



IDAHO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

NEW SCHOOL LEADER ORIENTATION



Idaho Public Charter School Commission
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Welcome

Congratulations on your new leadership position at a public charter school! Thank you for your willingness to take on this challenging but fulfilling role.

As you may be aware, public charter schools operate under a grant authority from an authorized chartering entity, or authorizer. Your school is authorized by the Public Charter School Commission (PCSC). The purpose of this document is to help familiarize you with the PCSC’s role and provide you with some important information and resources that we hope will support you in your work.

The PCSC’s office, located in Boise, has a full-time staff that stands ready to assist you. We invite you to contact us anytime with your questions or concerns.

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Attachments

- Your School’s Current Performance Certificate and Framework
- Your School’s Most Recent Annual Performance Report
- The PCSC’s Most Recent Annual Report

History & Structure

Idaho's original charter school legislation passed in 1998. At that time, only local school district boards could authorize public charter schools. In many cases, this model was effective, but in others, sufficient difficulty arose that the legislature identified a need for an alternative, independent authorizer. The Public Charter School Commission (PCSC) was created in 2004 to fulfill this role. The PCSC currently authorizes the majority of Idaho's public charter schools.

The PCSC's seven members hail from all around the state. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor (3 members), Senate Pro Tempore (2 members), or Speaker of the House (2 members). They serve four-year terms, and officers are elected every two years in the spring.

The PCSC is staffed by the Office of the State Board of Education.

The Authorizer's Role

The PCSC's statutory role is one of oversight. We seek to fulfill this role with an attitude of service, and look forward to working with you toward a mutual goal of providing Idaho's students with many diverse, high-quality schools of choice.

The Public Charter School Commission's mission is to ensure PCSC-authorized public charter schools' compliance with Idaho statute, protecting student and public interests by balancing high standards of accountability with respect for the autonomy of public charter schools and implementing best authorizing practices to ensure the excellence of public charter school options available to Idaho families.

In accordance with Idaho statute, the PCSC sets expectations for performance and holds schools accountable for results. We support your school's autonomy by refraining from dictating your inputs or controlling your processes. Instead, we establish a consistent standard for performance outcomes while freeing you to manage your operations as needed, within the bounds of the law, to meet or exceed that standard.

The PCSC is responsible for prudent evaluation of new charter petitions, as well as the oversight of existing public charter schools' academic, operational, and financial statuses. The bulk of our focus is on academic outcomes, but schools' operational compliance and financial health are also important to ensure the protection of student and public interests.

We are happy to assist you with guidance or recommendations, but will always respect the decision-making authority of your school's board. We believe in the foundational concept that public charter schools exchange increased autonomy for increased accountability, and strive to uphold both sides of that equation.

Performance Certificates

Idaho statute provides an accountability structure for public charter schools and authorizers. At the heart of this structure is the performance certificate, which is a legal agreement detailing the roles and responsibilities of both parties. Incorporated into your performance certificate is a performance framework that includes the indicators, measures, and metrics that will be used to evaluate your performance outcomes.

Initial performance certificate terms for newly-authorized charter schools are for five years; thereafter, performance certificates may be renewed for additional five-year terms. During these terms, authorizers monitor the schools' academic, operational, and financial outcomes.

Annually throughout your certificate term, we will provide you with a written report comparing your actual performance outcomes to the standards set forth in your performance certificate. Such reports

do not result in sanctions, but simply serve to inform you and the public of your school’s status, and provide ample opportunity for schools to correct any deficiencies. They may also determine your eligibility for replication or expansion.

During the final year of your performance certificate term, your school will be evaluated for renewal. The renewal process is discussed in further detail in the Charter Renewal section below.

Occasionally, concerns regarding a school’s academic, operational, or financial status arise. If this occurs, we’ll work with you to get the issue corrected with minimal consequences. The chart below summarizes possible PCSC responses to different types of concerns:

Academic	Operational	Financial
<p>No immediate consequences are imposed by PCSC in the event of academic deficiencies.</p> <p>Deficiencies (by comparison to terms of performance certificate) are noted in PCSC’s annual report to school.</p> <p>PCSC may issue courtesy letters, without sanctions, to schools in order to provide early notice of concerns and maximize opportunity to correct.</p> <p>Persistent or severe deficiencies are considered during the periodic renewal process.</p> <hr/> <p>Note: ESSA waiver requirements and sanctions apply to public charter schools as with any other public schools, but are handled by the State Department of Education (SDE) rather than the authorizer.</p>	<p>No immediate consequences are imposed by PCSC in the event of operational / compliance deficiencies.</p> <p>If PCSC identifies possible law violation, PCSC must notify the entity responsible for enforcing said law.</p> <p>Deficiencies (legal violations and operational weaknesses) are noted in PCSC’s annual report to school.</p> <p>PCSC may issue courtesy letters, without sanctions, to schools in order to provide early notice of concerns and maximize opportunity to correct.</p> <p>Persistent, numerous, or severe deficiencies are considered during the periodic renewal process.</p>	<p>No immediate consequences are imposed by PCSC in the event of fiscal deficiencies.</p> <p>If PCSC determines that school may not remain fiscally sound through remainder of certificate term, PCSC may notify SDE of this concern. SDE modifies payment schedule (not payment amount) to minimize taxpayer risk in case of mid-year closure.</p> <p>Deficiencies (according to near-term and sustainability measures) are noted in PCSC’s annual report to school.</p> <p>PCSC may issue courtesy letters, without sanctions, to schools in order to provide early notice of concerns and maximize opportunity to correct.</p> <p>Deficiencies that threaten the fiscal health of the school are considered during the periodic renewal process.</p>

Idaho’s administrative rule requires public charter schools to notify their authorizers in known cases of non-compliance by the school. Please be assured that providing such notification is unlikely to result in sanctions. We’ll do our best to help you resolve the situation quickly, and will note such resolution in your next annual report if appropriate.

The PCSC or its staff occasionally requests meetings with school leadership to discuss relevant issues. Such meetings are not intended to infringe upon your board’s autonomy, but rather to exchange information, provide guidance, and help everyone work more effectively within their respective roles. Please feel free to request a meeting with our staff anytime we can be helpful to you.

Additionally, PCSC staff makes periodic site visits to schools, attends board meetings, and hosts training seminars. These events offer a friendly opportunity to put names with faces and answer questions. We especially value site visits as opportunities to develop our understanding of your school's mission, method, and student population.

Charter Renewal

Your charter and performance certificate describe the school you have committed to provide for your community. Your performance framework details academic, mission-specific, operational, and financial standards against which your outcomes are evaluated on an annual basis. These outcomes are provided to you by the PCSC in annual performance reports that serve as guideposts to help shape your strategic planning as you celebrate your strengths and seek to improve upon any shortcomings.

Every five years, your school is evaluated for renewal or non-renewal. During the renewal process, the PCSC carefully evaluates your school, including implementation of your stated mission and key design elements, as well as academic, mission-specific, operational, and financial outcomes relative to the standards established in the framework. We examine the trajectory of your school throughout the performance certificate term, noting changes over time as well as the larger context in which they have occurred.

The renewal process includes opportunities for you to address the outcomes described in your annual reports, provide contextual detail and additional evidence, and describe improvements undertaken by your school. For additional information, please feel free to explore the Renewal Application & Guidance available on our website.

Reporting Calendar

The PCSC requires schools in its portfolio to submit only a few reports each year:

Due July 30:

- School Leadership Update (formerly referred to as the Charter School Dashboard)
- Copy of Completed Support Unit Calculation
- Mission-Specific Performance Measure Results (if applicable; some schools elect not to include mission-specific standards in their performance frameworks)

Due November 1:

- Copy of Annual Independent Fiscal Audit
- First Quarter Financial Report (if applicable; schools achieving honor status on the financial section of their most recent annual reports are exempt)

Due February 1:

- Second Quarter Financial Report

Due May 1:

- Third Quarter Financial Report (if applicable; schools achieving honor status on the financial section of their most recent annual reports are exempt)

Schools in their pre-renewal and renewal years may need to meet limited, additional reporting requirements associated with the renewal process.

The PCSC strives to avoid duplicative reporting requirements whenever possible. We may occasionally request additional reports from schools, but only in cases where the necessary information cannot be obtained from another source.

Most of the information the PCSC uses to complete annual performance reports is gathered from the State Department of Education and State Board of Education. Prior to the publication of your annual report, we will provide you with an opportunity to review the report and notify us of any corrections or contextual information.

State Agency Roles

Please note that the State Department of Education, State Board of Education, and Public Charter School Commission are separate entities with different roles and reporting requirements. Here is a quick primer on the subject:

State Board of Education	State Department of Education	Public Charter School Commission
Policy-making body for all public education in Idaho	Responsible for technical assistance to public schools	Evaluates petitions for new public charter schools
Responsible for general oversight of K-20 education	Supports schools and investigates concerns in the areas of teacher certification, data management, federal programs, special education, school safety, & nutrition.	Oversees academic, operational, and financial performance of portfolio schools to protect the interests of students and taxpayers
Serves as the board of Idaho’s public universities		Makes renewal or non-renewal decisions based on performance outcomes
Comprised of 8 Governor appointees plus the Superintendent of Public Instruction	Manages public school finance, including issuance of payments to schools	Defends charter board autonomy while providing resources to help petitioners and schools succeed
	Headed by elected Superintendent of Public Instruction	Comprised of 7 commissioners: 3 Governor appointees, 2 Senate Pro Tempore appointees, and 2 Speaker of the House appointees

As you can see, you’ll work most often with the State Department of Education and Public Charter School Commission. If you are uncertain who to contact in a particular situation, our staff is glad to help point you in the right direction.

Stakeholder Concerns

Our office occasionally receives calls from individuals who are concerned about a situation at an individual school. We typically respond to these calls by providing relevant, factual information and referring the caller back to the school. We then follow up by making contact with your school’s leadership, both to ensure your awareness of the matter and to hear your perspective.

The majority of such complaints are most appropriately dealt with at the school level, via your grievance policy. In some cases, it may be appropriate for us to investigate further or refer concerned individuals to the Professional Standards Commission.

If a situation arises at your school that you realize may lead to stakeholder or media calls to our office, please feel free to get in touch with us preemptively. Knowing your side of the story can help us respond to inquiries more effectively.

Performance Certificate Amendments

Schools sometimes wish to amend their performance certificates in the middle of a performance certificate term. Common amendments include:

- Enrollment cap increases or decreases
- Grade level expansions or reductions
- Significant educational program modifications

Amendments must be approved by the PCSC before final adoption by your board. If you are considering proposing a performance certificate amendment, please contact PCSC staff well in advance for guidance regarding the process. Depending on the nature of your proposal, you may need to plan to attend a PCSC meeting. Amendments affecting enrollment for the upcoming school year are best proposed before the first of January in order to ensure finalization prior to your spring enrollment lottery.

PCSC Meetings

As a general rule, the PCSC holds its regular meetings on the second Thursday of every other month, in February, April, June, August, October, and December. We also hold occasional special meetings. Agendas and meeting materials for regular meetings are always posted on our website at least a week in advance; special meeting materials may be posted closer to the meeting date. Our meetings are open to the public, and we live stream audio whenever possible.

If an issue regarding your school (such as a proposed performance certificate amendment) is on the agenda, please remember that any materials you wish the PCSC to consider are due 30 days prior to the meeting date. For all PCSC policies regarding meeting materials submission, please visit our website.

Authorizer Fees

In accordance with Idaho law, all public charter schools pay annual fees to their authorizers. The amount of these fees depends upon a variety of factors, including the amount of state funds distributed to all public schools and Average Daily Attendance at your school and all public schools.

We will calculate your authorizer fee and provide you with an invoice each February. You may choose to direct up to 10% of the calculated fee to cover your membership fees to an organization or association that provides technical assistance, training, and advocacy for Idaho public charter schools. Fees must be paid by March 15.

Resources

The PCSC website offers a variety of resources to help you further explore Idaho's charter school community. Please visit us online to view:

- PCSC Policies and Procedures
- PCSC Annual Reports
- Annual Performance Reports for Individual Schools
- PCSC Meeting Notices, Agendas, Materials, and Minutes
- Educational Materials

- Reporting Deadlines and Templates
- Resource Links

Our staff is happy to assist you at any time. Please feel free to call, email, or drop by the office to let us know how we can help.