



MONTANA
COMMUNITY
CHOICE SCHOOLS

Commission's School Renewal Determination Guidebook

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Renewal Determination Policy

May

1. Renewal Procedures Meeting: The Commission Director will schedule a meeting with the school leadership team and governing board representative to introduce the renewal process, provide the Renewal Application Guide, and discuss any concerns regarding school outcomes.

June

2. Performance Report and Charter Renewal Application Guide: No later than June 30 of the year prior to charter contract expiration, the Commission shall issue a Community Choice School Performance Report and Charter Renewal Application Guide.

September

3. School's Response to Performance Report: The Community Choice School shall respond to the Performance Report and submit any corrections or clarifications within 90 days.

October - November

4. Campus Renewal Visits: Schools host the Commission Director and Commission Renewal Subcommittee on campus to observe the school in action and meet with members of the school community which may include: students, families, teachers, leadership team, and/or governing board members. The Director and school leader will collaborate to determine the visit agenda.

December

5. Renewal Application: The governing board of a Community Choice School seeking renewal shall submit a Renewal Application to the Commission pursuant to the Renewal Application Guide. The Renewal Application is due on (12/XX/XX). The Commission Director and Renewal Subcommittee will review each Renewal Application providing an Executive Summary to the Commission.
6. Public Posting: The Renewal Applications shall be posted on the Board of Public Education's website under the Community Choice Schools tab with directions for submission of written public comment.

January - February

7. Commission Action: The Commission shall rule by resolution on the Renewal Application no later than 30 days after the filing of the Renewal Application (1/XX/XX). Deliberations and vote will occur in a public meeting. Choice Schools that are approved for renewal will proceed to contracting. Choice Schools that are not renewed, move to the non-renewal hearing process.
8. Non-renewal Hearing: The Commission will provide the charter contract holders an opportunity to submit documents and testimony at a hearing to challenge the rationale for the non-renewal recommendation and in support of the continuation of the school. The charter contract holders may be represented by counsel and call witnesses on their behalf. Recording of the proceedings is permitted as are all open meeting laws. The Director and Choice School governing board will arrange the date of the hearing within 5 business days of the Commission's decision to open a hearing.
9. Final Determination: The Commission will deliberate and take action as the final step in the hearing. The hearing will abide by Montana's (MCA) open meeting laws.
10. Closure Protocol: If closure is determined, within 48 hours of final closure determination, a meeting will be held between the Commission Director, school leadership team, and governing board members to review the School Closure Protocol and establish a plan specific to the school.

Renewal Procedures Meeting

May of Year 4

The Commission Director schedules a meeting with the school leadership team and governing board representative to introduce the renewal process, provide the Renewal Application Guide, and discuss any concerns regarding school outcomes.

Performance Report and Charter Renewal Application Guide	School's Response to Performance Report	Campus Renewal Visits
June	September	October - November
No later than June 30 of the year prior to charter contract expiration, the Commission issues a CCS Performance Report and Charter Renewal Application Guide.	The CCS responds to the Performance Report and submits any corrections or clarifications within 90 days.	Schools host the Commission Director and Commission Renewal Subcommittee on campus to observe the school in action and meet with members of the school community.

Renewal Application	Renewal Recommendation	Public Posting	Final Determination
December			January
The governing board of a CCS seeking renewal submits a Renewal Application to the Commission.	The Commission Director and Renewal Subcommittee review each Renewal Application providing an Executive Summary and renewal recommendation to the Commission.	The Renewal Application is posted on the Board of Public Education's website under the Community Choice Schools tab with directions for submission of written public comment.	In a public meeting, the Commission rules by resolution on the Renewal Application no later than 30 days after the filing of the Renewal Application.



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Renewal Performance Report

School Name

Year

Issued by the Commission to the Choice School no later than June 30th of the 4th year of operation containing data through contract year 4. Year 5 is the renewal year.

Table of Contents

- Section I: Academic Performance Framework Longitudinal
Results with Commission Notes and School Response
- Section II: Operational Performance Framework Longitudinal
Results with Commission Notes and School Response
- Section III: Financial Performance Framework Longitudinal
Results with Commission Notes and School Response

SECTION I: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

LITERACY PROFICIENCY (color coded by exceeds / meets / approaches / does not meet)				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
All Students				
Free/Reduced Lunch				
American Indian				
Special Education				
English Language Learners				
Other (indicate)				

LITERACY GROWTH (color coded by exceeds / meets / approaches / does not meet)				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
All Students				
Free/Reduced Lunch				
American Indian				
Special Education				
English Language Learners				
Other (indicate)				

MATH PROFICIENCY

(color coded by **exceeds/meets/approaches/does not meet**)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
All Students				
Free/Reduced Lunch				
American Indian				
Special Education				
English Language Learners				
Other (indicate)				

MATH GROWTH

(color coded by **exceeds/meets/approaches/does not meet**)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
All Students				
Free/Reduced Lunch				
American Indian				
Special Education				
English Language Learners				
Other (indicate)				

POST SECONDARY READINESS/ADJUSTED COHORT GRADUATION RATE

(color coded by **exceeds/meets/approaches/does not meet**)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
All Students				

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK CONCERNS

COMMISSION'S NOTICE OF WEAKNESS OR CONCERN

DATA POINT	DESCRIPTION OF CONCERN

SCHOOL'S RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF WEAKNESS OR CONCERN

DATA POINT	PLAN TO ADDRESS CONCERN

SECTION II: OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

GOVERNING BOARD PERFORMANCE AND STEWARDSHIP (color coded by **meets/does not meet**)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Governance Oversight Rubric				

OPERATIONAL COMPLIANCE (color coded by **meets/does not meet**)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Operational Compliance Rubric				

ATTENDANCE RATES (color coded by **exceeds/meets/approaches/does not meet**)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
All Students				

RECURRENT ENROLLMENT (color coded by **exceeds/meets/approaches/does not meet**)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
All Students				

OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK CONCERNS

COMMISSION'S NOTICE OF WEAKNESS OR CONCERN

DATA POINT

DESCRIPTION OF CONCERN

SCHOOL'S RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF WEAKNESS OR CONCERN

DATA POINT

PLAN TO ADDRESS CONCERN

SECTION III: FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

NEAR TERM HEALTH (color coded by exceeds/meets/approaches/does not meet)				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Current Ratio				
Unrestricted Days Cash				
Default				
Enrollment Variance				

SUSTAINABLE HEALTH (color coded by exceeds/meets/approaches/does not meet)				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Total Margin & 3 Year Aggregated Margin				
Debt Service Coverage Ratio				
Debt to Assets Ratio				
Financial Compliance Rubric				

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK CONCERNS	
COMMISSION'S NOTICE OF WEAKNESS OR CONCERN	
DATA POINT	DESCRIPTION OF CONCERN
SCHOOL'S RESPONSE TO NOTICE OF WEAKNESS OR CONCERN	
DATA POINT	PLAN TO ADDRESS CONCERN



Renewal Site Visit Preparations for the Commission

Purpose

The Renewal Site Visit serves to provide the Commission context and insight as to how the school model and mission are implemented that may not be captured in the Renewal Performance Report and the Renewal Application. The Visit provides the school an opportunity to highlight aspects of the school community climate and culture that are not easily captured in the Performance Framework. Additionally, the site visit affords the Commission the opportunity to dig into areas of growth and strength that may have surfaced over the contract term. The site visit agenda will provide opportunity to:

- Observe how the school's key design elements are being implemented;
- Evidence of the school's mission in practice;
- Experience the school's climate and culture;
- Understand the perspective of students, staff, families, and governing board members.

The Director and school leader will design an agenda that is appropriate to the school's programming and current areas of improvement. The Commission has provided a sample agenda as a resource and highly encourages creativity in the site visit agenda to best highlight the school's implementation of its mission. Following the site visit, the Director will prepare a visit summary of the qualitative and contextual information gathered to include in the Final Recommendation Report to the Commission to consider in making their renewal decision.

Charter Renewal Site Visit Planning Checklist

- Initial Planning Meeting between Director and School Leader
 - Identify the renewal visit date
 - Schedule a pre-visit meeting one week prior to the visit to review the final agenda
 - Discuss agenda items for the visit
- Commission Site Visit Team Preparations
 - Complete Renewal Site Visit Notes Template pre-work
 - Areas to Focus on Noted on Renewal Report
 - Prepare questions for focus groups

Sample Agenda

- Welcome Meeting between Commission representatives and School Leadership
- Observation of Student Arrival
- Parent Forum (3-5 parents for 20-30 mins)
- Student Led Tour with Classroom Observations
- Conversation with School Leadership Team
- Conversation with Staff Groups
- Conversation with Board Members
- Lunch with Students
- Conversation with Staff Groups
- Student Led Tour with Classroom Observations
- Conversation with Staff Groups
- Parent Forum (3-5 parents for 20-30 mins)
- Observation of Dismissal
- Visit Summary with School Leader and Board Members



Site Visit Sample Questions

Purpose

Site visit sample questions are designed to support the Commission in gathering consistent, meaningful evidence of school performance across critical areas of the Performance Framework. These questions are not intended to be used as a script but rather as prompts that site visit evaluators can adapt depending on the stakeholder group (e.g., leaders, teachers, board members, students, or families) and the context of the school's performance. Combining these questions with direct observations, artifact reviews, and performance data, allows evaluators to develop a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the school's strengths, challenges, and progress toward fulfilling its mission and charter contract commitments.

Mission Driven Performance Questions: Is the school delivering on its promise?

1. Shared Understanding of Mission
 - a. How would you describe the school's mission? (ask leaders, teachers, students, families)
 - b. How do teachers and staff incorporate the mission into their daily work with students?
 - c. What evidence do you see that students and families are aware of and engaged with the school's mission?
 - d. How is the mission reflected in public-facing materials (website, recruitment flyers, reports, family handbooks)?
2. Implementation of the Mission in Key Design Elements
 - a. What are the school's key design elements, and how do they shape the student experience?
 - b. Can you provide examples of how these design elements are visible in the academic program, school culture, or operations?
 - c. How does the school evaluate whether design elements are being implemented with fidelity?
 - d. If revisions have been made to the charter contract, how has the school ensured new elements are fully integrated into practice?
 - e. Can you point to specific outcomes that demonstrate the effectiveness of the mission and key design elements?

Academic Performance Questions: Is the school an academic success?

1. Instruction
 - a. How do leaders and teachers at this school define "high-quality instruction"? How is this definition communicated and reinforced across classrooms?
 - b. During observations, how do you monitor whether instruction aligns with your shared understanding of high-quality teaching?
 - c. How do teachers engage students in rigorous thinking and active learning, beyond compliance and participation?
 - d. What evidence do you have that instruction is being differentiated to meet the needs of diverse learners?
 - e. What professional development opportunities do teachers receive to improve instructional practice? How do you measure whether PD translates into improved student outcomes?
 - f. How do teachers make adjustments in real time when students are not meeting learning targets?
2. Curriculum
 - a. How do you ensure your curriculum aligns with college and career ready benchmarks?
 - b. How do you ensure horizontal alignment across classrooms within the same grade level? Can you provide examples?
 - c. What systems are in place to ensure vertical alignment across grades, particularly in core subjects like

ELA and math?

- d. How is the curriculum differentiated for students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students?
 - e. What is your process for systematically reviewing and revising curriculum materials? Who is involved and how often does this happen?
3. Assessment and Program Evaluation
- a. What system of formative, diagnostic, and summative assessments do you use across grades?
 - b. How do teachers use formative assessment data to adjust instruction daily or weekly?
 - c. Can you provide an example of how data has led to changes in instructional strategies or interventions for a subgroup of students?
 - d. How does the school evaluate the overall quality and effectiveness of its academic program using both qualitative (e.g., student work, observations) and quantitative (e.g., test scores, growth measures) data?
 - e. How often are assessment results analyzed, and by whom?
 - f. In what ways does the school use multiple measures to monitor progress toward standards?
4. Support for Diverse Learners
- a. What process does the school follow for identifying students with disabilities and English learners? Is it consistent with federal guidelines?
 - b. How does the school provide targeted support to meet the academic needs of students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students?
 - c. How do interventionists and general education teachers coordinate and communicate about students receiving additional support?
 - d. Can you share an example of how student progress is monitored and how interventions have been adjusted as a result?
 - e. What systems are in place to ensure all students, including subgroups, have equitable access to rigorous curriculum and instruction?

School Climate and Culture: Is the school a safe and welcoming environment conducive to learning?

1. Measures of Culture, Climate, and Student Engagement
 - a. What processes are in place to identify and support students at risk of chronic absenteeism?
 - b. How do you track and address absenteeism trends across different student subgroups?
 - c. What strategies have been most effective in reducing out-of-school suspensions and keeping students engaged in learning?
 - d. How do you ensure consistency and fairness in suspension decisions across subgroups?
 - e. What tools or surveys do you use to measure school culture and climate? How often are they administered, and how do you use the results to make improvements?
 - f. How do students describe their sense of belonging and engagement in the school community?
2. School Leadership
 - a. How does the leadership team communicate the school's mission and goals to staff, students, and families?
 - b. Can you share examples of how decisions are aligned with the school's mission and priorities?
 - c. What communication systems are in place to ensure information flows effectively across all levels of the school (leaders, teachers, staff, board, families)?
 - d. How does leadership make and communicate decisions that affect the school community?
 - e. What strategies does the school use to recruit, hire, and retain key personnel (teachers, support staff, operations)?
 - f. How are staffing decisions made when an employee is not meeting performance expectations?
 - g. How familiar is school leadership with the Charter School Performance Framework standards, and what plans are in place to ensure compliance with them?
3. Professional Climate
 - a. How are roles and responsibilities defined for leadership, staff, management, and the board? How is this communicated and reinforced?
 - b. How does the school ensure that staff have the training and expertise to meet the needs of all students,

- including those in subgroups?
 - c. Is the school fully staffed in key areas (finance, human resources, communications, operations)? If not, how are gaps addressed?
 - d. What structures or practices support collaboration among teachers (e.g., PLCs, grade-level meetings, co-teaching)?
 - e. How are teachers and staff evaluated, and how is feedback used to improve performance?
 - f. What professional development opportunities are offered, and how does the school measure their effectiveness?
 - g. How does leadership solicit teacher and staff feedback? Can you share examples of changes made in response to staff input?
 - h. What systems are in place to monitor organizational health and school culture among staff?
4. Behavior Management and Safety
 - a. Describe your schoolwide discipline policy. How is it communicated to staff, students, and families?
 - b. What does implementation of your behavior policy look like across classrooms and grade levels?
 - c. How does your tiered system of behavioral supports promote student growth in social-emotional development?
 - d. What evidence do you have that classrooms are generally safe and conducive to learning?
 - e. How do staff and students describe what makes the school a safe environment?
 - f. What systems are in place to prevent and respond to bullying, harassment, and discrimination?
 - g. How do teachers manage disruptions in ways that minimize lost instructional time?
 5. Family Engagement and Communication
 - a. How does the school ensure that all families, regardless of primary language or disability status, receive communication in a way they can access and understand?
 - b. Can you give examples of how families are engaged beyond required events (e.g., conferences), such as through advisory groups, workshops, or community events?
 - c. How do you assess family satisfaction? Can you share examples of changes the school has made based on family or community feedback?
 - d. What processes are in place to respond to family or community concerns, and how do you ensure transparency in this process?
 - e. How does the school share performance data with families and the broader community?
 - f. How do you support parents to interpret and act on this data in ways that help their child?
 6. Student and Staff Wellbeing
 - a. What systems or programs are in place to support students' and staff wellbeing?
 - b. How does the school track and monitor student wellbeing, both at the individual and subgroup levels?
 - c. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of wellbeing supports over time?
 - d. What professional development do staff receive to help them address students' wellbeing?
 - e. What supports are in place for McKinney-Vento eligible students? Who is the school's McKinney-Vento Coordinator, and how do staff access them?
 - f. Can you share an example of how student wellbeing supports have positively impacted a student's academic progress or engagement?

Operational Performance Questions: Is the school an effective viable organization?

1. Board Evaluation of Leadership, Itself, and Providers
 - a. What formal process does the board use to evaluate the school leader's performance each year?
 - b. How does the board ensure its self-evaluations are meaningful and lead to improvement?
 - c. If applicable, how does the board evaluate management or comprehensive service providers?
 - d. Can you provide an example of how feedback from these evaluations has led to concrete changes?
2. Oversight of Management, Fiscal Operations, and School Goals
 - a. How does the board monitor academic performance and progress toward charter contract goals?
 - b. What reports or dashboards does the board regularly review to oversee fiscal health?
 - c. How often does the board review the budget, financial statements, and audit reports?
 - d. If using a management provider, how does the board ensure the provider is accountable to the school's

mission and goals?

e. Can you share an example of the board intervening or redirecting resources based on oversight findings?

3. Strategic and Continuous Improvement Planning

a. How does the board set priorities and goals that align with the school's mission and charter contract?

b. What process does the board use for long-term strategic planning?

c. Can you describe a recent example of the board adjusting strategy in response to performance data or community needs?

d. How does the board monitor progress on its own strategic priorities?

4. Policy Oversight

a. How does the board ensure policies are reviewed and updated in a timely manner?

b. Can you provide an example of a recent policy update and what prompted it?

5. Board Recruitment and Composition

a. What skills and expertise does the board seek when recruiting new members?

b. How does the board ensure it represents the school community?

c. What onboarding or training processes are in place for new board members to quickly become effective?

d. Can you describe how the board assesses gaps in its collective expertise and addresses them?

6. Board Development

a. What ongoing professional development opportunities does the board engage in each year?

b. How does the board ensure its members stay current on governance best practices and charter school law?

c. How do professional development efforts translate into stronger governance or oversight?

7. Governance Role, Legal Obligations, and Charter Contract Requirements

a. How do board members distinguish between governance and management roles?

b. How do you ensure compliance with legal obligations, including open meetings and conflict-of-interest laws?

c. What systems are in place to ensure the school remains faithful to the terms of its charter?

d. Can board members clearly articulate their fiduciary responsibilities?

8. Familiarity with Performance Framework Standards

a. How familiar is the board with the Charter School Performance Framework standards?

b. What systems are in place to monitor the school's performance against these standards?

c. How does the board ensure the school is on track to meet renewal expectations?

d. Can you share how the board communicates performance standards and progress with stakeholders (staff, families, community)?

9. Enrollment Systems

a. What processes are in place to manage student enrollment fairly and transparently?

b. How does the school ensure compliance with enrollment and lottery requirements?

c. How does leadership monitor enrollment numbers against charter targets throughout the year?

10. Recruitment Practices

a. What strategies does the school use to recruit students from diverse backgrounds?

b. How does the school ensure outreach efforts reach English learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged families?

c. Can you share examples of partnerships with community organizations that support recruitment?

d. How does the school communicate its mission and program to prospective families?

11. Retention Strategies

a. What systems are in place to track and analyze student retention data by subgroup?

b. How does the school identify reasons why students leave, and how does it respond to trends?

c. What strategies have proven effective in retaining students, particularly those from historically underserved populations?

d. How does the school engage families to strengthen their connection and commitment to staying enrolled?

e. Can you share specific examples where retention data informed program or family engagement improvements?

12. Contractual Relationships (If Applicable)

- a. Have there been any changes to management or service provider contracts? If so, how did the school ensure compliance with amendment procedures?
- b. How does the board and school leadership monitor the performance and effectiveness of contracted service providers?
- c. Can you provide an example of how feedback or monitoring led to adjustments in a provider's services?
- d. How do school leaders ensure that contracted partners align with the school's mission and goals?



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Renewal Site Visit Notes Template

School Information			
School Name		Date	
Mission			

Section I: Pre-Visit Preparations

Areas of Focus Noted from Renewal Performance Report			
	Visit Focus Area	Sources of Further Evidence	Plan to Address in Visit
Academics			
Operations			
Finance			

Section II: Site Visit Notes (note: prepare questions in advance)

School Leadership Team Meeting Notes

Attendees	
Questions	Notes

Governing Board Members Meeting Notes

Attendees	
Questions	Notes

School Staff Meetings Notes

Attendees	
Questions	Notes

Parent Forum Meeting Notes

Attendees	
Questions	Notes

Observations of School Culture

Evidence of the Mission in Practice

Section III: Post Visit Analysis

Key Indicators to Inform Renewal Decision Linked to Evidence

Indicator	Evidence	Impact to Renewal Decision



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Renewal Application Recommendation to Commission

School Information	
School Name	
School Leader	
Governing Board Chair	
Location	
Grades Served	
Enrollment	
Mission	

Section I: Key Evidence from Performance Framework and Application

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Section II: Site Visit Summary

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Section III: Recommendation

Approve

Rationale	
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Conditions	
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Deny

Feedback	
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Notice of Renewal Status to School and Governing Board

School Information	
School Name	
School Leader	
Governing Board Chair	
Location	
Grades Served	
Enrollment	
Mission	

Section I: Key Evidence from Performance Framework and Application

Section II: Site Visit Summary

Section III: Final Renewal Decision

Meeting Notes Containing Commission's Resolution

Approve

Rationale

Conditions

Deny

Feedback