



New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Charter Schools

Renewal Application

Updated August 2015

Introduction

As the State Education Agency and sole charter authorizer in the state of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Education (Department) holds all charter schools accountable for providing students with a high-quality public education. In July 2012, the Department released the [Performance Framework](#) which outlines academic, organizational and fiscal standards by which all New Jersey public charter schools are evaluated. In August 2015, the [Organizational Performance Framework](#) was revised to provide clear and precise information on how a charter school's organizational performance is evaluated.¹ The Performance Framework is used throughout the charter term as the basis for school evaluation, monitoring and intervention and in all high-stakes decision making, including replication, expansion, renewal and closure.

The renewal application aligns with the indicators within the Performance Framework. The decision to renew a charter for each subsequent five-year period will be based on a comprehensive review guided by the following three questions:

1. Is the school's academic program a success?
2. Is the school financially viable?
3. Is the school equitable and organizationally sound?

A successful application will provide clear evidence, based on student outcomes, for the renewal of the school's charter. The application should also identify weaknesses and address discrepancies between current and anticipated outcomes and provide a well-conceived plan for improvement over the next five years.

After the submission of the renewal application, the Department of Education will conduct a site visit to each charter school up for renewal. The site visit may include interviews with key stakeholders, classroom observations and review of key documents. The findings gathered from the site visit will augment the evaluation of student performance on the statewide assessment program, annual reports, monitoring visit results, financial reports and other relevant evidence before the Commissioner makes a decision about the renewal of a school's charter for a subsequent five-year period.

¹ The academic section of the Performance Framework will be revised in 2016 based on PARCC data.

Renewal Process

Application Submission: Each charter school must upload the completed renewal application in **Microsoft Word format along with the required Microsoft Excel attachment** to EpiCenter by 4:15 on Thursday, October 15, 2015. An EpiCenter task has been sent to your school with complete instructions on submission requirements. Please note that you must submit both documents – one in Word format and one in Excel format – in order for the task to be approved. If any of the documents are missing, the entire submission will be rejected and sent back for revision. Hard copies of the renewal application will **not** be required to be sent to the Commissioner, NJDOE or county offices this year.

However, **a hard copy** of the renewal application must be submitted to each school's district board(s) of education or State district superintendent(s) of the district(s) of residence of the charter school by **close of business on Thursday, October 15, 2015**.

Application Review: The application for renewal will be reviewed and evaluated by the New Jersey Department of Education. All applications must be clear and fully complete in order to be evaluated.

On-Site Renewal Visit: The Department of Education review team will conduct an on-site visit of the charter school which will include classroom visits, interviews with key stakeholders and document review.

Renewal Determination: The Commissioner will grant or deny the renewal of the charter by February 28, 2016.

Application Content and Format

The prescribed content and format for the renewal application are specified below.

Document Length: The document may not exceed 30 pages, not including the cover page, table of contents, charts and appendices.

Format: All pages should use standard one-inch margins, be paginated, with all text easily readable in font no smaller than type size 11 point.

Cover Page: Provide a cover page that includes the school's name and the date of the report. The bottom of the cover page should also note that the report was transmitted to the district board(s) of education of the charter school.

Table of Contents: Provide a clearly labeled Table of Contents naming all major sections and appendices with corresponding page numbers.

Appendices: All supplementary documents should be identified appropriately and properly labeled as appendices at the end of the application. The appendices should not exceed 10 pages in total.

Charter School Renewal Application Questions

Section 1: Basic Information

1.1 Fill in the following chart with the school's basic information for the 2015-2016 school year.

BASIC INFORMATION	
Name of School	
Year School Opened	
Grade Level(s) in 2015-2016	
Current Enrollment	
Maximum Enrollment	
Current Waiting List	
School Address(es)	
District(s) / Region of Residence	
Website Address	
Name of Board President	
Board President email address	
Board President phone number	
Name of School Leader	
School Leader email address	
School Leader phone number	
Name of SBA	
SBA email address	
SBA phone number	

1.2 Fill in the following chart with the school's student demographics for the 2015-2016 school year.

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS	
# Total Students	
# and % Free or Reduced Price Lunch Students	
# and % Special Ed Students	
# and % LEP Students	
# and % Asian Students	
# and % Black Students	
# and % Hispanic Students	
# and % White Students	
# and % Other ethnic groups	

Section 2: Organizational Performance Areas

Education Program and Capacity

The following questions are aligned to the [Organizational Performance Framework](#), Performance Area 1: Education Program and Capacity.

1.1 Mission & Key Design Elements

- a) State the school's mission. Describe the school's educational philosophy and key design elements including any unique and innovative features in the educational program.

1.2 Curriculum

- a) Describe the school's curriculum and how it is aligned to the state standards.
- b) Describe the school's process for selecting, developing, reviewing and revising the curriculum. Be sure to include a rationale for this process.
- c) Describe how the school's curriculum supports teachers in their instructional planning. In what ways does the school's curriculum meet the academic needs of all students, including but not limited to, students with disabilities and English language learners?

1.3 Instruction

- a) Describe the school's instructional expectations.
- b) Complete the *Description of Instructional Practices* template found in Appendix A.

1.4 Assessment

- a) Describe the school's assessment system and how it is used to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.
- b) Describe how the school uses other data (qualitative and quantitative) to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program.

1.5 Organizational Capacity

- a) Describe the school's organizational structure and roles of responsibilities of key personnel. Be sure to include the following in your response:
 - Process and system for decision-making.
 - Process and system for evaluating school leaders.
 - Process and system for evaluating and coaching teachers.
 - Process and system for staff professional development.

School Culture & Climate

The following questions are aligned to the [Organizational Performance Framework](#), Performance Area 2: School Culture & Climate.

2.1 School Culture & Climate

- a) Describe how the school promotes a culture of learning and scholarship and high expectations. Describe how the school's overall learning environment aligns with its mission and program. Evidence may include, but not limited to, student lead organizations, student achievements and

recognition, adult learning communities, levels of disciplinary referrals, class and staff attendance, and participation in school events and activities.

b) How does the school support the social and emotional health of its students?

2.2 Family & Community Engagement

a) Explain how the school promotes family and community involvement. Provide specific examples and evidence of how these plans have been realized and identify proposed changes to the plan that your school will implement to improve the school's partnerships with its families and surrounding communities. *(Respond to this question only if your response differs from what was provided in the Annual Report – Section 5.a)*

b) Describe the various partnerships the schools has with educational institutions and/or community organizations and how these relationships promote and help achieve the school's mission and align with the school's education program. *(Respond to this question only if your response differs from what was provided in the Annual Report – Section 5.b)*

Board Governance

The following questions are aligned to the [Organizational Performance Framework](#), Performance Area 3: Board Governance.

3.1 Board Capacity

a) Describe the size and composition of the current board of trustees. Include a brief job description for each officer of the board of trustees and describe any committees, advisory groups, and/or task forces and their role in supporting school programming.

b) Provide evidence that the board of trustees governs the school effectively. Include the following in your response:

- Evidence that the board has the appropriate skills (legal, fiscal, educational, community, etc.) and experience to govern the school effectively.
- Information on board priorities for recruitment of additional members and how the board recruits and selects new board members.
- Evidence that the school sets goals aligned to the mission.
- Evidence that the board regularly monitors progress relative to its priorities.
- Evidence that the board has adequate filled seats and regularly meets quorum, according to its bylaws.
- Example(s) of school policies that have been updated to ensure compliance and to facilitate efficient, effective operations.
- Evidence that the board evaluates the school leader(s) and/or management organization on an annual basis and holds these individuals accountable for meeting specified goals.

Access and Equity

The following questions are aligned to the [Organizational Performance Framework](#), Performance Area 4: Access and Equity.

4.1 Access and Equity

a) Describe how the school monitors and minimizes attrition rates to ensure stable and equitable enrollment.

- b) Describe the school’s suspension and expulsion policies and how they align with N.J.A.C. 6A:16.

4.2 Special Education

- a) Describe the steps the school takes to identify students in need of Special Education services.
- b) Describe the instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school employs to provide a continuum of services, including access to a multidisciplinary intervention team, relevant professional development, and differentiated instruction to ensure students’ access to the general education curriculum and academic success.

4.3 English Language Learners

- a) Describe the steps the school takes to identify students in need of English Language Learners (ELL) services.
- b) Describe the programs and services that are in place to ensure the academic success of ELL students, including the deployment of appropriately certified staff, the provision of appropriate accommodations on assessments and the methods used to exit students from ELL services.

Compliance

The following questions are aligned to the [Organizational Performance Framework](#), Performance Area 5: Compliance.

5.1 NJSMART Compliance

- a) Provide the name and title of the individual in your school responsible for NJ SMART submissions.

5.2 EpiCenter Compliance

- b) Provide the name and title of the individual in your school responsible for EpiCenter submissions.

Section 3: Fiscal Viability

The following question is aligned to the [Performance Framework](#), Section II. Financial Performance.

1.1 Financial Framework

- a) Based on the Performance Framework Financial Ratios reported in the FY2013-2014 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) provide an explanation for any Near Term or Sustainability Ratios that did not meet standard. Further, provide a plan with timeline for improving any ratios that do not meet standard.

1.2 Financial Audit

- a) *If applicable*, over the last charter term, provide an explanation for the occurrence of repeat findings from the Auditor’s Management Report (AMR) and provide a plan with timeline on resolution of these findings.

1.3 Budget Information

- a) **Using the spreadsheet titled, “Renewal App Budget Sum-Years 1-5,”** prepare a budget summary covering projected sources of revenue and planned expenditures for Years 1-5. If requesting an expansion to the school’s maximum enrollment, please provide two five-year budgets:
 - o Budget Summary 1 - without expansion for Years 1-5

- Budget Summary 2 - with expansion for Years 1-5
- b) Provide a Budget Narrative for fiscal year 2016-2017. If the school is planning to expand, provide **an additional budget narrative** reflecting the expansion. For years 2017-2021, provide a detailed itemized budget narrative and rationale for budget line items that have significant changes from year to year such as planned facilities expansion, capital investments, or any change not due to cost-of-living increases.
- c) **Using the spreadsheet titled, “Renewal App Budget Sum-Years 1-5,”** prepare a Cash Flow Schedule for the 2016-2017 school year only.

Notes:

- *Freeze revenues for five years except for increase in enrollment. The purpose of the five-year budget projection is to forecast significant changes in expenses. Please note that these budgets are solely for forecasting and projected revenues will be provided by Department of Education in March in time for actual budget preparation.*
- *Do not include any reliance on outside fundraising unless the school can document that funding has been secured.*
- *Charter Schools are now required to maintain a separate escrow account of \$75,000 for the express purpose of having funds available in the event of a corporate dissolution due to charter surrender or revocation. A total of \$75,000 must be reserved in the escrow account, due five years from the date of signature of the Charter Agreement. This reserve must be maintained outside of the General Fund and cannot be used for operational purposes.*
- *The escrow account is not included on the Budget Summary. It does, however, affect the cash flow. On the Cash Flow Schedule, the amount expected to be contributed for the Escrow Account during the first fiscal year can be any amount up to \$75,000. The reserve should be manually populated in the Budget column titled “Escrow Account Reserve” and distributed to the appropriate month(s).*

Section 4: Five-Year Planning

1.1 Maximum Enrollment

- a) Based on the school’s **currently approved maximum enrollment**, provide a five-year maximum enrollment chart by grade level, in the prescribed format below. If your charter is renewed **without** expansion, this chart will serve as the maximum enrollment chart of the school over the next five years.

Note: Schools may not account for year-to-year attrition in their maximum enrollment charts and must allow for the natural progression of students from year-to-year.

Maximum Enrollment Chart

Grade Level	2015-2016 (current maximum)	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Pre-K						
K						
1						
2						

3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
TOTAL						

- b) If the school requests an increase to its maximum enrollment over the next charter term, provide a second enrollment chart reflecting this request, in the prescribed format above. If your charter is renewed with expansion, this chart will serve as the maximum enrollment chart of the school over the next five years. Any increase in enrollment is an amendment to the school’s charter and must be requested in the form of a board resolution. **Include the board resolution and amendment request in the renewal application.**

***Note:** Requests for expansion of enrollment will be considered by the Commissioner during the renewal process and a decision will be made at the same time of the final renewal determination.*

1.2 Five-Year Planning

- a) Describe what changes and improvements the school will undertake in the next five years based on the school's examination of results and student performance outcomes.
- b) Provide detailed information on the school's plan for a facility for the five years of the next charter. The plan should include an adequate and detailed financial arrangement and timeline for the facility.
- c) Describe any significant changes the school expects to make in the following areas over the next charter term:
- Amendments to your school’s charter
 - Governance and/or Education Service Provider (ESP) structure

Questions 1.2 d and 1.2 e should only be answered by schools requesting expansion into another grade span. For example, a school requesting expansion from K-5 to K-8 over the next charter term is required to answer the questions below. A K-3 school requesting expansion to K-5, but not into grades 6-8, is not required to respond to these two questions.

- d) Provide a synopsis of the proposed educational program including key components of the education model and any unique or innovative features of the proposed expansion. Briefly explain the evidence base and performance record that demonstrate the expansion model will be successful in improving academic achievement for the student population. Highlight the following in your response:

- Curricular choices
 - Educational approaches
 - Instructional strategies
- e) Describe the team’s individual and collective qualifications for implementing the new school design successfully, including capacity in areas such as:
- School leadership, administration, and governance;
 - Staffing and recruiting;
 - Goal setting and performance management; and
 - Curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Appendix A

Description of Instructional Practices Template

Please provide a short description of how the school defines high quality instruction and a description of what instructional practices, behavioral expectations, and types of accommodations a site visit team should expect to see. Please note that this description will be one of the primary mechanisms by which the site visit team will evaluate instruction at the school.

Instructional Practices
Guiding questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What should the team see in classrooms that will let them know <u>what the students are expected to learn?</u></i>• <i>What should the team see in classrooms that will let them know <u>that students are learning?</u></i>• <i>What will teachers be doing that will demonstrate that they are <u>implementing the school's instructional model?</u></i>• <i>How does the school define <u>high-quality teaching</u> and what should <u>high-quality teaching look like in the classroom?</u></i>
School's Description:

Behavioral Expectations
Guiding questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What is expected of students in terms of behavior?</i>• <i>What interventions should the team expect to see if behavioral expectations are not met?</i>• <i>What might observers see teachers doing to encourage students to meet the behavioral expectations?</i>
School's Description:

Accommodations

Guiding questions:

- *What might the team see in classrooms to show that the school is supporting students with diverse learning needs?*
- *How might the team know that teachers are implementing IEP accommodations?*
- *How are teachers expected to deliver ESL instruction in the relevant classrooms?*

School's Description: