



**Charter School Authorizer Evaluations  
Authorizer Handbook  
2024**

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## About this Document

The purpose of this handbook is to provide Tennessee charter school authorizers (“authorizers”) with a comprehensive guide to the State Board of Education’s (“State Board”) authorizer evaluations established pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) § 49-13-145, Tennessee State Board of Education (“State Board”) Rule [0520-14-01-.08 - Authorizer Evaluation](#), and State Board Policy [6.113 - Charter School Authorizer Evaluations](#). This handbook aims to ensure that the State Board’s authorizer evaluation process is transparent, merit-based, comprehensive, and equitable.

The guidelines and procedures included in this handbook pertain to all authorizers in Tennessee and serve two purposes: 1) to set clear expectations for authorizers; and 2) to drive authorizer quality. This handbook is updated regularly to ensure consistency with law, rule, or policy changes, and to address the needs of authorizers with unique context, such as the Achievement School District and/or the Tennessee Public Charter School Commission.

## Introduction

In 2019, the General Assembly charged the State Board with conducting periodic evaluations of Tennessee charter school authorizers to determine authorizer compliance and evaluate quality. At present, Tennessee is the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) state in the U.S. to implement authorizer evaluations. The State Board partnered with an education consulting group with experience in authorizer evaluations to develop an evaluation system based on State Board [Policy 6.111 – Quality Charter Authorizing Standards](#).

As part of the development process, the State Board gathered feedback from charter school operators, authorizers, and charter school stakeholders on its Quality Charter Authorizing Standards, conducted focus groups to review feedback, connected with the three (3) other states that had an established authorizer evaluation system, and established a task force that included authorizers and operators to share in the development of the evaluation process. In addition, the State Board implemented a pilot evaluation with two (2) authorizers participating voluntarily in Fall 2020. The pilot served as a valuable step to prepare the State Board and authorizers for the official high-stakes authorizer evaluations beginning in Fall 2021.

Upon the conclusion of the pilot evaluation, the State Board finalized its rule and policy on charter school authorizer evaluations, which provide further details on the evaluation process, evaluation ratings, and corresponding follow-up actions. The State Board believes that quality authorizing leads to quality charter schools and increased educational opportunities for students.

## Authorizer Evaluation Cycle

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-145, the State Board shall ensure the effective operation of authorizers in the state and shall evaluate authorizer quality. The State Board is charged with conducting periodic evaluations of authorizers to determine authorizer compliance. An authorizer’s failure to remedy non-compliance may result in the reduction of the authorizer fee.

One of the primary mechanisms for fulfilling this purpose is a comprehensive evaluation process that sets clear standards for authorizer performance through the Quality Charter Authorizing Standards, promotes authorizer accountability, and includes tools and processes designed to evaluate performance and monitor compliance.

The State Board assesses operations and performance of authorizers in a two (2)-year cycle that culminates in an authorizer’s evaluation. The components of the State Board’s evaluation cycle include an evaluation year, a non-evaluation year, and corrective actions, if applicable. Authorizers are divided into two (2) cohorts and evaluated in the following sequence:

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Authorizers</b>
<b>Cohort 1</b> (beginning Fall 2021)	Hamilton County Schools Knox County Schools Shelby County Schools
<b>Cohort 2</b> (beginning Fall 2022)	Achievement School District Metro Nashville Public Schools Tennessee Public Charter School Commission

New authorizers that have authorized a charter school not yet opened shall be considered authorizers for purposes of participating in the evaluation and shall receive their first evaluation when at least one (1) of the authorizer’s charter schools begins its second year of operation.

Authorizers are typically evaluated biennially; however, in accordance with State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08, the following exceptions exist:

- Authorizer receiving an “Exemplary” rating
  - Exemption from an upcoming evaluation if the authorizer has achieved an “Exemplary” rating for two (2) consecutive evaluation years
- Authorizer receiving an “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” rating
  - Requirement to participate in another authorizer evaluation the year immediately following a rating of “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete”

An exemption or required additional evaluation does not change an authorizer’s assigned evaluation cohort.

## Evaluation Year

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-13-145, the State Board shall evaluate authorizers that oversee at least one (1) charter school. Evaluations are aligned to the State Board’s Quality Charter Authorizing Standards and the key components are outlined below.

### Timeline and Process

For authorizers in an evaluation year, the evaluation process includes the following steps (see the [Evaluator Guide](#) for a comprehensive description of each):

- Authorizers attend a required orientation in August;
- Authorizers upload documentation to a filesharing platform (i.e., Box.com or Google Drive) assigned by State Board staff between September and October;
- Authorizers submit a charter school data document with the operating status, history, and school leader for each school in its portfolio<sup>1</sup>;
- Authorizers work with the State Board staff to schedule the evaluation between October and December;
- State Board evaluation team members participate in a mandatory training in October that includes an overview of the evaluation and scoring processes, a review of the rubric, and norming on ratings and the writing of evaluative comments;
- During the evaluation week, the evaluation team reviews the submitted documentation for each authorizer and the authorizer’s appeal history, if applicable, which shall include any findings and recommendation report(s) issued by the executive director and the final decision by the appeals body for any appeals that occurred within the review term;
- During the evaluation, the evaluation team schedules and conducts an interview with school leaders from the authorizer’s portfolio;
- During the evaluation, the evaluation team schedules and conducts a meeting with the authorizer, known as the Document Debrief, to discuss the authorizer’s context and submitted documentation;
- At the end of the evaluation, the evaluation team lead reviews preliminary evaluation ratings with the authorizer;
- Evaluation team lead shares a draft evaluation report shared with the authorizer by January;
- Authorizer reviews draft evaluation report and provides factual corrections in January, if applicable;
- Evaluation team lead shares the final evaluation report with the authorizer in January;
- Final evaluation ratings presented to the State Board for approval at its first quarterly board meeting following the release of the final evaluation report to the authorizer;
- Upon State Board approval, written notification of approval is sent to the authorizer and the final evaluation report is posted to the State Board’s website;
- Authorizers receiving a rating of “Approaching Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” shall acknowledge receipt of the written notification and any required follow-up actions no later than ten (10) business days after the written notification is sent to the authorizer; and

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<sup>1</sup> Submission of inaccurate data by the authorizer could result in a lower evaluation score.

- Authorizers receiving a rating of “Approaching Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” shall develop a corrective action plan (see “Corrective Action” section).

### **Evidence Base and Documentation Submission**

The evaluation team will consider the following evidence – additional details about each type of evidence will be provided during Authorizer Orientation:

- Documents submitted by the authorizer during the submission window and any additional requested by the evaluation team;
- Narrative Form explanations submitted by the authorizer during the submission window (Appendix A);
- Clarifications and explanations provided by the authorizer during the Document Debrief;
- Supporting narrative shared during the School Leader Interview; and
- Appeals history during the review term, as applicable.

During the submission window, authorizers must submit documentation representing established practices and implementation of those practices; documents in draft form may also be submitted. When submitting documents for evaluation, authorizers should comply with the following requirements:

1. All documentation must be the property of the authorizer. Documents from other authorizers or guidance documents from the Department of Education will not be considered as part of the evaluation.
2. Documents and files should be easy to open and easy to read. It is the authorizer’s responsibility to make sure all uploaded documents work properly. Documents that cannot be opened or are unreadable could result in a lower score.
3. Unless requested by the Evaluation Team during the Document Debrief, only documentation submitted during the submission window will be considered.
4. If an authorizer has not implemented an established practice within the review term, only the established practice documentation will be evaluated. For example, if an authorizer has an established closing procedure but did not implement the procedure during the review term, only documentation regarding the authorizer’s closing procedure will be evaluated.
5. Authorizers should note within the Narrative Form the specific page numbers to be reviewed for the standard in question. Authorizers may highlight relevant text if desired, but highlighting is not required.
6. Authorizers should NEVER UPLOAD documents that contain identifying student information or nonpublic information, such as a School Safety Plan.
7. State Board staff will provide each authorizer with a randomly generated list of schools for specific implementation standards. Only documentation from the randomly selected schools will be considered for the corresponding evaluation standards. For any remaining evaluation standards

not included in the list, authorizers may choose documentation from any authorized charter school in their portfolio. See Appendix B for additional information.

8. Dated documentation (i.e., emails, handbooks, and applications) must be from within the review term. Documents with dates outside of the review term that are still in effect (i.e., a policy or procedure) are acceptable and should be noted in the Narrative Form.
9. Authorizers must assign a number to each document name beginning with 001. To the extent possible, it is recommended that document numbers sequentially align with the evaluation standards. A table of contents is not required.
10. The Additional Guidance document provides potential evidence for each sub-standard. The potential evidence listed is not exhaustive as there may be acceptable document types other than those listed and submitting the potential evidence does not guarantee a specific rating on any sub-standard.

Additional directions for how to correctly submit documentation shall be reviewed during Authorizer Orientation.

### **The Evaluation**

State Board staff will make every effort to set the evaluation for a date range that works for the authorizer. An evaluation consists of the following components:

- Days 1 – 3
  - Evaluation Team conducts document review and completes initial ratings
- Day 4
  - Evaluation Team meets with authorizer for the Document Debrief
  - Evaluation Team interviews charter school leaders
  - Evaluation Team conducts review of any additional requested documentation requested during the Document Debrief
- Day 5
  - Evaluation Team holds a consensus meeting
  -
- Days 6-8
  - Evaluation Team Lead works with Quality Editor to draft the evaluation report
- Day 9 or 10
  - Evaluation Team Lead meets with authorizer to share preliminary ratings

Authorizers are required to participate in the Document Debrief and the preliminary ratings meeting. Details about these steps can be found below. For more information regarding the full evaluation, please review the State Board's [Evaluator Guide](#).

### **Document Debrief (Day 4 – AM)**

The Document Debrief is an opportunity for the authorizer to contextualize their documentation and their role as an authorizer. Authorizers have 30 minutes to share information about their authorizing context,

explain any unique documentation, and provide an overview of how the documentation works together; no new evidence may be considered.

The Evaluation Lead will schedule the Document Debrief for one (1) hour with 15 minutes reserved for an opening and closing, 15 minutes for questions from the Evaluation Team, and 30 minutes for the authorizer to present. The authorizer may choose up to five (5) individuals to participate in the meeting, though additional attendees may be requested. Typical participants include staff members fully or partially funded by the authorizer fee and/or consultants who have actively implemented the organization's authorizing responsibilities. School staff should not participate in the Document Debrief.

The Evaluation Team will have dedicated time during the meeting to ask clarifying questions regarding information presented by the authorizer or any documentation submitted during the submission window. Additionally, the Evaluation Team may request additional documentation for their review. Any requested documentation must be received by the Evaluation Lead within 90-minutes of the conclusion of the Document Debrief to be considered. Documentation received outside of this additional window will not be accepted. The evaluation team is not responsible for requesting all documents perceived to be missing from the authorizer's initial submission. While the Evaluation Team will do its best to provide the authorizer with a complete list of documentation perceived to be missing, it is still the authorizer's responsibility to submit all necessary documentation during the submission window.

Documentation takes priority over verbal evidence provided by the authorizer during the Document Debrief. For example, an authorizer may verbally explain how they handle conflicts of interest in a convincing and coherent manner, but if no documentation is provided to corroborate their verbal comments, there may be no impact on the authorizer's score. Conversely, if an authorizer submits an excellent document, but in the Document Debrief it becomes clear that the authorizer does not understand the document, the Evaluation Lead may note this in the evaluation report, but there may be no impact the score.

### **Preliminary Report Out (Day 9 or 10)**

The preliminary report out provides the authorizer with a summary of the Evaluation Team's overall and standard ratings ahead of finalizing the evaluation report. This step is conducted virtually and held for up to 45 minutes with the Evaluation Lead and authorizer. The Evaluation Lead will schedule and facilitate the call. It is recommended that the authorizing staff lead, direct supervisor, director of schools, and board chair attend.

### **Evaluation Preparation**

The State Board has developed an [Evaluator Additional Guidance](#) document designed to aid evaluators in reviewing documentation submitted by an authorizer against the rubric. While the additional guidance is a valuable tool for the Evaluation Team, the document is also useful for authorizers to gain a deeper understanding of how the standards have been further defined and to review potential evidence to consider when selecting documentation to submit. The State Board strongly recommends authorizers review this document in preparation for evaluation and prior to submitting documentation during the submission window.



## Non-Evaluation Year

As required by State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08, authorizers in a non-evaluation year shall complete and submit the following to the State Board:

- A completed self-assessment using the State Board’s [form](#); and
- Information and evidence demonstrating completion of a corrective action plan<sup>2</sup>, if required because of the authorizer’s most recent evaluation report.

### Serving as an Evaluator or Shadow

Authorizers in a non-evaluation year may choose to nominate one (1) member of their authorizing staff to serve as an evaluator or to shadow an evaluation for another authorizer. In consultation with authorizers in a non-evaluation year, State Board staff will determine which role is appropriate for the nominated staff member. The nominated staff member will be required to attend the evaluator training as well as all activities during the evaluation, including up to 20 hours of document review, a school leader interview, the Document Debrief, and a three (3)-hour consensus call with the Evaluation Team. State Board staff will provide authorizers with specific information, participant requirements, and time commitments prior to evaluator selection. Participating in an evaluation during a non-evaluation year, while time consuming, is an excellent professional development opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the evaluation process and to reflect on your own authorizing practices without any stakes. See the [Evaluator Guide](#) for additional details about the responsibilities of an evaluator.

### Timeline and Process

For authorizers in a non-evaluation year, the evaluation process includes the following steps:

- Authorizers may choose to attend the authorizer orientation in August;
- Authorizers may nominate one (1) member of their authorizing staff to serve as an evaluator or shadow in September; and
- Authorizers submit a completed self-assessment and any required corrective action plan documentation, if applicable, to the State Board by January 2.

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<sup>2</sup> If an authorizer is required to participate in another authorizer evaluation in the school year immediately following an “Unsatisfactory/Incomplete” rating, the completed corrective action plan shall be submitted as part of the authorizer’s documentation during the document submission window of the authorizer’s next evaluation.

## Authorizer Evaluation Rating System

The State Board has established an [evaluation rubric](#) and rating system focused on the following categories aligned to the Quality Charter Authorizing Standards:

- Agency Commitment and Capacity
- Application Process and Decision Making
- Performance Contracting
- Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation
- Amendment, Renewal, and Revocation Decision Making

Each category consists of standards and sub-standards. Authorizers will receive scores aligned to criteria for each of the sub-standards and standards within the evaluation rubric. Each sub-standard will be given a numerical rating of 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 based on the documentation (see Chart 1). Sub-standard scores are averaged to determine the standard score for each of the 21 standards.

**Chart 1: Sub-Standard Ratings**

0	1	2	3	4
No explanation or documentation	Narrative and/or documentation <b>addresses and satisfies less than 50%</b> of the standard	Documentation <b>addresses most but satisfies 50% or less</b> of the standard	Documentation <b>addresses and satisfies more than 50%</b> of the standard	Documentation <b>addresses and satisfies 100%</b> of the standard

The overall evaluation score is determined by averaging all the standard scores. That number is then aligned to one of the overall evaluation rating designations as outlined in Chart 2. At the conclusion of each two (2)-year evaluation cycle, the State Board reserves the right to review and adjust the evaluation score ranges as needed.

**Chart 2: Overall Evaluation Ratings**

Score	Rating
3.5 – 4.0	Exemplary
3.0 – 3.49	Commendable
2.0 – 2.99	Satisfactory
1.0 – 1.99	Approaching Satisfactory
0 – 0.99	Unsatisfactory / Incomplete

In accordance with State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08, the follow-up actions aligned to each overall evaluation rating designation are as follows:

- Exemplary<sup>3</sup>
  - Public recognition and highlighting authorizer best practices by the State Board;
  - Exemption from an upcoming evaluation if the authorizer has achieved an “Exemplary” rating for two (2) consecutive evaluation years; and
  - Submission of a self-assessment during the non-evaluation year.
- Commendable
  - Public recognition and highlighting authorizer best practices by the State Board; and
  - Submission of a self-assessment during the non-evaluation year.
- Satisfactory
  - Submission of a self-assessment during the non-evaluation year.
- Approaching Satisfactory
  - Submission of a corrective action plan, which shall include any specific follow-up actions identified in the Evaluation Report. The corrective action plan shall be approved by the Executive Director of the State Board or his/her designee prior to implementation;
  - Submission of a self-assessment during the Non-Evaluation Year; and
  - Submission of documentation demonstrating completion of requirements by the deadlines set forth in the approved corrective action plan. Failure to complete the requirements outlined in the corrective action plan and/or receiving a rating of Approaching Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory/Incomplete in the next authorizer evaluation may result in the reduction of the authorizer’s authorizer fee in an amount and length of time determined by the State Board.
- Unsatisfactory/Incomplete
  - Requirement to participate in another authorizer evaluation the school year immediately following a rating of Unsatisfactory/Incomplete;
  - Submission of a corrective action plan, which shall include any specific follow-up actions identified in the Evaluation Report. The corrective action plan shall be approved by the Executive Director of the State Board or his/her designee prior to implementation; and
  - Submission of documentation demonstrating completion of requirements by the deadlines set forth in in the approved corrective action plan. Failure to complete the requirements outlined in the corrective action plan and/or receiving a rating of Unsatisfactory/Incomplete in the next authorizer evaluation may result in the reduction of the authorizer’s authorizer fee in an amount and length of time determined by the State Board.

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<sup>3</sup> An authorizer shall not be rated as “Exemplary” if the authorizer receives a zero (0) or one (1) rating for any rubric standard.

## Corrective Action

The State Board has been tasked by the General Assembly to ensure the effective operation of authorizers and to evaluate authorizer quality. Authorizers will receive an overall evaluation rating based on the Evaluation Team's thorough review of the evidence base against the evaluation rubric. Should an authorizer receive an overall evaluation rating of "Approaching Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory/Incomplete", the authorizer will be required to create and submit a corrective action plan including any specific follow-up actions identified in the evaluation report.

### Corrective Action Plan ("CAP")

Any authorizer required to complete a CAP may begin doing so upon receipt of the final evaluation report. A Letter of Corrective Action will accompany the final evaluation report and include the specific standard(s) identified as deficient<sup>4</sup> through the evaluation. The CAP must be completed using the State Board's [template](#) and includes the identification of the deficiency, specific improvements, responsible person(s), timelines, and measures for each area of concern. The State Board reserves the right to require specific items and timelines to be included in an authorizer's CAP.

The initial CAP and any other required follow-up actions must be submitted to the State Board's executive director or his/her designee for approval. The State Board will communicate specific timelines for CAP submission following the State Board's approval of the final evaluation ratings. Failure to complete the requirements outlined in the CAP may result in a recommendation by the executive director for the authorizer to receive a reduction in the authorizer fee, per State Board Rule 0520-14-01-.08.

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<sup>4</sup> "Deficient" is defined as any sub-standard receiving a score of less than "2" in the evaluation. The State Board reserves the right to require corrective action for sub-standards beyond those identified as "deficient" and to prioritize "deficient" sub-standards for corrective action.

# Appendix A: Narrative Form (Required)

**Authorizer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluation Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**About this Document**

This form affords authorizers in an evaluation year an opportunity to self-assess and explain the documentation submitted for each sub-standard. This form may also be used to identify known deficiencies and provide an explanation of the authorizer’s plan to address the deficiencies. For authorizers that were required to complete a corrective action plan following their most recent evaluation, the narrative form must also include explanations of the outcomes stated in the corrective action plan.

For each sub-standard, include a self-evaluated rating for each of the sub-standards on the rubric and an explanation for the rating. Any documents referenced in the explanation should appear in **BOLD** text. Authorizers may refer to a document by number rather than name as long as the number accurately corresponds with the appropriate submitted document. Authorizers should refer to the [Evaluator Additional Guidance](#) document for a list of potential evidence and guiding questions by sub-standard. **This document must be saved as a PDF and uploaded during the document submission window.**

When rating a process, practice and/or implementation:

- Include a rating of 0-4 for each substandard using the “Ratings Key” below.
- Calculate the Standard Rating as the average of the sub-standard ratings.

When explaining a process, practice and/or implementation:

- Include typed explanations up to 500 words per standard.
- Identify how the submitted documentation supports the rating selected.
- **BOLD** the names/numbers of documents referenced in the explanation and include page numbers whenever possible.
- Consider feedback received in the most recent evaluation and note changes that have been made in response.

**Ratings Key**

0	1	2	3	4
No explanation or documentation	Narrative and/or documentation <b>addresses and satisfies less than 50%</b> of the standard	Documentation <b>addresses most but satisfies 50% or less</b> of the standard	Documentation <b>addresses and satisfies more than 50%</b> of the standard	Documentation <b>addresses and satisfies 100%</b> of the standard

<b>Standard 1a - Planning and Commitment to Excellence</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Ensures that the authorizer’s decision-makers, leadership, and staff understand and are committed to these quality charter authorizing principles and standards.					
ii. Ensures external relationships, funding structures, and lines of authority to protect its authorizing functions from conflicts of interest and political influence that might compromise its judgement in charter approval and accountability decision-making.					
iii. States a clear mission for quality authorizing and develops goals and timely plans for improvement in response to regular evaluation of its work against national and state authorizing standards.					
iv. Implements policies, processes, and practices that streamline and systematize its work toward stated goals and executes its duties efficiently.					
v. Makes authorizing decisions that are likely to result in positive student outcomes, based on an accumulation of evidence, data, and expertise, and in accordance with state law.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

<b>Standard 1b - Human Resources</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Through intra- or inter-agency collaborations, contractual relationships and/or staff, enlists competent staff with relevant expertise for all areas essential to charter school oversight—including, but not limited to, education leadership; instruction and assessment; local community needs; special education, English learners, and other diverse learning needs; performance management and accountability; law; finance; facilities; and nonprofit governance and management.					
ii. Demonstrates an on-going commitment to developing and retaining authorizing staff members and provides regular professional development for the authorizer’s leadership and staff to achieve and maintain high standards of professional authorizing practice and to enable continual agency improvement.					
iii. Ensures authorizing is visible and the people responsible for day-to-day authorizing functions have clear opportunities to provide input with leadership and decision-makers and input is given significant weight in decision-making.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

<b>Standard 1c – Financial Resources</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sub-standards</b>						
i.	Determines the financial needs of the authorizing office and devotes financial resources to fulfill its authorizing responsibilities in accordance with national and state standards, commensurate with the scale of the charter school portfolio, and in accordance with Tennessee law, including all relevant requirements for use of the authorizer fee.					
ii.	Deploys funds effectively, transparently, and efficiently with the public and student interests in mind.					
iii.	Annually reports the authorizing obligations fulfilled using the authorizer fee in accordance with state law.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>						
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>						



<b>Standard 2a - Proposal Information, Questions, and Guidance</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

i. Develops and issues a charter application information packet or request for proposals (RFP) that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) States the authorizer’s mission and any chartering priorities the authorizer may have established;</li> <li>b) Provides the state’s required comprehensive application and rubric to elicit the information needed for rigorous evaluation of applicants’ plans and capacities; and</li> <li>c) Communicates clear guidance, requirements and timelines with prospective operators regarding the application content and format, while explaining evaluation criteria.</li> </ul>					
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<b>Standard Rating</b>					
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**Explanation (500 word limit):**

<b>Standard 2b - Fair, Transparent, Quality-focused Process</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Implements a charter application process that is defined in policy, open, well-publicized, and transparent, and is organized around clear, realistic timelines.					
ii. Allows sufficient time for each stage of the application and school pre-opening process to be carried out with quality and integrity and explains how each stage of the application process is conducted and evaluated.					
iii. Engages, for both written application reviews and applicant interviews, highly competent teams of internal and external evaluators with relevant academic, organizational (governance and management), financial, and legal expertise, as well as thorough understanding of the essential principles of charter school autonomy and accountability.					
iv. Provides orientation or training to application evaluators (including interviewers) to ensure consistent evaluation of standards, practices, and the fair and unbiased treatment of all applicants.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

**Standard 2c - Rigorous Approval Criteria**

**Sub-standards**

**0**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

<p>i. Utilizes the state’s required application and rubric which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Requires all applicants to present a clear and compelling mission, a quality educational program, a demonstration of community support, a solvent and sustainable budget and contingency financial plans, a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of the model for the target student population and students with diverse needs, effective governance and management structures and systems, founding team members demonstrating diverse and necessary capabilities in all phases of the school’s development;</li> <li>b. Establishes distinct requirements and criteria for applicants who are existing school operators or replicators including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Clear evidence of their capacity to operate new schools successfully while maintaining quality in existing schools;</li> <li>ii. Documentation of their educational, organizational, and financial performance records based on all existing schools;</li> <li>iii. Explanation for any never-opened, closed, revoked, or non-renewed schools (including closed, revoked or non-renewed third-party contracts to operate schools);</li> <li>iv. Presentation of their growth plan, business plan, and most recent financial audits;</li> <li>v. Evidence of meeting high standards of academic, organizational, and financial success to earn approval for replication; and</li> <li>vi. Document any current or past litigation and the resolution of such litigation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. Establishes distinct requirements and criteria for applicants proposing to contract with educational service providers (ESPs), including charter management organizations by requiring applicants to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Evidence of the service provider’s educational and management success;</li> <li>ii. A description of the process for selecting the ESP;</li> <li>iii. A draft (or existing) service/management contract that sets forth proposed key terms, including roles and responsibilities of the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>					
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<p>school governing board, the school staff, and the service provider; the services and resources to be provided; performance-evaluation measures and mechanisms; detailed explanation of compensation to be paid to the provider; financial controls and oversight; investment disclosure; methods of contract oversight and enforcement; and conditions for contract renewal and termination; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iv. Disclosure and explanation of any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the school governing board and proposed service provider or any affiliated business entities.</li> <li>d. Considers diverse educational philosophies and approaches.</li> <li>e. Requires applicants to demonstrate capacity to serve students with diverse needs, including students with disabilities or learning exceptionalities, English learners, at-risk students, and gifted students.</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. Requires all applicants to participate in a capacity interview to elicit evidence-based explanations which allow the applicant to demonstrate clear evidence of capacity to execute its plan successfully.</li> </ul>					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

<b>Standard 2d - Rigorous Decision Making</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sub-standards</b>						
i.	Grants charters only to applicants that have demonstrated competence and capacity to succeed in all aspects of their particular charter school model, consistent with the stated approval criteria.					
ii.	Rigorously evaluates each application through thorough review of the written proposal, a substantive in-person interview with each qualified applicant, and all appropriate due diligence to examine the applicant’s experience and capacity.					
iii.	Ensures that the application-review process and decision making are free of conflicts of interest and requires full disclosure of any potential or perceived conflicts of interest between applicants, the reviewers, and the decision makers.					
iv.	Promptly notifies applicants of its application decision, explaining in writing any available rights of legal or administrative appeal through which a school may challenge the authorizer’s decision and including written explanation of the evidence-based factors that determined the decision so that applicants can decide if they wish to revise their plans based in part on that information and resubmit in the future.					
v.	Does not make application decisions on the basis of political or community pressure.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>						
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>						

<b>Standard 3a - Charter Agreement Negotiation, and Execution</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sub-standards</b>						
i.	Executes a charter agreement between the authorizer and a legally incorporated governing board independent of the authorizer.					
ii.	Ensures mutual understanding and acceptance of the terms of the charter agreement by the school’s governing board.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>						
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>						

<b>Standard 3b – Terms, Rights and Responsibilities</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sub-standards</b>						
i.	Grants charter agreements for an initial term of ten operating years with the authorizer conducting a high-stakes review every five years and producing annual performance reports.					
ii.	Explicitly defines material terms of the charter agreement.					
iii.	Allows – and requires charter agreement amendments for – occasional material changes to a school’s plans but does not require a formal amendment process for modifications to non-material terms of the charter agreement.					
iv.	Executes charter agreements that clearly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. State the rights and responsibilities of the school and the authorizer;</li> <li>b. State and respect the autonomies to which schools are entitled—based on statute, waiver, or authorizer policy—including those relating to the school’s authority over educational programming, staffing, budgeting, and scheduling;</li> <li>c. Define performance standards, criteria, and conditions for renewal, intervention, revocation, and non-renewal, while establishing the consequences for meeting or not meeting standards or conditions;</li> <li>d. State the statutory, regulatory, and procedural terms and conditions for the school’s operation;</li> <li>e. State reasonable pre-opening requirements or conditions for new schools to ensure that they meet all health, safety, and other legal requirements prior to opening and are prepared to open smoothly;</li> <li>f. State the responsibility and commitment of the school to adhere to essential public-education obligations, including admitting and serving all eligible students so long as space is available, and not expelling or counseling out students except pursuant to a legal discipline policy; and</li> <li>g. State the responsibilities of the school and the authorizer in the event of school closures.</li> </ul>					
v.	Ensures that purchasing any fee-based services that the authorizer provides is explicitly not a condition of charter approval, continuation, or renewal.					

vi. For any fee-based services that the authorizer provides, the authorizer develops a separate services agreement that respects charter school autonomy and treats the charter school equitably compared to district schools, if applicable.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					



<b>Standard 3c - Performance Standards</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sub-standards</b>						
i. Executes charter agreements with a performance framework incorporated in the agreement, commonly as an attachment, that plainly establishes the standards under which schools will be evaluated and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Objective and verifiable measures of student achievement as the primary measure of school quality, in accordance with state law;</li> <li>b. Clear, measurable, and attainable academic, financial, and organizational performance standards and targets that the school must meet as a condition of renewal, including but not limited to state and federal measures; (See Paragraph ii., Performance standards detailed information.)</li> <li>c. Expectations for appropriate access, education, support services, and outcomes for students with disabilities;</li> </ul>						
ii. The performance framework includes clearly defined and measurable indicators, measures, metrics, and targets that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Academic Performance               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define the sources of academic data that will form the evidence base for ongoing and renewal evaluation;</li> <li>2. Set expectations for student academic achievement status or proficiency, including comparative proficiency;</li> <li>3. Set expectations for student academic growth, including adequacy of growth toward state standards;</li> <li>4. Incorporate state and federal accountability systems, including state grading and/or rating systems;</li> <li>5. Set expectations for postsecondary readiness, including graduation rates (for high schools); and</li> <li>6. Provide schools an option to incorporate mission-specific performance measures for which the school has presented valid, reliable, and rigorous means of assessment approved by the authorizer.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) Financial Performance               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define the sources of financial data that will form the evidence base for ongoing and renewal evaluation, including the school's</li> </ul> </li> </ul>						

<p>c)</p>	<p>annual financial audit conducted by a qualified independent auditor;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Enable the authorizer to monitor and evaluate the school’s financial stability and viability based on short-term performance; and</li> <li>3. Enable the authorizer to monitor and evaluate the school’s long-term financial sustainability.</li> </ol> <p>Organizational Performance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define the sources of organizational data that will form the evidence base for ongoing and renewal evaluation;</li> <li>2. Define the essential elements of the educational program for which the authorizer will hold the school accountable;</li> <li>3. Define financial management and oversight standards based on generally accepted accounting principles;</li> <li>4. Hold school governing boards accountable for meeting statutory and board-established operating and reporting requirements;</li> <li>5. Ensure school compliance with student and employee rights and obligations; and</li> <li>6. Establish expectations related to the school environment, including health and safety, transportation, facilities, and appropriate handling of records.</li> </ol>					
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<b>Standard Rating</b>	
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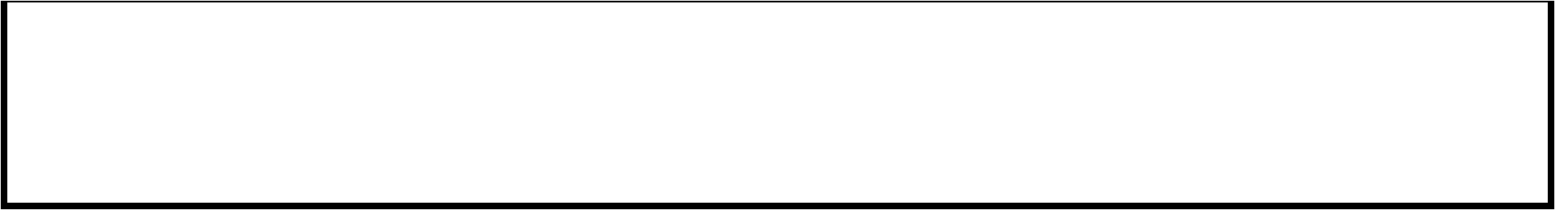
**Explanation (500 word limit):**

<b>Standard 3d - Provisions for Educational Service Provider (ESP) (if applicable)</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<p>i. Includes, for any school that contracts with an ESP provider for the management of its educational program, finances, or school operations, provisions within the charter agreement that:<sup>5</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Clearly establish the primacy of the charter agreement over the ESP contract;</li> <li>b. Clearly identify the school governing board as the party ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the school, and clearly define the ESP as a vendor of services;</li> <li>c. Prohibit the ESP from selecting, approving, employing, compensating, or serving as school governing board members;</li> <li>d. Provide for sufficient transparency around the spending of public monies; and</li> <li>e. Require all instructional materials, furnishings, and equipment purchased or developed with public funds to be the property of the school, not the ESP, in compliance with state law.</li> </ul>					
<p>ii. Reviews the proposed ESP contract with the charter school’s governing board to ensure that it is consistent with applicable law, authorizer policy and the public interest, and requires, prior to contract execution, the contract between the ESP and the charter school’s governing board to articulate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The roles and responsibilities of the school governing board and the ESP, including all services to be provided under the contract;</li> <li>b. The performance measures, consequences, and mechanisms by which the school governing board will hold the SEP accountable for performance, aligned with the performance measures in the charter agreement;</li> <li>c. All compensation to be paid by the ESP, including all fees, bonuses, and what such compensation includes or requires;</li> <li>d. Terms of any facility agreement that may be part of the relationship;</li> <li>e. Financial reporting requirements and provisions for the school governing board’s financial oversight;</li> </ul>					

<sup>5</sup> The standard does not apply to contracts with ESPs that do not have substantial responsibility for education, operational, and financial operations such as for payroll, textbooks, curriculum, etc.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. All other financial terms of the contract, including disclosure and documentation of all loans or investments by the ESP to the school, and provision for the disposition of assets in accordance with law;</li> <li>g. Assurances that the school governing board, at all times, maintains independent fiduciary oversight and authority over the school budget and ultimate responsibility for the school’s performance;</li> <li>h. Provisions for contract termination; and</li> <li>i. Respective responsibilities of the governing board and ESP in the event of school closure, including transparency in the school’s revenues and expenditures, as well as those managed by the ESP.</li> </ul>					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

<b>Standard 4a – Performance Evaluation and Compliance Monitoring</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Implements a comprehensive performance accountability and compliance monitoring system that is defined by the charter agreement, outlined in policy, and provides the information necessary to make rigorous and standards-based renewal, revocation, and intervention decisions.					
ii. Defines and communicates to schools the process, methods, and timing of gathering and reporting school performance and compliance data.					
iii. Implements an accountability system that effectively streamlines federal, state, and local performance expectations and compliance requirements while protecting schools' legally entitled autonomy and minimizing schools' administrative and reporting burdens.					
iv. Solicits feedback from its schools and utilizes the results to provide clear technical guidance to schools as needed to ensure timely compliance with applicable rules and regulations.					
v. Conducts at least one formal on-site review to each school annually, uses the evidence collected to inform the school's annual evaluation, and provides schools with a report summarizing the review.					
vi. Proactively communicates the purpose of any proposed on-site visit and ensures visits are used for collecting data that cannot be obtained otherwise and in accordance with the contract, while ensuring that the frequency, purposes, and methods of such visits respect school autonomy, minimize administrative burdens, and avoid operational interference.					
vii. Evaluates each school annually on its performance and progress toward meeting the standards and targets stated in the charter agreement, including essential compliance requirements, and clearly communicates evaluation results to the school's governing board and leadership.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					



<b>Standard 4b - Respecting School Autonomy</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Respects the school’s authority over its day-to-day operations by refraining from directing or participating in educational decision or choices that are within a school’s purview under the charter law or contract and does not conflict with the authorizer’s additional responsibilities as the local education agency.					
ii. Collects information from the school in a manner that minimizes administrative burdens on the school, while ensuring that performance and compliance information is collected with sufficient detail and timeliness to protect student and public interests.					
iii. Regularly reviews compliance requirements and evaluates the potential to increase school autonomy based on flexibility in the law, streamlining requirements, demonstrated school performance, or other considerations.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

<b>Standard 4c - Protecting Student Rights</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Ensures that schools admit students through a random selection process that is open to all students, is publicly verifiable, and does not establish undue barriers to application (such as mandatory information meetings, mandated volunteer service, or parent contracts) that exclude students as provided by federal, state, and local law.					
ii. Ensures that schools provide equitable access and inclusive services to all students as required by applicable federal and state law, including, but not limited to, students with disabilities, English learners, homeless students, students in foster care, migrant students, at-risk students, and gifted students.					
iii. Ensures clarity in the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in serving students with disabilities.					
iv. Ensures that schools' student discipline policies and actions are legal, fair, and equitable and that no student is suspended, expelled, or counseled out of a school outside of that process, and that schools have a clear process for addressing parent/community grievances.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					



<b>Standard 4d - School Intervention</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Establishes and clearly communicates to schools at the outset an intervention and problem-solving policy that states the general conditions that may trigger intervention and the types of actions and consequences that may ensue.					
ii. Utilizes ongoing oversight and evaluation processes to determine when intervention in non-emergency situations is needed.					
iii. Provides clear, evidence-based, and timely notice of contract violations or performance deficiencies that are aligned to the intervention policy and is communicated to the school leaders and governing board.					
iv. Allows schools reasonable time and opportunity for remediation in non-emergency situations.					
v. Engages in intervention strategies that clearly preserve school autonomy and responsibility (identifying what the school must remedy without prescribing solutions) while clearly stating possible consequences for noncompliance.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

<b>Standard 4e - Public Reporting</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Produces and communicates to its decision-makers, charter school leaders, and the public an annual authorizer report that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Provides clear, accurate performance data for the charter schools it oversees;</li> <li>b. Reports on individual school and overall portfolio performance according to the framework set forth in the charter agreement in accordance with state law; and</li> <li>c. Reports on the authorizer’s performance in meeting its goals.</li> </ul>					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

<b>Standard 5a – Amendments to the Charter Agreement</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Establishes and clearly communicates to schools an amendment process that’s aligned to the charter agreement and state law, utilizes the state’s required application, and follows the state’s required timeline and approval criteria.					
ii. Promptly notifies a school of its amendment decision, including written explanation of the evidence-based reasons for the decision and explains in writing any available rights of legal or administrative appeal through which a school may challenge the authorizer’s decision.					
iii. Grants amendments only to schools with a petition that demonstrates alignment to the school’s mission and goals and provides specific, evidence-based information that shows thorough preparation and viability of the plan.					
iv. Does not make revocation decisions on the basis of political or community pressure.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

<b>Standard 5b - Renewal Process</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Conducts a high-stakes interim review of each school in the fifth year of the current charter term and clearly communicates the results to the school in accordance with Department of Education guidelines.					
ii. Provides to each school, in advance of the renewal decision using the timeline specified in state law, a cumulative performance report that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Summarizes the school’s performance record over the charter term; and</li> <li>b. States the authorizer’s summative findings concerning the school’s performance and its prospects for renewal.</li> </ul>					
iii. Allows the school meaningful opportunity and reasonable time to respond to the cumulative report; to correct the record, if needed; and to present additional evidence regarding its performance.					
iv. Requires any school seeking renewal to complete the state’s renewal application and follows the renewal application timeline required in state law.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

<b>Standard 5c - Renewal Decisions Based on Merit and Inclusive Evidence</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Establishes and clearly communicates a renewal policy which requires the thorough analysis of a school’s comprehensive body of objective evidence defined by the performance framework and consistent with the charter agreement and state law, including any policy changes thereto.					
ii. Defines and communicates with its schools the criteria for renewal and non-renewal decisions that are consistent with the charter agreement.					
iii. Grants renewal only to schools that have achieved the standards and targets stated in the charter agreement, are organizationally and fiscally viable, and have been faithful to the terms of the contract and applicable law.					
iv. Promptly notifies a school of its renewal decision, including written explanation of the evidence-based reasons for the decision and any available rights of legal or administrative appeal through which a school may challenge the authorizer’s decision.					
v. Promptly communicates renewal decisions to the school community and public within a time frame that allows parents and students to exercise choices for the upcoming school year.					
vi. Does not make renewal decisions on the basis of political or community pressure or solely on promises of future improvement.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

<b>Standard 5d - Revocation</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sub-standards</b>						
i.	Establishes and clearly communicates a revocation policy with criteria for charter revocation decisions that are consistent with the charter agreement and state law, including any policy changes thereto.					
ii.	Revokes a charter during the charter term only if there is clear violation in accordance with the reasons set forth in state law.					
iii.	Promptly notifies each school of its revocation decision, including written explanation of the reasons for the decision and any available rights of legal or administrative appeal through which a school may challenge the authorizer’s decision.					
iv.	Promptly communicates revocation decisions to the school community and public within a timeframe that allows parents and students to exercise choices for the upcoming school year.					
v.	Does not make revocation decisions on the basis of political or community pressure.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>						
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>						

<b>Standard 5e - Closure</b>					
<b>Sub-standards</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
i. Establishes and clearly communicates to schools a closure policy or procedure that is consistent with the charter agreement and requires the authorizer to oversee and work with the school governing board and leadership in carrying out a detailed closure protocol that ensures timely notification to parents; orderly transition of students and student records to new schools; and disposition of school funds, property, and assets in accordance with law.					
<b>Standard Rating</b>					
<b>Explanation (500 word limit):</b>					

## Appendix B: Selected Schools

### About this Document

This document provides authorizers in an evaluation year the list of randomly selected schools by evaluation standard. Only documentation from the randomly selected schools will be considered for the evaluation standards listed below. If more than one (1) school is identified, the authorizer must submit documentation for both schools. If an authorizer submits documentation from a school that has not been selected for the standards identified on this form or if any submitted documentation was not in place during the review term, the authorizer will not receive full points for the standard.

For the remaining evaluation standards not included below, authorizers may choose documentation from any authorized charter school in their portfolio. Refer to the [Evaluator Additional Guidance](#) for a complete list of potential documentation to submit as evidence. The State Board reserves the right to adjust this form as needed for any unique authorizing contexts.

Authorizer:		
<i>Evaluation Standard</i>	<i>Required Documentation</i>	<i>Selected School(s)</i>
2b, 2c, 2d	Charter Applications (2) <i>Note: Includes one application per cycle within the review term, as available</i>	A.
		B.
3a, 3b, 3c, 3d	Charter Agreements (2)	C.
		D.
4a, 4b, 4c	Operational School Documents: Pre-Five-Year Review (1) <i>Note: Authorizers may submit documentation from any school for 4d-School Intervention.</i>	E.
4a, 4b, 4c	Operational School Documents: Post-Five-Year Review (1) <i>Note: Authorizers may submit documentation from any school for 4d-School Intervention.</i>	F.
5a	Amendment Petitions (2)	G.
		H.
5b, 5c	Renewals (2) <i>Note: Authorizers must include Year 5 Interim Report as part of renewal evidence</i>	I.
		J.
5d	Revocation (1)	K.
5e	Closure (1)	L.