

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 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 State Board for Charter Schools’ (“Board”) academic 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 remained conscious of its limited resources to implement the academic framework. The Board was also mindful of its commitment to maintaining current levels of data collection so as not to unnecessarily burden the 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 is organized by indicators, measures, metrics and targets.

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.

Minimum Academic Performance Expectations

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

Indicators

The Academic Performance Framework includes two indicators, or general categories, to evaluate a charter holder's academic performance.

1. **State Accountability:** State Accountability is the default indicator used to evaluate the academic performance of all charter schools sponsored by the Board. This indicator includes the letter grade of each school operated by the charter holder as assigned through Arizona's A–F Letter Grade Accountability System. In addition, this indicator considers state designations for school improvement.
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(H) 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.

Measures

For each of the indicators, the academic framework utilizes measures to evaluate schools. The combination of measures, taken on the whole, provides the Board with a balanced scorecard of each school's performance over time. Multiple measures are used in the standards: A-F State Accountability Letter Grades, State designations for school improvement, and school-specific academic goals for charter holders approved to use the separate indicator for academic performance.

Metrics

Metrics are the methods of evaluating a measure. In the development of the academic framework, the Board reviewed the available data to determine which metrics are appropriate for evaluating its charter schools.

Targets and Rating Categories

For each of the measures, 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, and the charter holder may be brought before the Board for disciplinary action.

Indicators and Measures in Detail

Each of the indicators and measures is presented below. Included is an overview of each measure, methodological approaches, and factors considered in the development of specific targets.

Indicator: State Accountability

A-F Letter Grade Accountability System

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

Targets for A–F Letter Grade Accountability System

Targets for this measure were set taking into consideration alignment with the state grading system and the Board’s mission to improve public education in Arizona. Schools receiving an “A” grade are assessed in the academic framework as “exceeds standard,” while schools receiving an “F” grade are considered “falls far below standard.”

Modifications for Alternative and Extremely Small 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(H)¹

State Designations for School Improvement

| 1b. Is the school meeting performance expectations as set forth by state and federal accountability requirements? | |
|---|---|
| | <p><i>Meets Standard:</i></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Not identified for improvement. |
| | <p><i>Does Not Meet Standard:</i></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Identified for improvement and/or targeted support. |
| | <p><i>Falls Far Below Standard:</i></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Identified for improvement and/or comprehensive support. |

Targets for State Designations

Targets for this measure were set taking into consideration Arizona’s plan for school performance under the provisions outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act and A.R.S. § 15-241.02. The Department of Education must annually measure proficiency rates, subgroup performance, graduation rates, and other academic indicators to identify all Arizona public schools required to implement targeted, comprehensive, and other supports necessary to improve school performance.

Indicator: 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 Department of Education and adopted by the State Board of Education for state accountability pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(H) may petition the Board to adopt unique, school-specific academic performance standards. If approved by the Board, four 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 for guidance on School-Specific Academic Goals).*

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

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

Overall Ratings

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

| Overall Rating | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|---|
| 1b. State Designation for School Improvement | | | |
| 1a. A-F Letter Grade State Accountability | Not Identified for Improvement | Identified for Improvement and/or Targeted Support | Identified for Improvement and/or Comprehensive Support |
| A | Exceeds Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | Falls Far Below Standard |
| B | Above Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | Falls Far Below Standard |
| C | Meets Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | Falls Far Below Standard |
| D | Does Not Meet Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | Falls Far Below Standard |
| F | Falls Far Below Standard | Falls Far Below Standard | 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 in place of the State Accountability indicator, 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.

Example Charter Holder

| | State Accountability | | School-Specific | Overall Rating |
|----------|---|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | 1a. A-F Letter Grade State Accountability | 1b. State Designation for School Improvement | 2. School-Specific Academic Goals | |
| School 1 | Exceeds Standard | Meets Standard | - | Exceeds Standard |
| School 2 | Above Standard | Meets Standard | | Above Standard |
| School 3 | Meets Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | - | Does Not Meet Standard |
| School 4 | Does Not Meet Standard | Falls Far Below Standard | - | Falls Far Below Standard |
| School 5 | - | - | Meets Standard | Meets Standard |

Example Charter School

| FY | State Accountability | | School-Specific | Overall Rating |
|------|---|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | 1a. A-F Letter Grade State Accountability | 1b. State Designation for School Improvement | 2. School-Specific Academic Goals | |
| 2017 | Does Not Meet Standard | Falls Far Below Standard | - | Falls Far Below Standard |
| 2018 | Meets Standard | Does Not Meet Standard | - | Does Not Meet Standard |
| 2019 | Above Standard | Meets Standard | - | Above 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 performance 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 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" by the Department of Education
- 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

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 charter 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 level 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.

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

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 replication applications and new charter applications submitted by officers, directors, partners or members, or charter representatives of existing Charter Holders and may consider associated schools 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 preponderant populations of at-risk students that are not included in the State's criteria to obtain Alternative School status and has provided an opportunity for those schools to request use of school-specific academic goals in place of State Accountability.

Identifying Eligible Schools

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 established by the Department of Education and adopted by the State Board of Education for state accountability pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(H).

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. Under the current criteria to obtain Alternative School Status, the school must be approved by the Arizona Department of Education to serve students in one or more of the following categories:

- Students who have a documented history of disruptive behavior issues.
- Students who have dropped out of school and are now returning.
- Students in poor academic standing as demonstrated by being at least one year behind on grade level performance or academic credits.
- Students who are primary caregivers or are financially responsible for dependents and, therefore, may require a flexible school schedule.
- Students who are adjudicated.
- Students who are wards of the state and are in need of an alternative school setting

Schools receiving an achievement profile pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(H) are not eligible to apply for School-Specific Academic Goals.

Schools Eligible to Apply for 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 Department of Education and adopted by the State Board of Education for state accountability pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(H) 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
- 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, four 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. Schools shall select one or more measures from each of the indicators listed below:

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 – 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 Intervals Review Process, the Board will conduct a comprehensive on-site Academic Systems Review to gain an understanding of how the school develops and implements the following:

- A curriculum that improves student achievement.
- A system for monitoring the integration of the State academic standards.
- A system for monitoring and documenting student proficiency.
- A professional development plan that supports effective implementation of the curriculum.

Purpose: This visit 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 to determine the school's implementation.

Length: 0.5 – 1 day (typically scheduled 8:30 am to 12:30 pm)

Team: Board staff

Product: A Five-Year Intervals Review Report will summarize the Board staff's findings based on observations at the school site, discussion with school leadership team, and a review of documents. In addition, each report will include a summary of the charter holder's academic, financial and operational performance and any areas requiring further attention. 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.

Criteria: The school delivers a comprehensive program of instruction and has designed a method to measure pupil progress toward pupil outcomes that provides improved academic outcomes and educational success for all students.

Below are the main questions that will guide the Board staff's inquiry during the site visit

Does the school have an explicit, written curriculum for core content areas that is aligned with the state academic standards that drills down to the skill level?

Is there a systematic process in place for annually monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curriculum?

How is the integration of the state academic standards into the teachers' instructional practices assessed?

What does the school's teacher evaluation system comprise of? (Type, Frequency, Formative & Summative)

Is there a comprehensive assessment plan that utilizes data in a variety of ways to measure student performance and plan for teaching and learning?

How does the school staff track, analyze, and monitor its students' academic performance?

What evidence demonstrates that the professional development the teachers are engaged in is increasing student achievement?

How are the professional development activities aligned with the program of instruction (curriculum, methods of instruction, best practices)? What types of follow-up activities occur?