerenewal year (year 4 of school operation) to be concurrent with publication of Performance Reports.¹⁹

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Regulations applicable to the Commission provide for a public comment period during which interested parties may submit written comments regarding the potential renewal of a charter contract.²⁰ Authorizers, including the Commission, have discretion in setting a deadline for submissions. Posting a public comment period is an optional though encouraged practice for district authorizers.

¹⁹ See WAC § 108-40-070(6). Publication of the Renewal Application Guidance concurrent with the Performance Reports enables a school to incorporate its response to the Performance Reports into its renewal application rather than requiring separate submissions on the same topic.

²⁰ See WAC § 108-40-070(9).



4. RENEWAL INSPECTION: A FOCUSED APPROACH

The renewal inspection plays a critical role in the renewal process. It supplements the authorizer's performance review to provide a more complete picture of each school's current performance and plans for a new charter term. The visit also provides the school an opportunity to update information related to areas of concern or in relation to the school's plans for the new charter term. The inspection should align to the renewal priorities that the authorizer has identified based on each school's current outcomes, essential program elements, organizational and financial performance status, and plans for the new charter term.

The school inspection is an important opportunity for the authorizer to experience a school's day-to-day operation, to observe the culture, and to gather evidence that helps to document and illuminate school performance. When charter renewal is at stake, the inspection plays a particularly important role in providing context for the school's overall record of performance and its plans for a new charter term. Renewal inspections should be designed to accomplish the following:

- Generate additional evidence of performance in relation to charter contract and state standards.
- Document and assess fidelity of the educational culture and program particularly in relation to the essential program terms.
- Assess viability of plans for the new charter term particularly with respect to proposed material changes in program, school size or grades served.
- Get stakeholder feedback regarding the school's program and engagement with the school community.

Most renewal site visits will have both summative and formative components:

Summative components. Summative components are elements of the renewal visit that directly inform the authorizer's decision to renew or not renew the school's charter or that inform a decision to approve or deny a material aspect of the school's proposed plans for the new charter term.

Formative components. Formative components are elements of the renewal visit that inform the authorizer's understanding of the school's educational process or school operations but do not directly affect the ratings of school performance and are not material to the decision to approve or deny a material aspect of the school's plans for the new charter term.



School Autonomy. When the authorizer engages in formative assessment, including during renewal inspections, it should frame the scope of reviews in ways that respect charter school autonomy. This framing includes:

- Focusing the inspection on areas that either directly pertain to school performance as defined in the authorizer's performance framework or that pertain to programmatic plans and priorities as articulated in the educational program terms and design elements.
- Providing advance notice, whenever possible, on requests for access to documents and other materials.
- Limiting document requests to the format in which the school has created them rather than requiring the school to create new or reformatted documents solely for purposes of the visit.
- Providing advance notice of visit priorities and soliciting school input on the scheduling
 of inspection activities in order to maximize opportunities to have the priorities
 addressed and to minimize disruption of teaching and learning.
- Referencing judgments either to standards set out in the authorizer's performance framework, to school-defined programmatic or operational priorities, or to proposed changes in the school's plans.

Inspection Guidance. Each school's performance status and renewal plans should dictate the visit structure and activities. See the sample Inspection Guidance (Attachment 4) for how the authorizer can translate the school's programmatic priorities and current performance into specific inspection priorities. The Inspection Guidance should include criteria aligned to the priorities.

There are standard visit activities that will be applicable to most if not all visits. The substance of these activities should be tailored to the priorities for each school:

Introductory Meeting. The introductory meeting provides an in-person opportunity for the full site visit team to review the purpose and structure of the visit with the school's leadership. It also provides an important opportunity for the school's leadership team to share any information about the schedule or the school day that they believe should inform the visit team's review. The visit team and school leadership use this time to confirm the schedule and/or make adjustments as needed.

Observations. Observations provide direct evidence of how adults and children function in the school environment. Observations have specific objectives based on the school's program and plans. For example, classroom observations incorporate review of educational program terms



and design elements. By tailoring the focus of observations to school-identified priorities and plans, the authorizer can provide formative feedback that aligns with school-generated priorities rather than imposing external judgments about what those priorities should be.

Document Review. Document review provides an opportunity for the inspection team to review primary source materials. For example, the agenda for a staff meeting that the inspection team will observe.

Teacher and Leadership Conversations. Teacher and leadership conversations offer a way to better understand the school's experience, beliefs, and plans related to school program and operations. As with observations, the focus of these conversations aligns with the overall priorities identified for the renewal inspection.

Student and Parent Focus Groups. Focus groups provide an opportunity for visitors to engage directly with students and parents. They can provide important perspective, particularly about the educational program and school culture.

Board Discussion. At its discretion, the authorizer may incorporate board meeting observation into the renewal visit process. One purpose for such observation is to assess baseline compliance with the board's legal and fiduciary obligations such as conducting open meetings and operating consistent with bylaws and board policies. A second purpose may be to understand the board's role and capacity in relation to the school's plans for the new charter term. If necessary, the authorizer will typically schedule the observation to align with a regularly scheduled board meeting and will conduct the observations separate from the main visit.

Timing. Renewal inspections usually take place in the fall of the final contract year. Visits should typically occur no earlier than the second or third week of school and no later than mid-October of the renewal year.²¹

5. INSPECTION TRANSPARENCY

When taking a focused approach to the renewal inspection, it is especially important that the authorizer communicate clearly with school leadership and stakeholders about the visit objectives and priorities.

²¹ For schools whose performance clearly indicates that they have earned renewal, authorizers may consider conducting renewal inspections following receipt of the renewal application in spring of the school year preceding the decision. This may be a consideration for authorizers with a significant number of renewals such that it would be a challenge to conduct all visits in the fall.

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Pre-visit planning. The authorizer should communicate the objectives and priorities to school leadership as part of pre-visit planning and scheduling. This communication enables the school to be a partner in visit planning. For example, if the school's educational program includes a STEM focus, then the school can incorporate STEM observations and conversations with STEM teachers into the visit schedule. School leadership can and should communicate the identified priorities to stakeholders.

Visit conversations. For focus groups, interviews, and other conversations with stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, parents), the inspection team should put the visit into the overall context of the renewal process and briefly review the inspection priorities.

6. INSPECTION REPORT

The renewal inspection culminates with an inspection report. See the sample Inspection Report (Attachment 5). The findings contained in the report should align with the formative and summative priorities identified for the inspection based on the school's program, planning, and performance. The recommendations, if any, should focus on updating performance information or on material changes that would affect the terms of a new charter contract.²²

No recommendation. The inspection report should *not* make a recommendation on charter contract renewal. That recommendation should be issued as part of a separate Renewal Report based on evaluation of the school's cumulative record of performance over the current charter term.²³

Timing. The Commission is required to issue a renewal inspection report within 14 days following the inspection.²⁴ Other authorizers may wish to take more time developing the inspection report – especially in the event that the school's status for renewal may be affected by the visit findings. In order to maintain a timely process and feedback, authorizers should seek to issue inspection reports within 30 days following the visit. Commission schools have 10 days to respond to the report. Providing an opportunity for schools to respond with factual corrections and supplemental information is a good practice. Seven to ten days is sufficient time to provide for school responses.

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²² For example, if the school has proposed expansion of grades or enrollment during the new charter term, the report may include a recommendation related to approval of the proposed material change. Alternatively, if the school is currently under monitoring for non-compliance, the visit may include updated compliance information along with a recommendation for monitoring status under a new charter term in the event the authorizer renews the charter.

²³ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.190(5)(c) (requiring the authorizer to "provide a public report summarizing the evidence base for its decision.").

²⁴ WAC § 108-40-070(7).



7. RECOMMENDATION FOR RENEWAL

The authorizer should generate a Renewal Report that includes a recommendation regarding charter contract renewal and the accompanying basis for the recommendation. See the sample Renewal Report (Attachment 6).

Renewal Recommendation. A recommendation to renew the charter contract should include the recommended charter term along with any proposed conditions or requirements.

Evidence Basis. The Renewal Report should present the evidence basis for the recommendation. The authorizer should compile the evidence basis from the Performance Report supplemented by evidence from the school's renewal application, additional performance data (e.g., 4th year assessment data), and evidence from the renewal inspection.

Material Changes. The Renewal Report *may* include recommendations on proposed material changes to the school's program or operations. For example, if an elementary school is seeking to expand to K-8, the Renewal Report may make a recommendation on approval of the proposed middle school expansion. Although a decision on material changes is not required at the time of renewal, it is often in the interests of both the school and the authorizer to decide those requests concurrently with renewal.

8. RECOMMENDATION FOR NONRENEWAL

If the Renewal Report recommends nonrenewal of the charter contract, the authorizer should cite the statutory basis for the recommendation.²⁵ The evidence supporting the recommendation should derive from the Performance Report supplemented, as applicable, with evidence from the school's renewal application, additional performance data (e.g., fourth-year assessment data), and evidence from the renewal inspection.

VI. RENEWAL DECISIONS

The authorizer may grant renewal for a five-year term or may vary the term based on the school's performance, demonstrated capacities, and particular circumstances.²⁶ In addition to varying the renewal term length, the authorizer may put specific conditions on the renewal and set expectations for improvement. It is especially appropriate for the authorizer to establish conditions and improvement expectations to accompany renewal terms of fewer than five years.

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²⁵ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.200(1) (identifying statutory bases on which an authorizer may decide to nonrenew a charter contract); R.C.W. § 28A.710.200(3)(a) (The process must "provide timely notification of the prospect of and reasons for revocation or nonrenewal.").

²⁶ See R.C.W. 28A.710.190(1).



Full-Term Renewal. Means a contract term of five years.

Short-term Renewal (with conditions). Means a contract term of one to four years. Generally, if there are circumstances warranting a short-term renewal, a two- or three-year term is most appropriate. These intermediate lengths usually provide sufficient opportunity for the school to implement changes and to have an opportunity to demonstrate the necessary improvement without letting too much time lapse in the event that the school is able to remedy the problems.

It is important that authorizers be thoughtful, deliberate and outcomes-oriented in crafting renewal conditions. That is the authorizer articulates expected outcomes, and the school remains responsible for determining how to achieve those outcomes.

Material Changes. As part of the renewal decision, the authorizer should document any material changes to the school program or operations. The authorizer and school should incorporate these revisions into the contract for the renewal term.

Notification. Within twenty-four hours following the decision, the authorizer should notify, in writing, the board of the charter school and the state board of education.²⁷

VII. RENEWAL CONTRACTING

Once the authorizer has made a renewal decision, the parties have just 90 days to execute the renewal contract.²⁸ The more work the parties have done prior to the decision to identify and resolve pending contract issues, the more manageable this short contracting window will be. Prior work addressed in previous sections includes the following:

- Renewal Application: The school should have identified material changes as part of presenting their plans for a new charter term; and
- Renewal Decision: Whenever possible, the renewal decision should include decisions about proposed programmatic or operational changes that would require amendment of the existing contract. These may include material increase to the number of students served; addition of new grades; relocation to a new facility; substantial changes to the educational program; etc.

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²⁷ See RCW § 28A.710.190(5) (requiring notification within 10 days of a decision).

²⁸ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.160(2) (requiring execution of a contract within 90 days of approval of a charter application); WAC § 108-40-070(12).



The authorizer should initiate the process of amending and updating the current contract to ensure alignment with current law and to incorporate approved changes.

The authorizer and the school should develop a timeline for executing the contract. The timeline should work backwards from the dates on which the charter school's board and the authorizer's governing body will approve the contract.

The timeline should anticipate the need for multiple drafts and iterations.

VIII. NONRENEWAL: WIND DOWN AND CLOSURE

Nonrenewal means that the authorizer intends for the school to close. Any school closure inevitably causes disruption for students, staff, and the community. An authorizer's objective in overseeing a closure should be to minimize that disruption. Implementation of an orderly process helps to achieve this goal. Following a nonrenewal decision, the authorizer should rely on its established termination protocol²⁹ while making adjustments as needed to fit the circumstances.

Public Proceeding. If the Renewal Report recommends nonrenewal, a school is entitled to challenge the recommendation and to make the case for renewal in a public proceeding.³⁰ At the proceeding, both the school and the authorizer may make written submissions, give testimony, call witnesses, and be represented by counsel.³¹

For Commission-authorized schools, the law requires the Commission to designate a presiding officer for a proceeding.³² The presiding officer manages the meeting process and has the authority to impose procedural limits on all parties.³³

Presiding officer recommendation. Following the proceeding, the presiding officer must issue to the Commission a recommendation regarding whether the nonrenewal decision should stand or be modified in some way.³⁴

²⁹ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.210(1) (requiring authorizers to develop a school termination protocol prior to making a nonrenewal or revocation decision).

³⁰ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.200(3)(c) (requiring an opportunity for the school "to submit documents and give testimony challenging the rationale for closure and in support of continuation of the school" in a public proceeding).

³¹ See WAC §§ 108-40-100(2)-(3).

³² WAC § 108-40-100(2).

³³ WAC § 108-40-100(4).

³⁴ WAC §§ 108-40-100(5).



Final determination. The Commission must make a final determination within a "reasonable period" for deliberation after receiving the presiding officer's recommendation. The Commission must state the reasons for the decision. 35

If the authorizer changes its decision following the public proceeding and hearing officer recommendation, then the authorizer must decide the length of the renewal term and any conditions or expectations for improvement.

Once a nonrenewal decision is final, the authorizer should work with the school to implement the established termination protocol.

³⁵ See WAC §§ 108-40-100(6).



APPENDICES

- 1. Renewal Process Calendar (Suggested)
- 2. Performance Report (Sample)
- 3. Essential Program Terms Guidance
- 4. Renewal Inspection Guidance (Sample)
- 5. Renewal Inspection Report (Sample)
- 6. Renewal Report (Sample)



CHARTER RENEWAL ATTACHMENT 1 SAMPLE RENEWAL PROCESS CALENDAR

For schools deemed eligible and recommended for renewal

Process Step	Timing	Responsible Party	Scheduling Notes	Statutory/regulatory guidance on timing ¹
Performance Report	May 1 of pre-renewal year (contract year 4)	Authorizer	May be updated with year 4 performance data when available.	≥ 6 mos. before contract expires. RCW § 28A.710.190(2)
Issue renewal application & guidance	May 1 of pre-renewal year (contract year 4)	Authorizer	To coincide with performance report	≥ 6 mos. before contract expires. RCW §§ 28A.710.190(2)-(3) WAC § 108-40-070(6) (guidance to be issued in conjunction with performance report).
Contract renewal application	June 1 of pre-renewal year (contract year 4)	School		WAC § 108-40-070 (renewal application due by June 1)

¹ Note that Washington Administrative Code rules govern Commission schools. These rules are not binding on district authorizers; however, unless otherwise noted, the requirements are consistent with quality practices and the other process elements and are, therefore, recommended for district authorizers as well.



Response to performance	June 1 of pre-renewal	School	To be incorporated with	RCW § 28A.710.190(2)
report	year (contract year 4)		renewal application	(Within 30 days of
				performance report).
Public comment period	June 1 to August 31	Authorizer		WAC § 108-40-070(9).
Renewal inspection	August/September	Authorizer	Individual inspections to be scheduled in coordination with staff and schools	WAC § 108-40-070(7)
Renewal inspection report	14/30 days following inspection	Authorizer		WAC § 108-40-070(7)
Inspection report response	Within 10 days following the report	School	Optional for the school	WAC § 108-40-070(7)
Renewal Report	November 1	Authorizer		RCW § 28A.710.190(5)(c)
Authorizer resolution and decision	December (regular authorizer board meeting)	Authorizer board		
Report decision to charter school's board and state board of education in writing	December (the next day following the decision)	Authorizer	Include resolution, statement of reasons for the decision, and assurance of compliance with procedural requirements.	Within 10 days of decision RCW § 28A.710.190(5)
For contract renewals				
Initiate contracting process	November (the next day following the decision)	Authorizer	90-day window begins as of the renewal decision.	RCW § 28A.710.160(2); WAC § 108-40-070(12) (90 days to execute)
Decision on proposed material changes	December (regular authorizer board meeting)	Authorizer	Provides time for incorporation of new/revised terms into the contract as needed.	N/A
Execute renewal contracts	February (within 90 days following contract renewal decision)	Authorizer/School		RCW § 28A.710.160(2) (90 days from renewal decision)



Initiate wind down and	November (the next	Authorizer	RCW § 28A.710.210(1).
dissolution based on	day following the		
termination protocol.	decision)		
End school operations	June 30	Authorizer/School	



For schools deemed eligible for renewal but recommended for nonrenewal

Process Step	Timing	Responsible Party	Scheduling Notes	Statutory/regulatory guidance on timing ²
Performance Report	May 1 of pre-renewal year (contract year 4)	Authorizer	May be updated with year 4 performance data when available.	≥ 6 mos. before contract expires. RCW § 28A.710.190(2)
Issue renewal application & guidance	May 1 of pre-renewal year (contract year 4)	Authorizer	To coincide with performance report	≥ 6 mos. before contract expires. RCW §§ 28A.710.190(2)-(3) WAC § 108-40-070(6) (guidance to be issued in conjunction with performance report).
Contract renewal application	June 1 of pre-renewal year (contract year 4)	School		WAC § 108-40-070 (renewal application due by June 1)
Response to performance report	June 1 of pre-renewal year (contract year 4)	School	To be incorporated with renewal application	RCW § 28A.710.190(2) (Within 30 days of performance report).
Public comment period	June 1 to August 31	Authorizer		WAC § 108-40-070(9).
Renewal inspection	August/September	Authorizer	Individual inspections to be scheduled in coordination with staff and schools	WAC § 108-40-070(7)
Renewal inspection report	14 days following inspection	Authorizer		WAC § 108-40-070(7)

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² Note that Washington Administrative Code rules govern Commission schools. These rules are not binding on district authorizers; however, unless otherwise noted, the requirements are consistent with quality practices and the other process elements and are, therefore, recommended for district authorizers as well.



Within 10 days following	School	Optional	WAC § 108-40-070(7)
November 1	Authorizer	Includes report documenting the basis for the recommendation.	
November 21	School	Within 20 days of recommendation for nonrenewal	WAC § 108-40-070(10) WAC § 108-40-100(1)
December <mark>15</mark>	Authorizer	Recommend ~ 21 days following receipt of request	RCW § 28A.710.190(3)(c) WAC § 108-40-100(1)
January <mark>14</mark>	Authorizer	Within 30 days of public proceeding	WAC § 108-40-100(5)
February (regular authorizer board meeting)	Authorizer board		
February (the next day following the decision)	Authorizer	Include resolution, statement of reasons for the decision, and assurance of compliance with procedural requirements.	Within 10 days of decision RCW § 28A.710.190(5)
	following November 1 November 21 December 15 January 14 February (regular authorizer board meeting) February (the next day following the	following November 1 Authorizer November 21 School December 15 Authorizer January 14 February (regular authorizer board meeting) February (the next day following the	Rovember 1 Authorizer Includes report documenting the basis for the recommendation.



For schools deemed ineligible for renewal

Process Step	Timing	Responsible Party	Scheduling Notes	Statutory/regulatory guidance on timing ³
Performance Report	May 1 of pre-renewal year (contract year 4)	Authorizer	May be updated with year 4 performance data when available.	≥ 6 mos. before contract expires. RCW § 28A.710.190(2)
School request for opportunity to respond	May 21	School	Within 20 days of ineligibility determination	WAC § 108-40-070(10) WAC § 108-40-100(1)
Public proceeding	June	Authorizer	Recommend ~ 21 days following receipt of request	RCW § 28A.710.190(3)(c) WAC § 108-40-100(1)
Written recommendation by the presiding officer	July	Authorizer	Within 30 days of public proceeding	WAC § 108-40-100(5)
Final determination of eligibility for renewal ⁴	August <mark>15</mark>	Authorizer	WAC requires decision "after a reasonable period." Recommend mid-August.	WAC § 108-40-100(6)
If the school is deemed eligi	ble (if the school is de	emed ineligible, pr	oceed with closure protocol)	
Contract renewal application	September 15	School		
Response to performance report	September 15	School	To be incorporated with renewal application	
Public comment period	September 15 to October 15	Authorizer		WAC § 108-40-070(9).
Renewal inspection	October 7	Authorizer	Individual inspections to be scheduled in coordination with staff and schools	WAC § 108-40-070(7)
Renewal inspection report	October 21	Authorizer	14 days following inspection	WAC § 108-40-070(7)

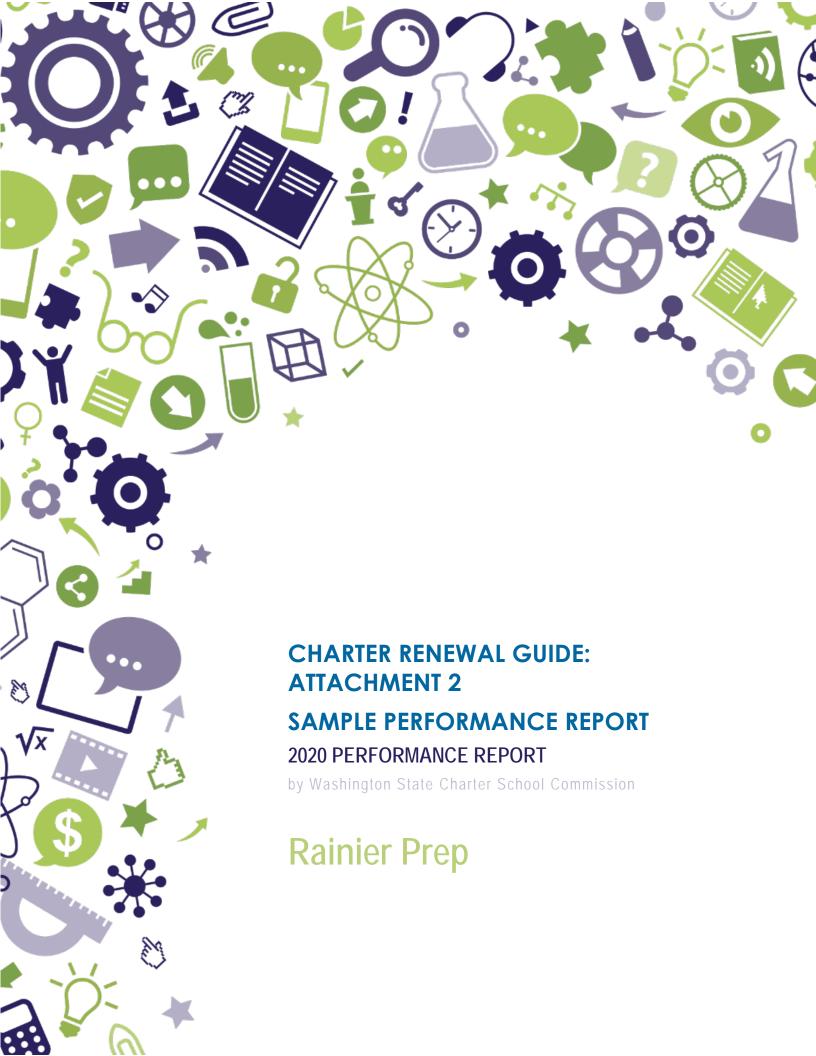
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³ Note that Washington Administrative Code rules govern Commission schools. These rules are not binding on district authorizers; however, unless otherwise noted, the requirements are consistent with quality practices and the other process elements and are, therefore, recommended for district authorizers as well.

⁴ Schools authorized by the Commission have the right to appeal an ineligibility determination under the procedures set out in WAC § 108-40-100. See WAC 108-40-070(8).



October 31	School	Within 10 days following	WAC § 108-40-070(7)
		report (optional)	
November <mark>1</mark>	Authorizer	Includes report	
		documenting the basis for	
		the recommendation.	
			November 1 Authorizer Includes report documenting the basis for





Rainier Prep

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10211 12th Ave S, S	eattle, WA 98168
School Contact	(206) 494-5979
School Website	https://www.rainierprep.org/
Neighborhood Location	Highline School District
Leadership	School Leader: Maggie O'Sullivan
School Mission	To prepare all students to excel at four-year colleges and to become leaders in their communities.
Education Program Terms & Design Elements	Rainier Prep provides a longer school day to ensure that students have more time to learn. Rainier Prep provides a daily advisory program. Rainier Prep focuses on increasing achievement in STEM.
Grades Served	5–8
First Year of Operation	2016 - 2017
Total Student Enrollment	343 Students

2019-20 Student Demographics

STUDENT GROUPS		RACE / ETHNICITY	
Special Education	11.0%	Asian	6.3%
Limited English	22.0%	Black / African American	40.0%
Low Income	78.6%	Hispanic / Latino of any race(s)	24.0%
		Two or More Races	6.3%
GENDER		White	4.9%
Male	53.1%		
Female	46.6%		
Gender X	0.3%		

INTRODUCTION

Charter renewal marks a critical juncture for a school, and the renewal decision is one of the Charter School Commission's most important responsibilities as a charter school authorizer. At renewal, the Commission must determine whether a school has met its public commitments to the children and families it serves, as well as to the community. The renewal process requires thorough analyses of a comprehensive body of quantitative and qualitative data based on annual performance reviews over the charter term; the school's renewal application; and a renewal site visit. It culminates in a Commission decision to renew or non-renew the charter.

This performance report constitutes the first stage of the renewal process which begins in the spring of the year before the contract expires. This report summarizes the school's performance record to date based on data required by the charter contract and the Commission's school performance standards. The report identifies weaknesses and concerns that might adversely impact the Commission's renewal decision or the length of a renewal term. This report does not contain a recommendation regarding charter renewal because the Commission does not yet have all information relevant to that decision. The school has thirty days to respond to this report. In reviewing the school's response. Additional relevant information beyond what is contained in this report that will inform the renewal decision includes information presented in the school's renewal application as well as new or updated academic, financial, and operational performance information that the Commission receives between now and the time of the Commission's decision.

The school may respond to the performance report. In reviewing responses, the Commission will give particular attention and weight to factual corrections, clarifications, and updates for which the school provides documentation. In addition, the school must submit a renewal application. The renewal application provides an opportunity to go beyond the data contained in the performance report in supporting the school's case for renewal. It is also an opportunity to describe improvements that the school has undertaken or plans to undertake. The renewal application will also ask the school to articulate plans for the coming charter term, particularly with respect to plans that would require material changes to the existing contract terms.²

In the fall of the school's renewal year, the Commission will conduct a renewal site visit. The site visit provides an important opportunity for the Commission to experience a school's day-to-day operation, to observe the culture, and to gather qualitative and quantitative evidence that helps to document and illuminate school performance. When charter renewal is at stake, the visit plays a particularly important role in providing context for the school's overall record of performance and its plans for a new charter term.

Following completion of the renewal visit, the Commission will prepare a renewal inspection report followed by a renewal recommendation report. The renewal recommendation will

¹ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.190(2).

² See R.C.W. § 28A.710.190(3).

present a recommendation for renewal or non-renewal and will summarize the evidence basis for the recommendation including relevant evidence from the performance report, the school's renewal application, the renewal visit, and any additional relevant performance information. The Commission is tentatively scheduled to make all renewal decisions before the end of the calendar year.³ Schools will have an opportunity to respond; to present testimony and supporting documents at a public meeting; to have legal representation; and to call witnesses. The Commission will document all decisions in writing with the reasons for the decision.⁴

REPORT LAYOUT

The report is structure in alignment with the three Performance Frameworks: Academic, Organizational and Financial. The school's performance is summarized by framework including the Commission's assessment of that performance. The last section of the report contains information regarding concerns the Commission has regarding a charter school's performance that, if not remedied, may jeopardize the school's position in seeking renewal.

³ The sequencing and timeline for each stage of the renewal process will be based on the Commission's published Renewal Application Timeline (dated 11/8/19); however, the Commission will adapt this schedule based on school and Commission operational constraints in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁴ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.190(3)-(4).

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The school's academic performance is based on the standards and targets established in the Academic Performance Framework (APF) consistent with the requirements of Washington's charter school law. The APF contains measures and metrics for student academic proficiency, student academic growth, achievement gaps, attendance, recurrent enrollment, high school graduation rates and postsecondary readiness, and school-specific measures were applicable.⁵

The APF contains measures that have been grouped according to:

1. STATE AND FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY RESULTS answering the question:

Is the charter school meeting performance expectations based on the Washington School Improvement Framework?

2. GEOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS answering the question:

How are charter school students performing compared to the district in which the school is located?

3. COMPARISON TO SCHOOLS SERVING SIMILAR STUDENTS answering the question:

How are charter school students performing compared to schools serving similar students?

4. SCHOOL SPECIFIC ACADEMIC GOALS answering the question:

Did the school meet its school specific academic goals?

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE RATINGS

The APF measures combine or "roll up" to an overall academic rating. The overall rating is based on the school's cumulative record of academic performance; however, the Commission gives particular attention to performance trends and weighs recent performance more heavily. The overall rating helps provide clarity to schools and the public about the school's academic performance and standing. It helps to ensure consistency in Commission decision-making and support parents as they navigate their public school options. Following are the rating tiers:

RATINGS

Tier	Rating	Performance
1	Exceeds Standard	School is exceeding performance expectations and is on par with the highest-performing schools in the state.
2	Meets Standard	School is consistently meeting performance expectations.
3	Does Not Meet Standard	School shows weakness in one or more academic areas. Possible intervention.
4	Falls Far Below Standard	School is consistently failing to meet academic performance expectations. Likely intervention; possible revocation.

NOTE: If a school does not have at least one year of SBA data or if more than one of the four indicators is missing, an overall tier rating will not be calculated.

⁵ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.170 (requiring school performance provisions based on a performance framework and specifying categories for measures and metrics).

RENEWAL TIERS

Based upon the most current data combined with trend data from the life cycle of the current charter contract term, charter schools whose Academic Performance Framework scores result in:

- A Tier 1 or 2 are presumed to be renewed;
- A Tier 3 rating, renewal is in question; and
- A Tier 4 rating, non-renewal is presumed.

Data for academic performance derive primarily from results of the state's annual public school assessments. State assessment results from a school year are typically available in the fall of the following school year. The academic performance section of this report is based on data from the first three years of the school's operation. The Commission will incorporate data from the fourth year, 2019-20, as part of the renewal recommendation in the fall of 2020.6

⁶ To the extent that 2019-20 state accountability data are not available due to the COVID19 pandemic, the renewal recommendation will be based on data through the 2018-29 school year supplemented with more recent interim and qualitative data as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE RESULTS RAINIER PREP

	INDICATOR	MEASURE	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
10	WCIE Coore	All Students	Е	M	N/A
1a	WSIF Score	Subgroups	Е	Е	N/A
	Proficiency Geog. Comparison	Reading	Е	Е	Е
2a1		Math	Е	Е	Е
		Science	Е	M	M
		Reading	Е	Е	Е
2a2	Proficiency Subgroup Geog. Comparison	Math	Е	Е	Е
	Companison	Science	Е	M	M
2b1	Student Growth Geog.	Reading	Е	Е	Е
201	Comparison	Math	Е	Е	Е
2b2	Student Subgroup Growth	Reading	Е	Е	Е
202	Geog. Comparison	Math	Е	Е	Е
2c1	Grad Rate Geog. Comparison	All	N/A	N/A	N/A
201	Grad Rate Geog. Companison	Subgroup	N/A	N/A	N/A
2d	EL Progress Geog. Comparison	All	M	D	N/A
Zu	EL Flogress Geog. Companson	Subgroups	N/A	N/A	N/A
2e	Reg. Attendance Geog.	All	E	E	N/A
26	Comparison	Subgroups	Е	Е	N/A
2f	9th graders on track Geog.	All	N/A	N/A	N/A
۷۱	Comparison	Subgroups	N/A	N/A	N/A
2g	Dual Credit Geog. Comparison	All	N/A	N/A	N/A
4 8	Dual Credit Geog. Companson	Subgroups	N/A	N/A	N/A
		Reading	E	Е	Е
3a	Proficiency Regression	Math	E	Е	Е
		Science	E	Е	N/A
3b	Grad Rate Regress	ion	N/A	N/A	N/A
4a	School Specific Goals	#1	M	Е	Е
-1 a	School Specific doals	#2	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Overall Tier Rating		1	1	N/A

PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES OR CONCERNS:

Rainier Prep's 2018-19 academic performance earns an "Exceeds" rating in 17 of the 18 categories that were applicable to the school during this charter term. The school earned a "Meets" rating for the remaining standard category (geographic comparison of English Learner progress). Rainier Prep had the following school-specific goal:

Students will show more than a year's growth within the year on the STAR reading assessment. ... STAR predicts an average growth at 1.0 years in one academic year and our goal is to outperform what is typical in growth.

The target for a rating of "Meets" was a STAR growth score between 1.0 and 1.49. In 2018-19, students' growth was 1.48 – at the top of the "Meets" category.

Neither Rainier Prep's overall performance nor any of its subcategory outcomes raise questions or concerns about the school's meeting the Commission's academic performance criteria for contract renewal.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

"Organizational performance" refers to the school's outcomes with respect to its legal obligations. The organizational performance standards measure the school's compliance with legal and ethical requirements that are common to all charter schools. By focusing on common legal requirements, the organizational performance standards maximize each school's operational autonomy consistent with the legislature's intent for charter schools to serve as public school alternatives to traditional common schools. This framework articulates these obligations in six categories: Education Program; Financial Management & Oversight; Governance & Reporting; Students, Parents & Employees; School Environment; and Other Obligations. Each category has subcategories aligned to the school's obligations as articulated in the charter contract.

The Commission uses a binary rating system to assess organizational performance. The school either "meets" or "does not meet" the requirement. This binary system is consistent with the notion that the school either meets or does not meet minimum expectations for the various requirements such as reporting deadlines or healthy and safety or procedural obligations for students with disabilities.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE RATINGS

No school or organization is perfect, and the existence of one or more "does not meet" ratings does not, in and of itself, indicate unsatisfactory organizational performance. The Commission looks for organizational performance that is predominantly compliant with no areas of repeated non-compliance. Based upon the most current data combined with trend data analysis from the life cycle of the current charter contract term:

- Renewal is presumed if a charter school's performance meets the established expectations or whose actions demonstrates that remedies regarding deficiencies were successfully implemented.
- Nonrenewal is presumed if a charter school's performance does not met expectations or whose actions did not demonstrate that remedies were implemented regarding identified deficiencies.

The Commission rates organizational performance based primarily on data and results from the State Auditor's Accountability Audit. This report is typically available 18 months following completion of the school's July 1 to June 30 fiscal year. Thus, this section of the renewal report is based on results from the school's first two years of operation (2016-17 and 2017-18). Where the state Accountability Audit raises concerns, the Commission will update with more current, unaudited compliance information. In addition, the Commission's final renewal recommendation will incorporate organizational performance information from the school's 2018-19 Accountability Audit.

Where there have been instances of non-compliance, the Commission staff will consider the following in the organizational performance analysis:

- 1) Seriousness of the compliance issue. For example, breach of health and safety requirements would generally be a more serious issue than the late filing of a report.
- 2) Number and duration of non-compliance issues (non-communication or inability to work with Commission). The Commission staff will weigh repeated non-compliance more heavily in its overall assessment.

⁷ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.020.

- 3) Timeliness of the remedy. If the school has remedied the issue promptly on its own initiative or following notification from the Commission, the Commission staff will weigh the violation less severely than if the school has not remedied the issue promptly.
- 4) **Current status.** Although the Commission considers the school's complete performance history relevant and applicable, it will generally weigh recent performance and current compliance status more heavily than past performance.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE RESULTS RAINIER PREP

	INDICATOR	MEASURE	2017-18	2016-17
1a		Material Terms of Charter Contract	M	M
1b	Education Program	Education Requirements	M	M
1 c		Students with Disabilities Rights	M	M
1d		English Language Learner Rights	M	M
2a	Financial Management &	Financial Reporting and Compliance	M	M
2b	Oversight	Generally Accepted Accounting Principles	M	M
3 a	Governance & Reporting	Governance Requirements	M	M
3b		Management Accountability	M	M
3c		Reporting Requirements	M	M
4a		Rights of Students	M	M
4b		Recurrent Enrollment	N/A	N/A
4c	Students, Parents & Employees Rights	Techer and Staff Credentials	M	M
4d	Manus	Employee Rights	M	M
4e		Background Checks	M	M
5a		Facilities and Transportation	M	M
5b	School Environment	Health and Safety	M	M
5c		Information Management	M	M
6a	School Specific Goals	#1	M	N/A
6b	School Specific doals	#2	N/A	N/A

PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES OR CONCERNS:

During the term first two years of its charter, Rainier Prep has consistently met the Commission's Organizational Performance requirements. In 2016-17, Rainier Prep met the standard for 16 of 16 applicable organizational performance subcategories. On its 2017-18 Organizational Performance Report, Rainier Prep met the standard in 16 of 17 applicable subcategories. The only 2017-18 subcategory on which the school did not meet the standard was Reporting Requirements. The report narrative elaborated that the school earned the "does not meet" rating because it had been late on 3 of 28 required submissions.

Overall, Rainier Prep's record to date does not raise any questions or concerns about the school's meeting the Commission's organizational performance criteria for contract renewal.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

"Financial performance" refers to an assessment of a charter school's financial health and viability. The Commission's financial performance framework summarizes a school's financial health based on two types of measures: "near term" indicators (measuring current viability) and "sustainability" indicators (measuring longer-term viability). The near-term indicators include Current Ratio, Unrestricted Days' Cash, and Debt Default. The sustainability indicators include Total Margin, Debt-to-Asset Ratio, and Cash Flow. The Commission also considers enrollment variance as an informational measure but does not rate performance on this indicator. The measures incorporate historical (three-year) trends, current status, and future prospects in a way that, taken together, the measures provide an overall picture of financial health and identify areas of potential concern.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE RATINGS

For each of the measures, the Commission has based targets on industry standards for not-for-profit financial management and authorizer best practices. The Commission uses data from the school's yearend audited financial statements along with more current financial data from unaudited quarterly financial reports. The calculations are based on all school funds, not just the general fund. Some financial measures have different targets for the early years of operation (years 1-2) from subsequent years (years 3 and beyond) to reflect the realities of start-up financial operations. Thus, the ratings for years 1-2 are based on slightly different criteria from the ratings beginning in year 3.

The Commission rates financial performance based on the school's audited financials as conducted either by the State Auditor's Office or by an independent financial audit consistent with the requirements of the charter contract and charter school law. This financial performance review is based on the three years of audited financials that are currently available. The Commission reviews but does not formally evaluate the school's unaudited financials for the current school year unless it has identified a prior cause for concern. The final renewal recommendation will incorporate findings from the school's 2019-20 audited financials.

Renewal Presumptions

Based upon the most current data combined with trend data analysis from life cycle of the current charter contract term:

- Renewal is presumed if a charter school's financial performance demonstrates historic and future viability. In other words, a school who has demonstrated an ability to generate sufficient income to meet operating expenses and debt commitments is presumed to be renewed.
- Nonrenewal is presumed if a charter school's financial performance demonstrates historic and future financial insolvency. In other words, a school that has demonstrated and/or is projecting an inability to pay its debts is presumed to be nonrenewed.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE RESULTS RAINIER PREP

	INDICATOR	MEASURE	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
1 a		Current Ratio	M	M	M
1b	Near Term Indicators	Unrestricted Days Cash	M	M	M
1c		Debt Default	M	M	M
2 a		Total Margin	M	M	M
2b	Sustainability Indicators	Debt to Asset Ratio	M	M	M
2c		Cash Flow	M	M	M
	Info Only	Enrollment Variance	M	M	M

PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES OR CONCERNS:

During the term of its charter, Rainier Prep has consistently met the Commission's Financial Performance requirements. Based on its audited financials for each of the first three years of operation, the school has met the standard for every applicable financial indicator in every year.

Overall, Rainier Prep's record to date does not raise any questions or concerns that would affect the school's meeting the financial performance criteria for contract renewal.





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CHARTER RENEWAL GUIDE: ATTACHMENT 3 MATERIAL TERMS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INCORPORATION IN CHARTER CONTRACTS

The **mission statement** should be a verbatim presentation of your governing board-approved mission statement. The authorizer will use this as the school's official mission statement and may include it in information about the school that is made available to the public, including on the authorizer's website. The authorizer will not evaluate compliance with or performance against the statement; however, authorizer approval is required for revisions to the mission consistent with the terms of the charter contract.

The **vision** should be a concise statement of what you expect the school to look like for children and families. It should be consistent with the educational program and should provide the foundation for the Material Terms of the educational program. The authorizer will use this as the school's official vision statement and may include it in information about the school that is made available to the public, including on the authorizer's website. The authorizer will not evaluate compliance with or performance against the statement; however, authorizer approval is required for revisions to the vision statement consistent with the terms of the charter contract.

The **Material Terms** of the educational program identify the characteristics of the educational program that you consider critical to the school's success and for which you are prepared to be held accountable to the authorizer and the public. The authorizer's oversight and evaluation of your school's educational program will focus on successful implementation of these terms. **You should identify no fewer than three and no more than five Material Terms**.

The Material Terms should be *minimum* expectations. You need not – and should not – include all of the things that you want the school to be. Rather, you should include a set of minimum programmatic components that will enable the authorizer to validate your program objectively and to communicate about it accurately to the public. The authorizer will use the Material Terms to validate that the program you are offering is fundamentally consistent with what you advertise the school to be.

Review of the Material Terms will be reflected in the Organizational Performance Framework. It will not replace the Commission's ultimate focus on performance standards set out in the Academic Performance Framework. The authorizer's judgments about how successful the program is will continue to focus on achievement of the outcomes set forth in the Academic Framework.



As part of the Organizational Framework, the Material Terms must be measurable. They will be the elements of the educational program for which the authorizer will hold you accountable and should be verifiable by someone who is experienced in public education but not necessarily expert in the particular program that you are offering. Articulate the terms in a way that indicates the objective evidence that can be used to determine whether you have met the expectation. Avoid general statements about the school culture or learning environment. Instead focus on specific, measurable components that will establish that culture or learning environment.

Note: The Material Terms are different from *school-specific measures* that you may develop as part of your Academic Performance Framework because they focus on *process* rather than student *outcomes*. In other words, the school-specific academic performance measures focus on what students will *achieve*. By contrast, the Material Terms should capture the essentials of what students will *experience*. The following examples are intended to serve as guidance.



MATERIAL TERMS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM **EXAMPLES**

EXAMPLE: Excel Community Charter School (No Excuses) 1

Vision: Excel Community Charter School will implement a "no excuses" educational program for middle school students based on core operating principles that include high standards for student conduct, more time devoted to learning, and an unwavering focus on preparing all children to pursue post-secondary education. We recognize that students need more time in the classroom to acquire the academic knowledge and skills that will prepare them for competitive high schools and colleges, as well as more opportunities to engage in diverse extracurricular experiences.

Excel Community Material Terms

The Excel Community philosophy will be reflected in the following observable, verifiable characteristics to which the Commission should hold the school accountable:

Student Conduct: Teachers will implement a uniform and consistent system of formal and informal rewards and consequences for academic performance and behavior.

More Time: Excel will provide an extended school day, week and year to foster both academic achievement and participation in extracurricular activities.

College Preparatory Academics: Every student at Excel will be expected to take at least three years of mathematics, four years of English, three years of laboratory science, and three years of social science.

EXAMPLE: Big Island Montessori Charter School

Vision: Big Island Montessori Charter School subscribes to the principles of education articulated by Maria Montessori as characterized by an emphasis on independence, freedom within limits, and respect for a child's natural psychological development, as well as technological advancements in society.

Big Island Material Terms

¹ Adapted from materials of the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), Democracy Prep and other "no excuses" models.



The Big Island Montessori philosophy will be reflected in the following observable, verifiable characteristics to which the Commission should hold the school accountable:

- 1. Mixed age classrooms
- 2. Uninterrupted blocks of work time
- 3. A Constructivist or "discovery" model, where students learn concepts from working with materials in a prepared learning environment, rather than by direct instruction.
- 4. All lead teachers will have either AMS (American Montessori Society) or AMI (Association Montessori Internationale) certification

EXAMPLE: The New Urban High School of Waipio (Project-based, 21st Century Learning)2

Vision: New Urban High School (NUHS) will help students develop the academic, workplace and citizenship skills needed for the 21st century through implementation of four design principles for preparing children for success in the adult world including *personalization*, *adult world connection*, *performance-based assessment*, *and integrated instruction*. Responding directly to the needs of students, all four principles connect to the broad mission of preparation for the adult world. Moreover, all four call for structures and practices that schools do not now routinely employ. The design principles permeate every aspect of life at NUHS: the small size of the school, the openness of the facilities, the personalization through advisory, the emphasis on integrated, project-based learning and student exhibitions, the requirement that all students complete internships in the community, and the provision of ample planning time for teacher teams during the work day. We discuss each design principle in turn below.

New Urban High School Material Terms

This NUHS philosophy will be reflected in the following observable, verifiable characteristics to which the Commission should hold the school accountable:

- 1. Personalization: Each student will have a faculty advisor and an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) that will guide his or her instructional program.
- 2. Adult World Connection: All students will engage in adult world connections including substantial internships in the world of work; community service projects; and at least one field study of a professional work environment.

resourceful ♦ collaborative ♦ education

 $^{^{2}}$ Adapted from materials of the High Tech High network of schools.



- 3. Performance-based assessment: all students will develop projects, at least annually, that require them to solve problems and present findings to community panels. In addition, before graduation all students will complete an academic internship, a substantial senior project, and a personal digital portfolio.
- 4. Integrated instruction: the daily schedule and annual calendar will support teamteaching as well as development and implementation of project-based instruction.



MATERIAL TERMS OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

DEVELOPMENT TEMPLATE

Material Term	School Information
School Name:	
Mission:	[insert current, governing board approved mission
(Not formally	statement]
evaluated)	
Vision:	[see educational program guidance and
(Not formally	examples]
evaluated)	
Material Term #1:	[no fewer than three and no more than five; see
(formally	guidance and examples, below]
evaluated)	
Material Term #2:	
(formally	
evaluated)	
Material Term #3:	
(formally	
evaluated)	
Material Term #4:	[if applicable]
(formally	
evaluated)	
Material Term #5:	[if applicable]
(formally	
evaluated)	
Geographic Area	
Served:	
Location:	[list all physical locations (excluding home-based)
	at which the school provides educational services
	to children consistent with contract paragraph xx]
Facility:	[Facility type and basic description including
	whetehr public or private]
Grades Served:	[as approved by year]
Projected	[projected enrollment table by grade and year;
Enrollment:	contract should specify enrollment variances that
	require authorizer notification and/or approval.
	E.g., enrollment exceeding the projection by more
	than 10% requires approval]
Maximum	[maximum projected enrollment as currently
Enrollment:	approved. Note : not applicable for conversion
	schools; mark this "N/A"]



Virtual or Online	[identify the virtual or online program offered, if
Program Provider:	applicable; if not applicable, then row may be
	deleted]
Educational	[if applicable, identify the contracted third-party
Service Provider:	educational service provider, whether for profit or
	not for profit and provide a copy of the service
	agreement for Commission review; if not
	applicable, then mark "N/A"]



CHARTER RENEWAL GUIDE: ATTACHMENT 4 RENEWAL INSPECTION GUIDANCE (SAMPLE)

INTRODUCTION

This Renewal Visit Preparation memorandum serves to frame the renewal visit for **Rainier Prep Charter School.**

Charter renewal marks a critical juncture for a school, and the renewal decision is one of the Washington State Charter School Commission's (Commission) most important responsibilities as a charter school authorizer. At renewal, the Commission must determine whether a school has met its public commitments to the children and families it serves, as well as to the community. The renewal process requires thorough analyses of a comprehensive body of quantitative and qualitative data based on annual performance reviews over the charter term; the school's renewal application; and a renewal site visit. It culminates in a Commission decision to renew or non-renew the charter.

The site visit plays a critical role in the renewal process. It supplements the Commission's performance review to provide a more complete picture of each school's current performance and plans for a new charter term. The visit also provides the school an opportunity to update information related to areas of concern or in relation to the school's plans for the new charter term. This memorandum identifies renewal visit priorities based on current outcomes, essential program elements, organizational and financial performance status, and the school's plans for the new charter term.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents extraordinary circumstances for all things related to schools and education. Nevertheless, the objective of the Commission is for the 2020-21 renewal visits to mirror, to the full extent practicable, the focus and priorities of renewal visits as they would ordinarily occur. To this end, the Commission is structuring the visits around each school's performance status and future plans in order to facilitate decisions based on the full charter term rather than based on the particulars of what is happening in this distinct moment.

The renewal site visit team should use this memorandum in conjunction with the Commission's renewal criteria and related guidance set out in the <u>Charter School Renewal Application</u>.



RAINIER PREP CHARTER SCHOOL: VISIT CONTEXT

Rainier Prep opened in Highline School District in 2016-17. The school serves grades 5-8. As of spring of 2020, the school's verified enrollment was 343 students. In its renewal application, Rainier Prep reports a current enrollment of 346 students. The school's student population is 42.5% Hispanic, 40% Black, 6.3% Asian, 4.9% White, and 6.3% "2 or more" ethnicities. Rainier Prep is looking to expand enrollment to 405 students for a proposed increase of 17% beginning in the second year of its renewal term (2022-23).

Rainier Prep's mission and vision are

to prepare all of our students to excel at four-year colleges and become leaders in our community. Our vision is to model innovation and be a positive example in the public education space to create educational access for people in our community who historically have experienced the most barriers to higher education, economic mobility, and justice. We continue to focus on high expectations and high support for our students, whose insights and experiences we seek to amplify as lifelong learners who will deepen skills of self-advocacy and participation in democracy.

Students with specialized needs at Rainier Prep include 72% economically disadvantaged (free or reduced lunch eligible). 9.9% are students identified with disabilities. The school's percentage of students with disabilities is lower than that of the Highline School District as a whole (16%) and lower than that of the geographically closest comparison schools (17%). The school's ELL population is substantial (22%) though still lower than either Highline School District as a whole (26%) or the closest comparison schools (32%).

RENEWAL VISIT PRIORITIES

Academic Performance Priorities

- No visit priorities

Educational Program Priorities

- Advisory: How does the student advisory connect to and impact students' learning?
- STEM: Is STEM education a core part of the academic program currently or going forward?

Operations Priorities

No visit priorities



Finance and Facilities Priorities

- Facilities plans for enrollment growth
- Financial viability during the renewal term

ACADEMIC STATUS

The school's academic performance is based on the standards and targets established in the Academic Performance Framework (APF) consistent with the requirements of Washington's charter school law. The APF contains measures and metrics for student academic proficiency, student academic growth, achievement gaps, attendance, recurrent enrollment, high school graduation rates and postsecondary readiness, and school-specific measures were applicable.¹

The APF contains measures that have been grouped according to:

1. STATE AND FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY RESULTS answering the question:
IS THE CHARTER SCHOOL MEETING PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS BASED ON THE WASHINGTON

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK?

2. GEOGRAPHIC COMPARISONS answering the question:

How are charter school students performing compared to the district in which the school is located?

3. COMPARISON TO SCHOOLS SERVING SIMILAR STUDENTS answering the question:

How are charter school students performing compared to schools serving similar students?

4. SCHOOL SPECIFIC ACADEMIC GOALS answering the question:

Did the school meet its school specific academic goals?

Academic Outcomes

Rainier Prep's 2018-19 academic performance earns an "Exceeds" rating in 17 of the 18 categories that were applicable to the school during this charter term. The school earned a "Meets" rating for the remaining standard category (geographic comparison of English Learner progress). Rainier Prep had the following school-specific goal:

Students will show more than a year's growth within the year on the STAR reading assessment. ... STAR predicts an average growth at 1.0 years in one academic year and our goal is to outperform what is typical in growth.

¹ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.170 (requiring school performance provisions based on a performance framework and specifying categories for measures and metrics).



The target for a rating of "Meets" was a STAR growth score between 1.0 and 1.49. In 2018-19, students' growth was 1.48 – at the top of the "Meets" category.

Neither Rainier Prep's overall performance nor any of its subcategory outcomes raise questions or concerns about the school's meeting the Commission's academic performance criteria for contract renewal.

Educational Program Priorities: Student Advisory and STEM

Student advisory has been a core component of Rainier Prep's educational program design from the outset, and the school continues to view student advisory as central to its work on social and emotional learning. The renewal application states that "We also believe in developing the whole person and have a rich curriculum of social and emotional learning, which starts with our advisory program." (emphasis added). The renewal visit provides an opportunity to better understand that role that the advisory program plays in the educational program; the ways that students, parents, and school staff experience the program; and the connections the school makes between the advisory and student learning.

In its initial program design, Rainier Prep identified STEM education as a priority. The Commission recognized this focus by identifying it as an essential component of the educational program incorporated into the current charter contract. However, the school's application for contract renewal makes no mention of or reference to STEM education. The renewal visit provides an opportunity to better understand the current role, if any, of STEM education in the school's educational program. To the extent, that it remains a priority, the visit team will evaluate the extent to which Rainier Prep has a cohesive vision for and implementation of STEM education. To the extent that STEM is no longer a priority, the renewal visit provides an opportunity to clarify and identify essential elements for the renewal term that align with the school's current priorities.

OPERATIONS STATUS

The Commission rates organizational performance based primarily on data and results from the State Auditor's Accountability Audit. This report is typically available 18 months following completion of the school's July 1 to June 30 fiscal year. Thus, this section of the renewal report is based on results from the school's first two years of operation (2016-17 and 2017-18). Where the state Accountability Audit raises concerns, the Commission will update with more current, unaudited compliance information. In addition, the Commission's final renewal recommendation will incorporate organizational performance information from the school's 2018-19 Accountability Audit.

² Rainier Prep Contract Renewal Application, p.3.



Where there have been instances of non-compliance, the Commission considers the following in the organizational performance analysis:

- 1) **Seriousness of the compliance issue.** For example, breach of health and safety requirements would generally be a more serious issue than the late filing of a report.
- 2) Number and duration of non-compliance issues (non-communication or inability to work with Commission). The Commission staff will weigh repeated non-compliance more heavily in its overall assessment.
- 3) **Timeliness of the remedy.** If the school has remedied the issue promptly on its own initiative or following notification from the Commission, the Commission staff will weigh the violation less severely than if the school has not remedied the issue promptly.
- 4) **Current status.** Although the Commission considers the school's complete performance history relevant and applicable, it will generally weigh recent performance and current compliance status more heavily than past performance.

During the term first two years of its charter, Rainier Prep has consistently met the Commission's Organizational Performance requirements. Rainier Prep met the standard for 16 of 16 applicable organizational performance subcategories in 2016-17 and on 17 of 17 applicable subcategories in 2017-18. Rainier Prep's record to date does not raise any questions or concerns about the school's meeting the Commission's organizational performance criteria for contract renewal and there are no operations priorities for the renewal inspection.

FINANCE AND FACILITIES STATUS

"Financial performance" refers to an assessment of a charter school's financial health and viability. The Commission's financial performance framework summarizes a school's financial health based on two types of measures: "near term" indicators (measuring current viability) and "sustainability" indicators (measuring longer-term viability). The near-term indicators include Current Ratio, Unrestricted Days' Cash, and Debt Default. The sustainability indicators include Total Margin, Debt-to-Asset Ratio, and Cash Flow. The Commission also considers enrollment variance as an informational measure but does not rate performance on this indicator. The measures incorporate historical (three-year) trends, current status, and future prospects in a way that, taken together, the measures provide an overall picture of financial health and identify areas of potential concern.

Finances. During the term of its charter, Rainier Prep has consistently met the Commission's Financial Performance requirements. Based on its audited financials for each of the first three years of operation, the school has met the standard for every applicable financial indicator in every year. The school's performance to date does not raise any financial concerns.



Notwithstanding its strong performance to date, Rainier Prep's financial plans for the renewal term raise two priorities for the renewal visit. These are interrelated issues of budget and facilities. First, Rainier Prep indicates an interest in expanding enrollment by 17% from the current level of 346 students to 405 students beginning in the 2022-23 school year. The school reports that the increase would be contingent on securing adequate facilities.³ Second, the renewal term budget – which assumes the proposed enrollment increase – shows annual deficits ranging from \$569K (2022-23) to nearly \$1.2M (2025-26) and totaling \$4.37M over the five-year term.⁴ The renewal visit provides an opportunity to better understand the school's plans to increase enrollment and to be financially viable during a renewal term.

³ Rainier Prep, Charter Contract Renewal Application, p. 7 (Sep. 4, 2020).

⁴ *Id*. at 11.



TOPIC: Student Advisory

STANDARD: The school has established student advisory as a foundational aspect of social and emotional learning.

Visit Activity	What to look for/ask
Advisory	Does the advisory have a clear structure and objectives?
Observation	What effective practices do you observe?
	How do advisors direct students? What expectations do they articulate? How do
	teachers follow through/hold students accountable?
	How do you see advisors adjusting /adapting based on individual student needs?
Teacher	What are your goals for students in advisory?
interviews	Where are your students starting the year academically? How do you know?
	What planning and professional development work have you done around advisory?
	Walk me through your preparation for and follow up on an advisory class.
	How will you assess progress during the year for students individually? For the
	class as a whole?
	How will you know if advisory has been a success this year?
Leadership	What are your goals for students in advisory?
	Where are your students starting the year academically? How do you know?
	How do new teachers learn to do advisory?
	How has the advisory program evolved since the school started?
	How will you assess progress during the year for students individually? For the class as a whole?
	How will you know if advisory has been a success this year?
Additional	
Observations	
Summary	
Comments	
Summary Rating	Standard: .
	Select One (delete the ones not selected)
	1= wholly undeveloped
	2 = needs improvement
	3 = satisfactory
	4 = good
	5 = excellent



TOPIC: STEM Education

STANDARD: STEM education is an integral part of the educational program; it complements and supplements existing programs in a way that is likely to strengthen student learning.

Visit Activity	What to look for/ask
Classroom	How is STEM incorporated into the existing educational program?
Observation	Are STEM classes happening as scheduled?
	Are STEM concepts incorporated into core subject lessons?
Teacher	How is STEM incorporated into the educational program?
interviews	[for core subject area teachers] What STEM concepts and/or approaches are you expected to implement in your classroom?
	What resources are available to you to incorporate STEM into your lesson plans? What STEM curricular materials (books, technology platforms, handouts, etc.) are available to you?
	Would you characterize STEM as an essential element of instruction or an additional tool?
	What types of professional learning does the school provide for STEM instruction?
	What is the vision for STEM education at Rainier Prep during a renewal term?
Leadership	How is STEM incorporated into the educational program?
	How is STEM content and/or programming integrated into your existing focus on business education?
	What STEM concepts or approaches do you expect core subject area teachers to implement?
	What STEM curricular materials (books, technology platforms, handouts, etc.) are you using?
	Would you characterize STEM as an essential element of instruction or an additional tool?
	What is the vision for STEM education at Rainier Prep?
Student focus	How is STEM incorporated into your educational program?
group	What STEM opportunities have you had?
	What STEM opportunities have your friends or classmates had that are different
	than yours?
Parent focus	How is STEM incorporated into your child's educational program?
group	What STEM opportunities has your child you had?
	Are there other STEM opportunities at the school that you are aware of that your
	child has not participated in (yet)?
Additional	
Observations	
Summary	
Comments	

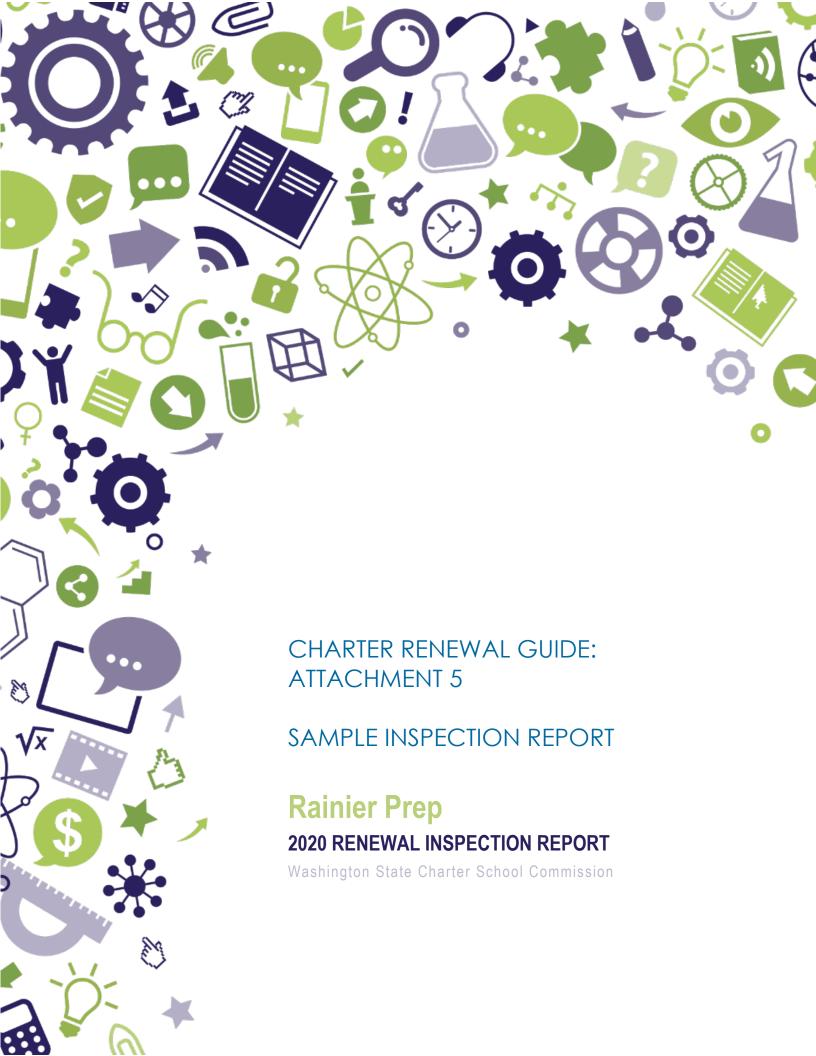


TOPIC: Facilities and finance

STANDARD: The school has sound plans for being financially viable during a renewal term including budgeting and planning around enrollment growth.

Visit Activity	What to look for/ask
Leadership	What's the status of the enrollment growth plan?
	What evidence does the school have of demand? (If needed) what are the
	primary recruitment activities planned?
	What new facilities needs does the planned growth present?
	What options is the school considering for meeting those needs?
	The budget shows annual deficits ranging from \$569K (2022-23) to nearly \$1.2M
	(2025-26) and totaling \$4.37M over the five-year term. What's needed for the
	school to be financially viable?
	What are current plans for ensuring viability?
Additional	
Observations	
Summary	
Comments	

Visit Activity	What to look for/ask
Governing board	What's the status of the enrollment growth plan?
	What evidence does the school have of demand? (If needed) what are the
	primary recruitment activities planned?
	What new facilities needs does the planned growth present?
	What options is the school considering for meeting those needs?
	The budget shows annual deficits ranging from \$569K (2022-23) to nearly \$1.2M
	(2025-26) and totaling \$4.37M over the five-year term. What's needed for the
	school to be financially viable?
	What are current plans for ensuring viability?
Additional	
Observations	
Summary	
Comments	





Rainier Prep

10211 12th Ave S, Se	eattle, WA 98168	
School Contact	(206) 494-5979	
School Website	https://www.rainierprep.org/	
Neighborhood Location	Highline School District	
Leadership	School Leader: Maggie O'Sullivan	
School Mission	To prepare all students to excel at four-year colleges and to become leaders in their communities.	
Education Program Terms & Design Elements	Rainier Prep provides a longer school day to ensure that students have more time to learn. Rainier Prep provides a daily advisory program. Rainier Prep focuses on increasing achievement in STEM.	
Grades Served	5–8	
First Year of Operation	2016 - 2017	
Total Student Enrollment	343 Students	

2019-20 Student Demographics

STUDENT GROUPS		RACE / ETHNICITY	
Special Education	11.0%	Asian	6.3%
Limited English	22.0%	Black / African American	40.0%
Low Income	78.6%	Hispanic / Latino of any race(s)	24.0%
		Two or More Races	6.3%
GENDER		White	4.9%
Male	53.1%		
Female	46.6%		
Gender X	0.3%		

INTRODUCTION

Charter renewal marks a critical juncture for a school, and the renewal decision is one of the Charter School Commission's most important responsibilities as a charter school authorizer. At renewal, the Commission must determine whether a school has met its public commitments to the children and families it serves, as well as to the community. The renewal process requires thorough analyses of a comprehensive body of quantitative and qualitative data based on annual performance reviews over the charter term; the school's renewal application; and a renewal site visit. It culminates in a Commission decision to renew or non-renew the charter.

The renewal inspection plays a critical role in the renewal process. It supplements the Commission's performance review to provide a more complete picture of each school's current performance and plans for a new charter term. The visit also provides the school an opportunity to update information related to areas of concern or in relation to the school's plans for the new charter term. The inspection aligns to the renewal priorities that the Commission identified based on each school's current outcomes, essential program elements, organizational and financial performance status, and the school's plans for the new charter term.

INSPECTION STRUCTURE

The school inspection is an important opportunity for the Commission to experience a school's day-to-day operation, to observe the culture, and to gather evidence that helps to document and illuminate school performance. When charter renewal is at stake, the inspection plays a particularly important role in providing context for the school's overall record of performance and its plans for a new charter term. Commission renewal inspections are designed to accomplish the following:

- Generate additional evidence of performance in relation to charter contract and state standards.
- Document and assess fidelity of the educational culture and program particularly in relation to the essential program terms.
- Assess viability of plans for the new charter term particularly with respect to proposed material changes in program, school size or grades served.

Most renewal site visits will have both summative and formative components:

Summative components. Summative components are elements of the renewal visit that directly inform the district's decision to renew or not renew the school's charter or that inform a district decision to approve or deny a material aspect of the school's proposed plans for the new charter term.

Formative components. Formative components are elements of the renewal visit that inform the district's understanding of the school's educational process or school operations but do not directly affect the district's ratings of school performance and are not material to the district's

decision to approve or deny a material aspect of the school's plans for the new charter term.

School Autonomy. When the Commission engages in formative assessment, including during renewal inspections, it frames the scope of reviews in ways that respect charter school autonomy. This framing includes:

- Focusing the inspection on areas that either directly pertain to school performance as defined in the Commission's performance framework or that pertain to programmatic plans and priorities as articulated in the educational program terms and design elements.
- Providing advance notice, whenever possible, on requests for access to documents and other materials.
- Limiting document requests to the format in which the school has created them rather than requiring the school to create new documents solely for purposes of the visit.
- Providing for school input on the sequencing of inspection activities in order to minimize disruption of teaching and learning.
- Referencing judgments either to standards set out in the district's performance framework, to school-defined programmatic or operational priorities, or to material changes in the school's plans.

Each school's performance status and renewal plans dictate the visit structure and activities. That said, there are standard components that the Commission incorporates into most if not all visits. These components are tailored to the priorities identified for each school:

- Introductory Meeting. The introductory meeting provides an in-person opportunity for the full site visit team to review the purpose and structure of the visit with the school's leadership. It also provides an important opportunity for the school's leadership team to share any information about the schedule or the school day that they believe should inform the visit team's review. The visit team and school leadership use this time to confirm the schedule and/or make adjustments as needed.
- Observations. Observations provide direct evidence of how adults and children function in the school environment. Observations have specific objectives based on the school's program and plans. For example, classroom observations incorporate review of educational program terms and design elements. By tailoring the focus of observations to school-identified priorities and plans, the Commission can provide formative feedback that aligns with school-generated priorities rather than imposing external judgments about what those priorities should be.
- **Document Review**. Document review provides an opportunity for the inspection team to review primary source materials. For example, the lesson plan for a particular class may be relevant to an observation of that class.
- Teacher and Leadership Conversations. Teacher and leadership conversations offer a way to better understand the school's experience, beliefs, and plans related to school program and operations. As with observations, the focus of these conversations aligns

- with the overall priorities identified for the renewal inspection.
- Student and Parent Focus Groups. Focus groups provide an opportunity for visitors to engage directly with students and parents. They can provide important perspective, particularly about the educational program and school culture.
- Board Discussion. At its discretion, the Commission may incorporate board meeting observation into the renewal visit process. One purpose for such observation is to assess baseline compliance with the board's legal and fiduciary obligations such as conducting open meetings and operating consistent with bylaws and board policies. A second purpose may be to understand the board's role and capacity in relation to the school's plans for the new charter term. If necessary, the Commission will typically schedule the observation to align with a regularly scheduled board meeting and will conduct the observations separate from the main visit.

COVID-19 Impact. The COVID-19 pandemic presents extraordinary circumstances for all things related to schools and education. Among many other things, they have required the Commission to conduct renewal inspections remotely. Nevertheless, the Commission's objective has been for the 2020-21 renewal inspections to mirror the structure, to the extent practicable, of inspections as they will occur in more typical circumstances. To this end, the inspections include "standard" components such as class observations, teacher and leadership conversations, parent focus groups, student focus groups, and board conversations, among other things.

The remote nature of the inspections has created some design opportunities. Rather than condensing visits into a single day, the Commission and the schools have conducted each inspection over the course of a week, enabling more flexibility to accommodate the school's schedule and to observe key aspects of the school program occurring on different days.

Findings and Recommendations

The renewal inspection culminates in this Renewal Inspection Report. The findings contained herein focus on the formative and summative priorities identified for the inspection based on the school's program, planning, and performance. The recommendations, if any, focus on material considerations or decisions affecting a new charter term.¹

This Renewal Inspection Report does *not* make a recommendation regarding whether the Commission should renew or non-renew the charter. That recommendation is based on assessment of the school's cumulative record of performance over the current charter term. The Commission's Executive Director will present a separate renewal recommendation to the Commission as part of a subsequent report that includes a cumulative assessment of the school's overall performance.

¹ For example, if the school has proposed expansion of grades or enrollment during the new charter term, the report may include a recommendation related to approval of the proposed material change. Alternatively, if the school is currently under monitoring for non-compliance, the visit may include updated compliance information along with a recommendation for monitoring status under a new charter term in the event the Commission renews the charter.

A subsequent renewal report will present a recommendation for renewal or non-renewal and will summarize the evidence basis for the recommendation including relevant evidence from the performance report, the school's renewal application, the renewal inspection, and any additional relevant performance information. The Commission will make renewal decisions in January 2021.² Schools will have an opportunity to respond; to present testimony and supporting documents at a public meeting; to have legal representation; and to call witnesses. The Commission will document all decisions in writing with the reasons for the decision.³

RAINIER PREP INSPECTION BACKGROUND

Rainier Prep opened in Highline School District in 2016-17. The school serves grades 5-8. As of spring of 2020, the school's verified enrollment was 343 students. In its renewal application, Rainier Prep reports a current enrollment of 346 students. The school's student population is 42.5% Hispanic, 40% Black, 6.3% Asian, 4.9% White, and 6.3% "2 or more" ethnicities. Rainier Prep is looking to expand enrollment to 405 students for a proposed increase of 17% beginning in the second year of its renewal term (2022-23).

Rainier Prep's mission and vision are

to prepare all of our students to excel at four-year colleges and become leaders in our community. Our vision is to model innovation and be a positive example in the public education space to create educational access for people in our community who historically have experienced the most barriers to higher education, economic mobility, and justice. We continue to focus on high expectations and high support for our students, whose insights and experiences we seek to amplify as lifelong learners who will deepen skills of self-advocacy and participation in democracy.

Students with specialized needs at Rainier Prep include 78.6% low income. 11% are students identified with disabilities. The school's percentage of students with disabilities is lower than that of the Highline School District as a whole (16%) and lower than that of the geographically closest comparison schools (17%). The school's limited English proficient population is substantial (22%) though still lower than either Highline School District as a whole (26%) or the closest comparison schools (32%).

Academic Program and Performance

Rainier Prep's 2018-19 academic performance earned an "Exceeds" rating in 17 of the 18 categories that were applicable to the school during this charter term. The school earned a "Meets" rating for the remaining standard category (geographic comparison of English Learner

² The Commission made modifications to the published Renewal Application Timeline (originally published 11/8/19) due to school and Commission operational constraints that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

³ See R.C.W. § 28A.710.190(3)-(4).

progress). Rainier Prep had the following school-specific goal:

Students will show more than a year's growth within the year on the STAR reading assessment. ... STAR predicts an average growth at 1.0 years in one academic year and our goal is to outperform what is typical in growth.

The target for a rating of "Meets" was a STAR growth score between 1.0 and 1.49. In 2018-19, students' growth was 1.48 – at the top of the "Meets" category.

School Operations

During the charter term, Rainier Prep has consistently met the Commission's Organizational Performance requirements. Rainier Prep met the standard for 16 of 16 applicable organizational performance subcategories in 2016-17 and on 17 of 17 applicable subcategories in 2017-18, the two years for which complete data are available. Currently, Rainier Prep has no compliance concerns. Thus, based on Rainier Prep's record to date there were no operations priorities for the renewal inspection.

School Finance & Facilities

During the term of its charter, Rainier Prep has consistently met the Commission's Financial Performance requirements. Based on its audited financials for each of the first three years of operation, the school has met the standard for every applicable financial indicator in every year. However, the initial renewal term budget submitted with the renewal application showed significant deficits. The renewal inspection provided an opportunity for the Commission to better understand the status of Rainier Prep's financial planning for a renewal term.

RAINIER PREP INSPECTION PRIORITIES & FINDINGS

RAINIER PREP INSPECTION SUMMARY

1. Inspection Priority. Student Advisory

Standard. The school has established student advisory as a foundational aspect of social and emotional learning.

Inspection Finding. All indications from the inspection are that Rainier Prep is fulfilling its objectives for building community and anchoring learning through student advisories based on the school's deliberate, thoughtful approach to defining objectives, developing content, and implementing effective advisory practices.

2. Inspection Priority. STEM Education

Standard. STEM education is an integral part of the educational program.

Inspection Finding. Within the core academic program, Rainier Prep incorporates science, technology, math, and engineering (STEM) in ways that are appropriate but not comprehensive. Charter renewal presents an opportunity for the school to assess whether it intends for STEM to constitute an essential design element during a renewal term.

3. Inspection Priority. Enrollment, Finance & Facilities

Standard. The school has sound plans for being financially viable during a renewal term including budgeting and facilities planning around enrollment growth.

Inspection Findings. Rainier Prep's plan for enrollment growth appears to be sound. The enrollment increase would require increased physical capacity for which the school is preparing deliberately. The school may, however, need to develop a revised renewal term budget that reflects its commitment to continue operating with a balanced budget.

RAINIER PREP INSPECTION FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

1. Inspection Priority. Student Advisory

Standard. The school has established student advisory as a foundational aspect of social and emotional learning.

Inspection Finding. All indications from the inspection are that Rainier Prep is fulfilling its objectives for building community and anchoring learning through student advisories based on the school's deliberate, thoughtful approach to defining objectives, developing content, and implementing effective advisory practices.

Discussion

Student advisory has been a core component of Rainier Prep's educational program design from the outset, and the school continues to view student advisory as central to its work on social and emotional learning. The renewal application states that, "[w]e also believe in developing the whole person and have a rich curriculum of social and emotional learning, which starts with our advisory program." 4 (emphasis added). The renewal inspection provided an opportunity for the Commission to better understand the role that the advisory program plays in the educational program; the ways that students, parents, and school staff experience the program; and the connections the school makes between the advisory and student learning.

All indications from the inspection are that Rainier Prep is fulfilling its objectives for building community and anchoring learning through student advisories based on the school's deliberate, thoughtful approach to defining objectives, developing content, and implementing effective advisory practices. Teachers and leadership articulated a clear structure and set of objectives for the advisory program that has developed over the charter term. They have refined the advisory structure, having moved from single sex advisories in the school's first year to co-educational advisories based on experience. Teachers and leadership described a curricular progression in objectives from the fifth grade where advisory serves to establish school culture and norms through the eighth grade which has a theme of preparing students for high school. Digital citizenship has become a component of the sixth-grade advisory which aligns with students' development of online interactions and is particularly appropriate as the school has shifted to virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rainier Prep engages in sound practices for implementing the advisory program. In recent years, teachers have developed and documented curricula for the advisory that integrates content from multiple sources including curricula around social emotional learning (SEL). The materials include both lesson plan type materials (objectives, etc.) and lesson materials such as PowerPoint decks. Summer professional development ("base camp") includes substantial work on developing advisory skills and training from a former advisor. During the school year, the school creates mentoring opportunities by periodically pairing advisories in the same room, and

⁴ Rainier Prep Contract Renewal Application, p.3.

there are other opportunities for newer advisors to learn from those with more experience.

In practice, the inspection team's observations indicated that teachers are generally conducting advisories consistent with the school's goals. In an eighth-grade advisory, students were working on developing resumes in anticipation of pursuing work opportunities while in high school. The session was part of ongoing work directly related to preparing students for high school. The teacher presented clear expectations for the purpose of the work and provided an exemplar. Students had an opportunity to solicit and receive individual feedback on their drafts. In a seventh grade variation on the advisory (community meeting) in which the whole grade met together, teachers shared practical information related to the school schedule then engaged in virtual activities like a kahoot "quiz" about college. Even in an online environment students' positive engagement with each other and rapport with their teachers was evident in their active participation and the nature of their contributions to the online "chat."

Students and parents affirmed the significant role that advisories play in the school experience and how they anchor the school's communication with and connection to families. Students described it as a time when teachers check in with them on work and when they can check in with each other and build community. Eighth grade students reflecting on the resume work said that they felt well prepared for the exercise and that the resume work was, in turn, preparing them well for high school. It was also clear from conversations with eighth graders that they were engaged in thinking about and planning for high school, consistent with Rainier Prep's objectives for that grade. With respect to communications and family engagement, parents had uniformly positive reflections on advisory. All reported being in regular content with their children's respective advisors. One parent described her child's advisor as "a link to the rest of the teachers [that] keeps her connected." Several reported that advisory was one of the things that motivated their children to get online for virtual learning in the mornings.

2. Inspection Priority. STEM Education

Standard. STEM education is an integral part of the educational program.

Inspection Finding. Within the core academic program, Rainier Prep incorporates science, technology, math, and engineering (STEM) in ways that are appropriate but not comprehensive. Charter renewal presents an opportunity for the school to assess whether it intends for STEM to constitute an essential design element during a renewal term.

Discussion

In its initial program design, Rainier Prep identified STEM education as a priority. The Commission recognized this focus by incorporating it as a distinct program design element incorporated into the charter contract. However, the school's application for contract renewal made no mention of or reference to STEM education. The renewal inspection provided an opportunity to better understand the current role of STEM education in the school's program. The inspection team sought to evaluate the extent to which Rainier Prep has a cohesive vision for and implementation of STEM education.

Within the core academic program, Rainier Prep incorporates science, technology, math, and engineering (STEM) in ways that are appropriate even though not comprehensive. Leadership reports that Next Generation Science Standards (Next Gen) heavily inform fifth grade instruction and to some degree sixth grade instruction as the school fosters an investigative, inquiry-based learning mindset. The school has a dean of STEM with responsibilities for horizontal alignment of STEM-related instruction. Leadership also reports that several science department staff have completed a University of Washington engineering fellowship designed to strengthen STEM instruction. In math, the school has emphasized preparing students to take algebra in eighth grade so that they have a strong foundation for high school math and science and ultimately for college success.

In addition to incorporating STEM standards and values into the core academic program, particularly in the early middle school grades, Rainier Prep provides supplemental STEM-based learning opportunities. For example, representatives from Amazon presented at the school for "Code Day," and students have taken engineering-related field trips to the Museum of Flight where they had the opportunity to speak with astronauts while the latter were on the space station. Regular elective opportunities include coding and Lego robotics. These opportunities are likely to expand students' awareness and appreciation of STEM applications.

Notwithstanding these STEM-related opportunities, it was not evident to the inspection team that STEM education is integral to the school's educational program in a way that makes it an essential component of Rainier Prep's program design. The school's application for charter renewal made no reference to STEM. Similarly, it was not clear during the inspection whether or how Next Gen standards inform the science program in the seventh and eighth grades. From the standpoint of educational outcomes, this is not necessarily problematic. It more indicates an opportunity and need for the school to evaluate whether it intends to continue treating STEM as an essential design element during a renewal term. Governing board members expressed a belief that STEM is a core part of the curriculum but spoke to discrete opportunities such as the Museum of Flight experience more than to programmatic objectives. To the extent that it is part of the core, charter renewal may be an opportunity for the school to reaffirm its commitment and to consider opportunities to extend STEM more deliberately through the instructional program – particularly in the upper grades. To the extent that it is not, then the charter for the renewal term should reflect that change.

3. Inspection Priority. Enrollment, Finance & Facilities

Standard. The school has sound plans for being financially viable during a renewal term including budgeting and facilities planning around enrollment growth.

Inspection Findings. Rainier Prep's plan for enrollment growth appears to be sound. The enrollment increase would require increased physical capacity for which the school is preparing deliberately. The school may, however, need to develop a revised renewal term budget that reflects its commitment to continue operating with a balanced budget.

Discussion

Notwithstanding its strong performance to date, Rainier Prep's financial plans for the renewal term raised interrelated budget and facilities priorities for the renewal inspection. First, Rainier Prep indicates an interest in expanding enrollment by 17% from the current enrollment of 346 students to 405 students beginning in the 2022-23 school year. The renewal application states that the increase would be contingent on securing adequate facilities. Second, the initial renewal term budget – which assumed the proposed enrollment increase – showed annual deficits ranging from \$569K (2022-23) to nearly \$1.2M (2025-26) and totaling \$4.37M over the five-year term. The renewal inspection provided an opportunity to better understand the school's plans to increase enrollment and to be financially viable during a renewal term.

The school's plan for enrollment growth appears to be sound. Sixth grade is a natural entry point, and the school has a significant wait list. Rainier Prep plans to draw from that wait list to create an additional section that would then trail up through seventh and eighth grades. Ultimately, the fifth grade would remain at its current size while the sixth through eighth grades would each have an additional section of approximately 20 students. Rainier Prep has evidence of demand that appears sufficient to sustain the planned enrollment growth. The proposed total enrollment increase (17%) is under the threshold that would require formal Commission approval.

Rainier Prep's planned enrollment increase would require increased physical capacity at the school's current location for which the school is preparing deliberately. The school is currently located on land owned by the archdiocese. The school's leadership has researched multiple expansion options including construction of semi-permanent structures to be placed in available space on the lot where the school currently is located. The school is in conversation with the diocese about the possibility of amending the current lease and with potential lenders about facilities financing options. The board and school leadership appear to be taking a deliberate, thorough approach to evaluating options and making a decision and are aligning the budget with their facilities plans.

Consistent with the school's diligent financial planning, Rainier Prep may need to submit an updated budget as part of the renewal process. The planned enrollment growth and expansion are both incorporated in the budget that Rainier Prep initially submitted with its renewal application; however, this budget shows deficits totaling \$4.37M. The annual deficits mirror, to a substantial degree, a gap in public funding created by the absence of levy funds for Rainier Prep that other public schools in the district receive. During a renewal term, Rainier Prep will continue to be required either to make up those deficits through fundraising or to reduce services to its students. Conversations with the board and leadership indicated that the school is committed to continue operating with a balanced budget as the school has throughout its initial charter term. The school may need to develop a revised renewal term budget that reflects this commitment.

⁵ Rainier Prep, Charter Contract Renewal Application, p. 7 (Sep. 4, 2020).

⁶ *Id*. at 11.





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CHARTER RENEWAL GUIDE: ATTACHMENT 6 SAMPLE RENEWAL REPORT

2021 CHARTER RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION REPORT FOR:

RAINIER PREP

Report Submitted By

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The Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) provides equal access to all programs and services without discrimination based on sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. Questions and complaints of alleged discrimination should be directed to the Executive Director:

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
OVERVIEW OF THE CHARTER RENEWAL PROCESS	5
CHARTER SCHOOL CONTRACT EXPLICIT RENEWAL CRITERIA	6
SCHOOL OVERVIEW	7
RECOMMENDATION	8
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	9
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE	. 10
FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE	. 12

INTRODUCTION

The Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) was created in 2013, after the approval of Initiative 1240 and subsequent passage of Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6194, to serve as a statewide charter school authorizer. The eleven-member Commission is tasked with running a process to approve new charter schools, and effectively monitoring the schools it authorizes through ongoing oversight.

Mission

To authorize high quality public charter schools and provide effective oversight and transparent accountability to improve educational outcomes for at-risk students.

Values

Student-Centered
Cultural and Community Responsiveness
Excellence and Continuous Learning
Accountability/Responsibility
Transparency
Innovation

Vision

Foster innovation and ensure excellence so that every student has access to and thrives in a high-quality public school.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHARTER RENEWAL PROCESS

Charter renewal marks a critical juncture for a school, and the renewal decision is one of the Charter School Commission's most important responsibilities as a charter school authorizer. At renewal, the Commission must determine whether a school has met its public commitments to the children and families it serves, as well as to the community. The renewal process requires thorough analyses of a comprehensive body of quantitative and qualitative data based on annual performance reviews over the charter term; the school's renewal application; and a renewal site visit. It culminates in a Commission decision to renew or non-renew the charter.

In terms of the criteria by which the authorizer will make its renewal decisions, in accordance with RCW 28A.710.190(5), the authorizer will base its decisions on evidence of the school's performance over the term of the charter contract in accordance with the performance frameworks set forth in the charter contract; this encompasses information contained in annual performance reports, information provided by the school to the authorizer in the charter school renewal application, information gathered by the authorizer during the renewal inspection, public comment provided during the renewal process, and any/all other information that pertains to a charter school's compliance with charter contract provisions.

The renewal recommendation will present a recommendation for renewal or non-renewal and will summarize the evidence basis for the recommendation including relevant evidence from the performance report, the school's renewal application, the renewal visit, and any additional relevant performance information. Schools will have an opportunity to respond; to present testimony and supporting documents at a public meeting; to have legal representation; and to call witnesses. The Commission will document all decisions in writing with the reasons for the decision.

RCW 28A.710.190(1) states:

A charter contract may be renewed by the authorizer, at the request of the charter school, for successive five-year terms. The authorizer, however, may vary the term based on the performance, demonstrated capacities, and particular circumstances of a charter school, and may grant renewal with specific conditions for necessary improvements to a charter school.

In making charter renewal decisions, an authorizer must:

- Base its decisions in evidence of the school's performance over the term of the charter contract in accordance with the performance framework set forth in the charter contract;
- Ensure that data used in making renewal decisions are available to the school and the public; and
- Provide a public report summarizing the evidence basis for its decision.

CHARTER SCHOOL CONTRACT EXPLICIT RENEWAL CRITERIA

Framework	Explicit Renewal Criteria
Academic	Based upon the most current data combined with trend data from the previous three years, charter schools whose Academic Performance Framework scores result in: • A Tier 1 or 2 are presumed to be renewed. • A Tier 3 rating, renewal is in question. • A Tier 4 rating, non-renewal is presumed.
Organizational	No school or organization is perfect, and the existence of one or more "does not meet" ratings does not, in and of itself, indicate unsatisfactory organizational performance. The Commission looks for organizational performance that is predominantly compliant with no areas of repeated non-compliance. Based upon the most current data combined with trend data analysis from the current charter contract term: • Renewal is presumed if a charter school's performance meets the established expectations or whose actions demonstrate that remedies regarding deficiencies were successfully implemented. • Nonrenewal is presumed if a charter school's performance does not met expectation or did not demonstrate that remedies were implemented for identified deficiencies.
	 Where there have been instances of non-compliance, Commission staff will consider the following for their analysis for recommendation to the Commissioners: Severity of the compliance issue and impact on students. For example, violation of health and safety requirements would generally be a more serious issue than the late filing of a report. Number and duration of non-compliance issues. The Commission staff will weigh repeated non-compliance more heavily in its overall assessment. Timeliness of the remedy. If the school has remedied the issue promptly on its own initiative or following notification from the Commission, the Commission staff will weigh the violation less severely than if the school has not remedied the issue promptly. Current status. Although the Commission considers the school's complete performance history relevant and applicable, it will generally weigh recent performance and current compliance status more heavily than past performance.
Financial	Based upon the most current data combined with trend data analysis from life cycle of the current charter contract term: • Renewal is presumed if a charter school demonstrates strong historic financial performance and future viability. In other words, a school who has demonstrated an ability to generate sufficient income to meet operating expenses and debt commitments is presumed to be renewed. • Nonrenewal is presumed is a charter school's financial performance demonstrates historic and future financial insolvency. In other words, a school who has demonstrated and/or is projecting an inability to pay its debts is presumed to be nonrenewed.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Rainier Prep

10211 12th Ave S, Seattle, WA 98168				
School Contact	(206) 494-5979			
School Website	https://www.rainierprep.org/			
School District	Highline School District			
Leadership	School Leader: Maggie O'Sullivan			
School Mission	To prepare all students to excel at four-year colleges and to become leaders in their communities.			
Education Program Terms & Design Elements	Rainier Prep provides a longer school day to ensure that students have more time to learn. Rainier Prep provides a daily advisory program. Rainier Prep focuses on increasing achievement in STEM.			
Grades Served	5–8			
First Year of Operation	2016 - 2017			
Total Student Enrollment	343 Students			

2019-20 Student Demographics

STUDENT GROUPS		RACE / ETHNICITY	
Special Education	11.0%	Asian	6.3%
Limited English	22.0%	Black / African American	40.0%
Low Income	78.6%	Hispanic / Latino of any race(s)	42.5%
		Two or More Races	6.3%
GENDER		White	4.9%
Male	53.1%		
Female	46.6%		
Gender X	0.3%		

RECOMMENDATION

Rainier Prep RENEW RENEW

Executive Summary

Rainier Prep, authorized on January 30, 2014 and opened in August 2016, has consistently performed at or above expectations on nearly every Performance Framework (Academic, Organizational and Financial) indicator and metric for the past four and half years. It has maintained remarkable consistency at the leadership level with Maggie O'Sullivan serving as the school leader since the school's inception. In addition to school level leadership, the school's board has maintained a core group of directors and has strategically added capacity throughout the school's first charter term that has enabled the school to provide educational opportunities to students that have resulted in very positive outcomes. While systemic financial issues at the state level remain and present a long-term risk to all charter public schools, Rainier Prep has met and is projected to continue to meet the Commission's financial performance expectations. This independent, home grown charter public school has met its public commitments to the children, families and community it serves. Rainier Prep is strongly recommended five-year charter contract renewal.

¹ Rainier Prep Performance Report, pp.7, 11 and 14.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Rainier Prep RENEW RENEW

Explicit Criteria

Based upon the most current data combined with trend data from the previous three years, charter schools whose Academic Performance Framework scores result in:

- A Tier 1 or 2 are presumed to be renewed.
- A Tier 3 rating, renewal is in question.
- A Tier 4 rating, non-renewal is presumed.

Performance Summary

The academic performance section of this report is based on data from the first three years of the school's operation. The Commission planned to incorporate data from the fourth year, 2019-20, as part of the renewal recommendation; however, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, academic outcome data for the 2019-20 school-year is not available. Despite this reality and based on the explicit renewal criteria, Rainier Prep is recommended for renewal.

Overall Tier Rating	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
	N/A	1	1	N/A

The Commission verified that Rainier Prep has consistently implemented the educational program consistent with its current charter contract. Of particular note is Rainier Prep's student advisory program. Based on Rainier Prep's renewal application and verified through the Renewal Inspection, the student advisory is a cornerstone of Rainier Prep's model that has enabled students to achieve strong academic outcomes. This student advisory program focuses on "developing the whole person" by engaging students in a "rich curriculum of social and emotional learning." Based on feedback from teachers, students and parents, Rainier Prep has continuously iterated upon the student advisory program during its life cycle. "All indications from the inspection are that Rainier Prep is fulfilling its objectives for building community and anchoring learning through student advisories based on the school's deliberate, thoughtful approach to defining objectives, developing content, and implementing effective advisory practices." "

The student advisory program continues to be a cornerstone of Rainier Prep's model despite the COVID-19 pandemic that forced Rainier Prep to deliver it programming in a virtual/distance learning setting. Rainier Prep has deliberately and diligently worked to modify and update its student advisory program in order to attend to this new reality. For example, "digital citizenship has become a component of the sixth-grade advisory which aligns with students' development of online interactions and is particularly appropriate as the school has shifted to virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic."⁴

² Rainier Prep Contract Renewal Application, p.3.

³ Rainier Prep Inspection Report, p.9.

⁴ Id.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Rainier Prep RENEW

Explicit Criteria

Based upon the most current data combined with trend data analysis from life cycle of the current charter contract term:

- Renewal is presumed if a charter school's performance meets the established expectations or whose actions demonstrate that remedies regarding deficiencies were successfully implemented.
- Nonrenewal is presumed is a charter school's whose performance does not met expectation or whose actions did not demonstrate that remedies were implemented regarding identified deficiencies.

Where there have been instances of non-compliance, the Commission staff will consider the following for their analysis for recommendation to the Commissioners:

- **Severity of the compliance issue and impact on students.** For example, violation of health and safety requirements would generally be a more serious issue than the late filing of a report.
- **Number and duration of non-compliance issues.** The Commission staff will weigh repeated non-compliance more heavily in its overall assessment.
- **Timeliness of the remedy.** If the school has remedied the issue promptly on its own initiative or following notification from the Commission, the Commission staff will weigh the violation less severely than if the school has not remedied the issue promptly.
- **Current status.** Although the Commission considers the school's complete performance history relevant and applicable, it will generally weigh recent performance and current compliance status more heavily than past performance.

Performance Summary

The organizational performance section of this report is based on data from the first two years of the -school's operation. The Commission planned to incorporate data from the third year, 2018-19, as part of the renewal recommendation yet the timing of this recommendation report in relation to the development and release of the 2018-19 Organizational Performance Report did not align. Despite this reality and based on the explicit renewal criteria, Rainier Prep is recommended for renewal.

Rainier Prep has been and remains in good standing with the Commission and has met standard for each Organizational Performance Framework indicator and standard. The school's board of directors are highly engaged and provide strong support and guidance to the school leader. The school leader, Maggie O'Sullivan, founded the school and remains in this position. This continuity of leadership cannot be understated and appears to be fundamental to Rainier Prep's success. In addition to Ms. O'Sullivan's leadership, the board of directors has remained largely consistent through the first four years of operation

⁵ Rainier Prep Performance Report, p.11

and has strategically added capacity to support Rainier Prep takes steps towards realizing its vision while fulfilling its mission, "to prepare all students to excel at four-year colleges and to become leaders in their communities".⁶

⁶ Rainier Prep Performance Report, p.2.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Rainier Prep RENEW

Explicit Criteria

Based upon the most current data combined with trend data analysis from life cycle of the current charter contract term:

• Renewal is presumed if a charter school's financial performance demonstrates historic and future viability. In other words, a school who has demonstrated an ability to generate sufficient income to meet operating expenses and debt commitments is presumed to be renewed.
Nonrenewal is presumed is a charter school's financial performance demonstrates historic and future financial insolvency. In other words, a school who has demonstrated and/or is projecting an inability to pay its debts is presumed to be nonrenewed.

Performance Summary

The financial performance section of this report is based on data from the first three years of the school's operation. "During the term of its charter, Rainier Prep has consistently met the Commission's Financial Performance requirements. Based on its audited financials for each of the first three years of operation, the school has met the standard for every applicable financial indicator in every year." ⁷

While Rainier Prep's record to date does not raise any questions or concerns regarding the school's financial viability, the state's systemic funding inequity for charter public schools does warrant mentioning in this report. Rainier Prep is successful despite inconsistencies in how education is funded in Washington. Restrictions on charter public schools create a barrier to the local levy funds that are available to traditional public schools. This funding inequity creates an additional hurdle for charter public schools to clear as they work produce strong student outcomes. While families of students at Rainier Prep, and other charter public schools, shoulder the same tax burden that funds other public schools in Washington, the schools their own children attend must rely on private fundraising to fill the funding gap left by this inequity. For comparison, during the 2018-19 school year, Rainier Prep received \$13,899 per pupil in revenue compared to Highline Public Schools' \$16,580 per pupil. Rainier Prep's board of directors has consistently raised over \$400,000 per year which has allowed Rainier Prep to remain in operation. Expecting a charter public school's board of directors to continuously raised this level of funding annually is concerning and illustrates the need for equitable funding for all public schools. Given his reality, Rainier Prep's results are even more impressive.

⁷ Rainier Prep Performance Report, p.14.

⁸ From OSPI's 2018-19 F196 Reports



ABOUT TANDEM LEARNING

Tandem Learning prepares school leaders and governing boards; school systems and management organizations; authorizers, funders, and lenders to make sound educational decisions and to implement those decisions well. The object of our work is to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children.

Resourceful. We ground our work in the recognition that schools operate with limited resources. Each decision about people, time, and money affects what schools accomplish minute by minute and year by year. The best decisions often require a combination of objectivity, creativity, and courage.

Collaborative. We work collaboratively with stakeholders and with particular attention to how choices and decisions will affect the teachers and school leaders who will ultimately be responsible for success.

Education. We believe that quality education can take many shapes and forms. There is no one right way, but the best ways share in common an understanding of where children are and belief in what they can become.