

Arizona State Board for Charter Schools

Academic Performance Framework and Guidance

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Academic Performance Framework Guidance

Charter schools may be established to provide a learning environment that will improve pupil achievement (A.R.S. § 15-181). As the authorizer or sponsor of charter schools, the State Board for Charter Schools (“Board”) must adopt a performance framework that includes the academic performance expectations of the charter school and the measurement of sufficient progress toward the academic performance expectations (A.R.S. § 15-183(R)).

Charter holders have the autonomy to select and implement programs of instruction that align with their philosophical and methodological ideology and operational structure consistent with state and federal law and the charter contract. The purpose of the Academic Performance Framework (“academic framework”) is to communicate the Board’s academic performance expectations for ensuring that all charter holders in its portfolio are providing a learning environment where measurable improvement in pupil achievement can be demonstrated.

In developing the academic framework, the Board was mindful of its commitment to maintaining current levels of data collection so as not to unnecessarily burden charter holders with requirements to submit additional information for the purpose of evaluating the academic performance of the charter holder. The successful implementation of the academic framework relies on having access to data collected through the administration and evaluation of state assessments.

The academic framework focuses purposefully on quantitative academic outcomes as a basis for analysis to be used in high-stakes decisions. If educational processes are required by law, such elements are included in the Operational Performance Framework and further guidance on the reasoning for this indicator can be found in the Operational Performance Framework and Guidance.

Academic Framework Structure

The Academic Performance Framework is organized by indicators, measures, and targets.

Indicators and Measures

The academic framework includes two indicators. Schools are evaluated by one of the following indicators:

1. **State Accountability:** State Accountability is the default indicator used to evaluate the academic performance of all charter schools sponsored by the Board and its measure is the letter grade of each school operated by the charter holder as assigned through Arizona's A-F Letter Grade Accountability System.
2. **School-Specific Academic Goals:** A charter holder that operates a school that serves a special population that does not have an achievement profile established by the State Board of Education for state accountability pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(I) may petition the Board to adopt unique, school-specific academic performance standards. Only charter schools that have been approved by the Board to use the substitute indicator of school-specific academic goals will be evaluated under this indicator.

Targets and Rating Categories

For each measure, targets are set to rate the schools against the academic framework. The targets establish the levels of performance needed to place each school into the rating categories. There are five possible rating categories but due to the nature of the individual measures, not every measure will include all five ratings.

Exceeds Standard: The school's performance on this measure exceeds the performance targets and shows exemplary performance.

Above Standard: The school's performance on this measure is above the performance targets required to meet the Board's standard.

Meets Standard: The school's performance on this measure meets the Board's minimum performance targets.

Does Not Meet Standard: The school's performance on this measure does not meet the Board's minimum performance targets.

Falls Far Below Standard: The school's performance on this measure signals a significant academic risk. Performance for any measure receiving this rating means the charter school is performing far below the Board's performance targets and on par with the lowest-performing schools in the state. If a charter holder operates a charter school that falls far below the standard, the charter holder may be brought before the Board for disciplinary action.

Evaluation of Charter Holder Performance

The academic framework provides a set of measures to evaluate a charter holder’s academic performance for the school(s) it operates. Targets for each measure are provided below.

Indicator: State Accountability

A-F Letter Grade Accountability System

	1a. Is the school meeting acceptable standards according to the state accountability system?
Exceeds Standard:	<input type="checkbox"/> School received a letter grade of A from the state accountability system.
Above Standard:	<input type="checkbox"/> School received a letter grade of B from the state accountability system.
Meets Standard:	<input type="checkbox"/> School received a letter grade of C from the state accountability system.
Does Not Meet Standard:	<input type="checkbox"/> School received a letter grade of D from the state accountability system.
Falls Far Below Standard:	<input type="checkbox"/> School received a letter grade of F from the state accountability system.

Targets for the A-F Letter Grade Accountability System were set taking into consideration alignment with the state grading system and the Board’s mission to improve public education in Arizona.

Modifications for Alternative, Extremely Small, and Arizona Online Instruction Schools

Subject to final adoption by the State Board of Education, the Department of Education is required to use appropriate achievement profiles to assess alternative schools and extremely small schools and may develop achievement profiles for Arizona Online Instruction schools and others pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(l)¹

¹ A letter grade or its equivalent achievement profile will be used for schools that fall under this provision.

Indicator: School-Specific Academic Goals

A charter holder that operates a school that serves a special population that does not have an achievement profile pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(l) may petition the Board to adopt unique, school-specific academic performance goals. If the petition is approved by the Board, five to six school-specific academic goals, along with specific metric(s) and target(s), must be developed and agreed to by the charter holder and the Board. School-specific academic goals will be incorporated into the charter contract for the charter holder. (See Appendix A: School-Specific Academic Goals).

2. Is the school meeting its school-specific academic goals?	
	<i>Exceeds Standard:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> School exceeded its school-specific academic goals.
	<i>Meets Standard:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> School met its school-specific academic goals.
	<i>Does Not Meet Standard:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> School did not meet its school-specific academic goals.
	<i>Falls Far Below Standard:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> School fell far below its school-specific academic goals.

Overall Ratings

An Overall Rating is determined for each charter school operated by the charter holder in accordance with the following matrix.

1. A-F Letter Grade State Accountability	Overall Rating
A	Exceeds Standard
B	Above Standard
C	Meets Standard
D	Does Not Meet Standard
F	Falls Far Below Standard

For each charter school operated by a charter holder that has been approved by the Board to use school-specific academic goals, the Overall Rating shall be determined as follows:

2. School-Specific Academic Goals	Overall Rating
School Exceeded its Goals	Exceeds Standard
School Met its Goals	Meets Standard
School Did Not Meet its Goals	Does Not Meet Standard
School Fell Far Below its Goals	Falls Far Below Standard

Dashboard

The Overall Rating is represented in the form of a color-coded graphic which will be referred to as the Dashboard. Examples for the charter holder and a charter school are included below.

Charter Holder Example

FY 20XX Charter Holder Name, Inc.

School	Type	Grades Served	Overall Rating
School 1	Traditional	K-8	Above Standard
School 2	Traditional	K-6	Falls Far Below Standard
School 3	Alternative	9-12	Does Not Meet Standard
School 4	Traditional	7-12	Exceeds Standard
School 5	Alternative	9-12	Meets Standard

Charter School Examples

School 1

FY 20XX Traditional Elementary K-8		
	Measure	Rating
1a. A-F Letter Grade	B	Above
OVERALL RATING	Above Standard	

School 2

FY 20XX Traditional Elementary K-6		
	Measure	Rating
1a. A-F Letter Grade	D	Does Not Meet
OVERALL RATING	Falls Far Below Standard	

Use of the Academic Framework

Evaluation

An evaluation is conducted annually to determine if the charter holder meets or is making sufficient progress toward the academic performance expectations set forth in the Board's academic framework. Overall Ratings for the most recent fiscal year that state achievement profiles are available are used to determine whether the charter holder meets the academic performance expectations set forth in the academic framework.

Meets the Board's Academic Performance Expectations

A charter holder meets the Board's academic performance expectations if all schools operated by the charter holder receive an Overall Rating of "Meets Standard," "Above Standard" or "Exceeds Standard" in the most recent fiscal year that state achievement profiles are available.

Demonstrating Sufficient Progress Toward the Board's Academic Performance Expectations

A charter holder that has one or more schools that receive an Overall Rating of "Does Not Meet Standard" or "Falls Far Below Standard" for three consecutive years has failed to demonstrate sufficient progress. In its determination of whether a charter holder demonstrates sufficient progress toward the Board's academic performance expectations, the Board will consider the Overall Rating for each of the schools it operates for the three most recent years that Overall Ratings are available and whether or not there has been improvement in the measures used to determine the Overall Rating.

The findings of the Demonstration of Sufficient Progress will be provided to the Board for consideration at the following times:

- If a charter school operated by the charter holder has failed to meet the Board's academic performance standard for three consecutive years
- During five-year interval reviews
- When considering a charter contract renewal request submitted by the charter holder
- Upon receipt of information that a charter school operated by the charter holder has been assigned a letter grade of "F" under the state accountability system
- When considering disciplinary action against a charter holder that has breached one or more provisions of its charter contract or is in violation of state or federal law

Reviews

A charter holder's academic performance will be considered by the Board during periodic reviews, including five-year interval reviews.

Five-Year Interval Reviews²

² Five-year interval reviews are counted using the first year in which the charter holder may operate a charter school under its charter contract

The most recent Overall Rating of each school operated by a charter holder will be used to determine whether the charter holder is meeting or making sufficient progress toward meeting the Board's academic performance expectations. Charter holders will be required to undergo an Academic Systems Review, as defined in Appendix B, at five-year intervals.

Other Reviews

Because academic performance can affect a charter holder's ability to meet the obligations of its charter contract or provisions of law, a charter holder's academic performance may also be reviewed at other times, including when the Board makes decisions related to a charter holder's financial and/or operational performance. The Board may also use academic performance data for public reporting to various stakeholders, such as schools, policymakers, students and families, and the public.

Academic Eligibility for Expansion Requests

A charter holder's academic performance is evaluated by the Board when considering expansion requests. A charter holder is eligible to submit the expansion requests identified below if all of the following are true:

1. A dashboard for each school operated by the charter holder is available through ASBCS Online,
2. 75 percent or more of the schools operated by the charter holder have a minimum Overall Rating of "Meets Standard" in the most recent fiscal year presented on each school's academic dashboard,
3. 75 percent or more of all Associated Schools have a minimum Overall Rating of "Meets Standard" in the most recent fiscal year presented on the Associated Schools' dashboards, or
 - a. If one or more Associated Schools are excluded for academic performance purposes, then 100 percent of the remaining Associated Schools eligible to receive an Overall Rating must have a minimum Overall Rating of "Meets Standard" on the most recent fiscal year presented on the Associated Schools' academic dashboards, and
4. The charter holder meets the financial and operational eligibility requirements.

Expansion requests include:

- Adding a new school that is currently not in operation under an existing charter contract
- Increasing the number of students the charter holder may serve at its school(s)
- Adding or changing to an Arizona Online Instruction ("AOI") program of instruction
- Increasing the grade levels the charter holder is approved to serve
- Replicating an existing charter
- Transferring a charter school from an existing charter contract to its own charter contract
- Transferring a charter school or charter contract from the current charter holder to an existing charter holder with a different dashboard

If during the processing of one of the expansion requests identified above the Board develops new academic dashboards for the schools operated by the charter holder, Associated School(s), or both, then

Board staff will reevaluate the charter holder's eligibility based on the most recent fiscal year academic dashboard.

Associated Schools

An Associated School is:

- A school operated by a charter holder that operates one or more other schools that contract with the same Education Service Provider.
- A school operated by the same charter holder but under different charter contracts.
- A school operated by a charter holder with at least fifty (50) percent of corporate board officers, directors, members or partners in common, as reflected in the charter contract.

The Board will consider the academic performance of Associated Schools in its consideration of new charter applications submitted by officers, directors, partners or members, or charter representatives of existing charter holders at other times.

Conclusion

A strong academic framework is critical for setting clear expectations for schools and for making high-stakes decisions more clear-cut and transparent. The creation and implementation of the academic framework required that the Board consider many factors, including which data elements are available, the quality of the data, and what information will support the Board in making high-stakes decisions.

Summarizing data into an Overall Rating that leads to certain predictable decisions and consequences supports the Board making objective, data-driven decisions. The academic framework provides an effective means to use ratings to “flag” a school for further evaluation, and then make a judgment about how to apply the consequences with relevant information being considered. This two-step process provides a transparent, data-driven method of placing schools in different categories of reward, review, or consequence.

APPENDIX A:
School-Specific Academic Goals

School-Specific Academic Goals

The Board recognizes that there are charter schools serving special populations that do not have an achievement profile pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(l) and has provided an opportunity for those schools to request use of school-specific academic goals in place of the State Accountability indicator.

The School-Specific Academic Goals indicator is not intended to replace State Accountability measures for schools that are identified as Alternative, or for any schools that have an achievement profile pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(l).

Subject to adoption by the State Board of Education, the Department of Education is required to use appropriate achievement profiles to assess accommodation schools, alternative schools, and extremely small schools and may develop achievement profiles for Arizona Online Instruction schools and others.

Schools Eligible to Apply for School-Specific Academic Goals

A charter holder that operates a school that serves a special population (e.g. majority homeless, students with disabilities, or a higher than average English Language Learner population) that does not have an achievement profile pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(l) may petition the Board to adopt unique performance standards. The Board shall consider a petition for use of the school-specific academic goals if at least 70% of the students served by the school are identified as having at least one of the following risk factors:

- Identified as needing special education services
- Identified as an English Language Learner
- Homeless

Schools that meet the criteria shall be approved by the Board to use school-specific academic goals. The charter holder shall provide verification that it meets the eligibility criteria at the time of initial application for use of school-specific academic goals and at subsequent five-year interval reviews.

Indicators and Measures

If approved by the Board, five to six school-specific academic goals along with specific metric(s) and target(s) must be developed and agreed to by the charter holder and the Board. School-specific academic goals will be incorporated into the charter contract for the charter holder. School-specific academic goals must address each of the indicators listed below and select one or more of the accompanying measures:

Student Growth – Academic improvement over time on valid and reliable assessments of Arizona academic standards.

Student Achievement – Academic proficiency on valid and reliable assessments of Arizona academic standards.

Post-secondary Readiness (high school only) – Outcomes in key subjects that indicate future success or that are aligned to college and career readiness such as graduation rates, SAT/ACT performance, workforce readiness, credit/course completion, or other metrics.

Student Engagement – Predictors of student achievement such as suspension rates, in-seat attendance rates, and positive socio-emotional or psychological adjustment rates.

Appendix B:
Academic Systems Review

Academic Systems Review

As part of the Five-Year Interval Review process, the Board will conduct a comprehensive on-site visit to gain an understanding of how the school develops and implements the following:

- A curriculum designed to improve student achievement.
- A system for monitoring the integration of the Arizona academic standards.
- A system for monitoring and documenting student proficiency.
- A professional development plan that supports implementation of the curriculum.

Purpose: The Academic Systems Review (“ASR”) is designed to gather evidence regarding the school’s implementation in providing a comprehensive program of instruction and designing a method to measure pupil progress toward pupil outcomes, as required in the charter contract. A set of criteria is used by Board staff to review the school’s implementation of its academic systems.

Product: A Five-Year Interval Review Report will summarize the Board staff’s findings based on observations at the school, discussion with the school leadership team, and a review of documents. The findings will consist of a summary of the school’s implementation in specific areas and identification of any areas requiring attention.

Eligible Schools: All charter schools operated by a charter holder at the time of their five and ten year interval review and prior to renewal.

Criteria: The ASR criteria determines the extent to which the school has:

1. An explicit, written curriculum for core content areas that is aligned with Arizona academic standards.
2. A systematic process for reviewing and evaluating the curriculum, at specific intervals, for alignment to Arizona academic standards and improving student academic outcomes for the population served.
3. A teacher evaluation system to monitor the integration of state standards into instruction.
4. An assessment plan to track, analyze, and monitor student academic performance.
5. A professional development plan that aligns with the program of instruction and best practices.

Appendix C:
Policy and Procedures for Revising
the Board's Performance Frameworks

Revising the Performance Frameworks

In October 2023, the Board established the following policy and procedures for revising its Academic Performance Framework, Financial Performance Framework and Operational Performance Framework (collectively referred to as “Performance Frameworks” or individually as the “Academic Framework,” “Financial Framework” and “Operational Framework”).

1. Beginning with the conclusion of the fiscal year 2024 cycle³, Board staff shall at least annually review the Performance Frameworks. The annual review shall include the analysis identified in Step 1a and will consider, as applicable, the data and information identified in Steps 1b through 1l.
 - a. The portfolio’s overall performance under the Performance Frameworks, to include overall performance by measure and trends. A review of trends will include, but not be limited to considering the most recent and two prior years, reviewing to determine percentages of charters that met and did not meet the Board’s standards and expectations.
 - b. Issues or items identified through the analysis completed under Step 1a of the Performance Frameworks’ data, including any risks or pressure points.
 - c. Lessons learned by Board staff during the most recent year implementing the Performance Frameworks.
 - d. Performance of schools that closed during the fiscal year under review to identify any possible issues or risks with the current Performance Frameworks.
 - e. Board member feedback received on the Performance Frameworks.
 - f. Stakeholder feedback received on the Performance Frameworks.
 - g. Actions taken by other agencies (e.g., Arizona Department of Education, State Board of Education) that may affect the Performance Frameworks.
 - h. Statutory or regulatory changes that may affect the Performance Frameworks.
 - i. Data maintained by other agencies (e.g., academic performance data, average daily membership).
 - j. Results of reviews or audits of the Board conducted by outside organizations, including national, state or local entities.
 - k. Best practices for charter school authorizing.
 - l. Any other relevant information.
2. The review under Step 1 will take place for each individual framework no more than six months after the charter holder/school performance dashboards are finalized for a given fiscal year under a framework.
3. Upon completing the review required under Step 1, Board staff will select the applicable option below based on the review results.
 - a. Recommend to the Board that no changes be made to the Performance Frameworks.

³ The fiscal year 2024 cycle would include charter holders’ fiscal year 2024 performance results under the Academic Framework and Operational Framework and charter holders’ fiscal year 2023 performance results under the Financial Framework determined using the audits and average daily membership received by the Board in fiscal year 2024.

b. Recommend to the Board that no changes be made to the Performance Frameworks at this time, but that additional data be collected.

c. Release for public comment proposed changes to the Performance Frameworks. Public comment opportunities and Board consideration will occur in accordance with the Board's "Procedures for Rule and Policy Adoption".

d. Request the Board establish a subcommittee to consider whether changes should be made to the Performance Frameworks and to make a recommendation to the full Board. Generally, the subcommittee option would apply when at least one of the following is true:

i. Board staff proposes significantly changing the Performance Frameworks' measures or overall ratings in a way that is not generally accepted as an improvement/positive change by stakeholders.

ii. Board staff proposes adding new or significantly changing existing processes under the Performance Frameworks in a way that is not generally accepted as an improvement/positive change by stakeholders.

iii. Board staff proposes adding new or significantly changing existing processes such that a final decision on how to proceed would benefit from stakeholder discussions when a clear path for addressing a concern is not evident or when multiple valid options exist.

4. The annual review of the Academic Framework, Financial Framework and Operational Framework required under Step 1 may occur separately or simultaneously.

5. Board staff shall annually report the review results and next steps for the Academic Framework, Financial Framework and Operational Framework at a regularly scheduled public Board meeting as described below.

a. Board staff may choose to report out all three frameworks' results at the same Board meeting or report out individual framework's results at separate Board meetings, so long as all three reports occur within the timeframes and under the conditions identified in Step 5b through Step 5d.

b. If Board staff's review results in proposed changes under Step 3c, then Board staff shall provide the report to the Board prior to releasing the proposed changes for public comment.

c. If Board staff's review results in a subcommittee being requested under Step 3d, then Board staff shall provide the report to the Board at the same meeting at which the Board considers Board staff's request to establish a subcommittee.

d. The review results for the Academic Framework, Financial Framework and Operational Framework must be reported to the Board no later than the November Board meeting unless circumstances outside of Board staff's control make that not possible (e.g., release of letter grades delayed, federal government extends deadline for submitting single audits). In situations where circumstances outside of Board staff's control occur, then the report to the Board must occur no later than 2 months after the situation is resolved (e.g., letter grades are released, deadline extension passes) or the next regularly scheduled Board meeting after that date.

6. Board members or, if applicable, subcommittee members may direct Board staff on additional data and information that should be collected and analyzed.

7. Documentation demonstrating compliance with the policy and procedures, such as presentations given at or materials prepared for Board meetings, shall be maintained by Board staff.

8. The policy and procedures do not prevent the Board from responding quickly to address concerns with its Performance Frameworks as they are raised or making changes to its Performance Framework at other times, provided that the review required under Step 1 occurs annually within the timeframes specified in Step 5 and the actions taken outside of the annual review adhere to the Board's "Procedures for Rule and Policy Adoption".