

Renewal Process and Performance Assessment Overview

Iowa Charter Schools

The Iowa Department of Education monitors and evaluates charter school performance to inform Iowa State Board of Education (State Board) renewal decisions at the end of each charter term. This process ensures a consistent, evidence-based review balancing charter school autonomy with accountability for academic outcomes, governance and financial and operational integrity.

Under Iowa Code section 256E.10, the State Board determines whether a charter contract should be renewed for up to five years based on evidence of school performance, including academic, operations and governance, and financial performance. This evidence is gathered through the performance assessment and site visit process and culminates in a **Renewal Performance Report** issued by the Iowa State Board of Education for each charter school up for renewal. The report is not the renewal decision, rather, it synthesizes performance assessment data and site visit findings to identify any areas that may jeopardize renewal if not addressed. Charters submit a written response to the report addressing individual required or recommended actions outlined in the report. Charter schools then submit a **Charter Renewal Application**, including their charter response, additional evidence of achievements, improvements and proposed plans for the next contract term. Upon receipt of the application, the State Board reviews the evidence provided and issues a final renewal decision by formal resolution, including the rationale for approval, conditional renewal, or revocation. High-performing schools in full compliance may qualify for expedited renewal.

Renewal Process Steps

The charter school renewal process provides a comprehensive evaluation of a school's performance, integrating quantitative data, qualitative observations, and stakeholder perspectives in a final Charter Renewal Application. The renewal process steps are detailed in *Table 1. Renewal Process Timeline*.

Table 1. Renewal Process Timeline

Spring - Year prior to renewal	Spring - Year prior to renewal	May-June [June 30]	July-August [August 30]	September-October [October 1]	November-December [December 1]
Step 1: Performance Assessment	Step 2: Site Visit	Step 3: Renewal Performance Report	Step 4: Charter Response	Step 5: Charter Renewal Application	Step 6: State Board Decision
Purpose: Evaluate the school's academic, operational, and financial performance to identify strengths, concerns, and areas for improvement that inform the Renewal Performance Report. Activities: Collect and analyze performance assessment data to inform site visit questions and each school's Renewal Performance Report issued by the State Board.	Purpose: Gather qualitative evidence and assess how the school implements its mission and operations in practice. Activities: Conduct site visits for schools up for renewal, including observations, focus groups, interviews, and document reviews to inform each school's Renewal Performance Report issued by the State Board.	Purpose: Synthesize performance assessment data and site visit findings in order to identify any area that may jeopardize renewal of the charter school contract if not remedied. Activities: Review and approve each school's Renewal Performance Report issued by the State Board.	Purpose: Require the school to submit a written response addressing its individual Renewal Performance Report issued by the State Board. Activities: Complete the Charter School Response within the Charter School Annual Report due October 1.	Purpose: Require the school to submit a renewal application that includes its response to the individual Renewal Performance Report issued by the State Board. Activities: Complete and submit the Charter School Annual Report, including the embedded response to the Renewal Performance Report issued by the State Board.	Purpose: Determine whether to renew, renew with corrective action, or revoke the charter contract based on the evidence presented. Activities: Review Charter School Renewal Applications to inform final renewal decisions.

*Note that the cell color and font-formatting indicate the primary responsible party: Blue-bold: Charter Team; Yellow-bold/italics: Iowa State Board of Education; Gray-bold: Charter Schools up for Renewal.

**Charter schools approved for renewal submit contracts for review and approval at the February State Board Meeting for final signature.

The performance assessment applies the State Board-approved performance framework¹ to evaluate each charter school's performance at the time of their renewal. Performance assessment results are incorporated into the individual charter **Renewal Performance Reports** issued by the State Board to each renewal charter school on June 30 of any given year. The assessment is organized into the same categories as the framework: Academics, Operations and Governance, Finance and Supplemental Data. Each category includes benchmark criteria for awarding points to the charter school. Charter schools may also earn additional points based on performance at or above state averages in several priority academic and attendance areas.

Table 2. Performance Assessment Categories, Criteria and Total Points outlines the total points available within the overall performance assessment and shows how those points are distributed across the major categories used to evaluate each school. It provides a clear structure for how evidence is translated into a composite score, including both required assessment categories and additional points awarded for results at or above state averages in key academic and attendance indicators. This scoring structure supports consistent evaluation and reporting within each charter school's **Renewal Performance Report**.

Table 2. Performance Assessment Categories, Criteria and Total Points

Category	Criterion Areas	Total Possible Points
Academics	- Iowa School Performance Profile Ranking - Charter Goal Achievement	200
Operations and Governance	- Governance Policy Document Compliance - Operations Document Compliance - Student Retention Rate - ELL Policy and Procedure Compliance - Special Education Policy and Procedure Compliance - Special Education Program Implementation	100
Finance	- Annual Fiscal Audit - Fiscal Reporting Compliance - Actual vs. Projected Enrollment - Quality Fiscal Budget: Surplus vs. Deficit	150
Supplemental Data	- Governing Board Member Expertise - Properly Endorsed Teaching Staff - Staff Retention Rate	75
Additional Points	- At or Above State Average Performance: ELA Proficiency and Growth - At or Above State Average Performance: Math Proficiency and Growth - At or Above State Average Performance: Chronic Absenteeism - At or Above State Average Performance: Average Daily Attendance and Attendance Growth	25
Overall Performance	Academics + Operations + Finance + Supplemental Data + Additional Points=550 total possible points	550

¹ The charter school [performance framework](#) was approved by the Iowa State Board of Education on February 6, 2025.

Table 3. *Performance Assessment Scoring Summary* provides a clear, consistent structure for communicating charter school performance results within each charter school’s **Renewal Performance Report** issued by the State Board. Each performance level reflects varying degrees of achievement and indicates the relative level of risk or concern associated with a school’s current performance record.

Table 3. Performance Assessment Scoring Summary

Level	% points	Summary
5	90-100%	This level indicates one or more of the following: • School data is exceeding expectation. • Document review and school visit results identify no corrective actions. • Performance is at low risk and limited concern.
4	80-89%	This level indicates one or more of the following: • School data is meeting expectation. • Document review and school visit results identify no or limited minor corrective actions. • Performance is at low risk and limited concern.
3	70-79%	This level indicates one or more of the following: • School data is slightly below expectation. • Document review and school visit results identify corrective and/or continuous improvement actions that need response over time. • Performance is at slight risk and concern.
2	60-69%	This level indicates one or more of the following: • School data is below expectation. • Document review and school visit results identify substantial corrective actions that need immediate and ongoing response. • Performance is at moderate risk and concern.
1	<59%	This level indicates one or more of the following: • School data is significantly below expectation. • Document review and school visit results identify critical corrective actions that need immediate response. • Performance is at high risk and substantial concern.

Taken together—the renewal process and performance assessment—provide a structured and transparent approach for evaluating charter school performance at the end of each contract term. By combining quantitative measures with qualitative review and organizing results into clear performance levels and point-based categories, the process further aligns with national standards of charter school authorization and ensures consistent and comparable reporting across all charter schools up for renewal. This approach clearly identifies areas of strength and areas that may require improvement or could impact renewal if not addressed.

Note: The charter school renewal process doesn't replace other compliance monitoring, review or accountability processes at the Iowa Department of Education.