

Charter Renewal



The Accountability Bargain

Charter schools trade greater autonomy over how to operate schools in exchange for greater accountability for academic outcomes. Each charter school has a contract signed by its governing board and by the sponsor of the school. As part of the contract, the Accountability Plan establishes academic, governance/organizational, and financial goals.

Charter school contracts last a maximum of five years as set by Ohio law. In order to continue operating, a charter school must apply to renew its contract at the end of each charter term. Receiving approval to continue operating is the core of accountability. Richland Academy of the Arts (RAA) Trustees do not automatically grant contract renewal; a school must demonstrate that it has earned the opportunity to serve students an additional term.

Renewal is a high stakes process. The interests of students, families, staff and communities are primary. It is critical that stakeholders understand the process and criteria surrounding renewal, as well as the responsibilities and obligations of all parties. Schools will know what RAA expects the school to accomplish, and what evidence must be compiled to demonstrate the school has earned renewal. This foreknowledge enables the school to present a more compelling case for the renewal of its school.

RAA grants renewal only to schools that provide evidence that they are fiscally and operationally viable, have achieved or are making convincing progress toward their contractual academic targets, are faithful to the non-academic terms of the contract, and have the systems in place for continued development in the future.

Through the use of RAA Renewal policies, RAA Trustees commit to a fair and transparent renewal process. When RAA Trustees make a determination of non-renewal, the school will understand the reasons for this outcome, and parents will be forewarned.

Additionally, at any time during the contract, the sponsor may suspend or terminate the contract if it determines the school:

- does not comply with health and safety standards established by law for school buildings;
- commits a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the contract;
- fails to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;
- fails to deliver the education plan or make substantial progress toward achievement of the contract's minimum educational or student performance standards identified in the contract;
- violates any provision of law from which the charter school was not specifically exempted;
- other good cause

The Renewal Process

From the Opening Assurances, quarterly enrollment reports, site visits, annual reports, and other communications, RAA provides schools ongoing feedback so they understand where they stand at a given points in their charter term in relation to earning renewal.

Throughout its sponsorship responsibilities, RAA will be assessing:

1. Is the school an academic success?
2. Is the school an effective, viable organization?
3. Is the school fiscally sound?
4. If the school's charter is renewed, what are its plans for the next charter term, and are they reasonable, feasible and achievable?

The Renewal Visit

A renewal visit is conducted in the last year of the charter term. This visit is typically in the fall and is more intensive than other school visits.

The renewal visit team, each having expertise in education plans, governance, finance, and/or accountability, and at least two members having at least three years-experience sponsoring community schools, will observe classroom instruction, and review school documents and student work. Reviewers will evaluate the quality of curriculum and instruction, the system of assessment and feedback, fidelity to the school charter and mission, school culture, academic achievement, board governance, and fiscal and legal compliance, among others. They will also conduct interviews with school leaders, board members, staff, students, and parents, if possible. In some cases, they may conduct interviews with network staff members.

During or after the renewal visit, RAA may require additional documentation and other evidence, and may also conduct follow-up visits, when deemed necessary.

The Application for Renewal

An Application for Renewal is the means by which a school makes its case to operate for an additional term. The school must present clear and concise evidence of the attainment of or progress toward the Accountability plan, as well as planned changes.

The narrative provides the school the opportunity to contextualize its performance and discuss its efforts to remediate its operations if the school did not meet academic, financial, or operational performance at any point during its charter contract. The narrative should not be utilized to defend nonperformance or reiterate actions discussed during preceding annual performance reviews.

Evaluating the Application for Renewal

The Application for Renewal provides information on the applicant’s academic, governance/operations, and financial performance over the term of its contract. While the application also describes any planned changes during the renewal term, consistent with NACSA’s Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing, RAA will make its renewal decision based on the school’s track record of performance, not on the promises of future performance or improvement.

At least three reviewers will review each application. Each review will have expertise in education plans, governance, finance, and/or accountability, and at least two will have at least three years-experience sponsoring community schools. All reviewers are required to attend a training session that goes through RAA’s renewal policies, the application for renewal, submission instructions, and the scoring rubric. A reviewer scoring calibration exercise will ensure consistency. Reviewers will indicate points awarded for each section, and related comments in the dialog box. Each reviewer will have signed a conflict of interest disclosure before starting and after completing all reviews.

Reviewers are not limited to the information provided by the applicant.

Evaluation rubric

I. Academic Performance

1. Did the school earn a Report Card Grade Equivalent (Overall Academic Performance Score) of at least 2 (C) by the third year of operation? If the school has been operable more than three years, has the school maintained a 2 (C)?

0	1	2	3
The application provides no evidence of progress towards meeting this goal.	The application provides inconclusive evidence that the school is progressing toward attaining/maintaining a 2.0 (C).	The application provides evidence that the school is progressing toward attaining/maintaining a 2.0 (C).	The application provides evidence that the school has attained/maintained a 2.0 (C).
Score: _____			

Comments:

2. Using results of the school’s local report cards, Appendices D and G., and Annual Reports over the contract years, the school demonstrates that it has met or has progressed towards meeting its academic goals (as defined in Appendix G, except comparison and school or mission-specific goals, which are addressed separately below).

0	1	2	3
<p>The application provides no evidence of progress towards meeting this goal over the term of the contract</p>	<p>The application provides inconsistent evidence of progress toward meeting this goal over the term of the contract OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school does not have a demonstrated record of meeting all standards in each of the years of the contract term. • An evaluation of data and evidence (for academic narrative this includes all available academic performance data, including state assessment data) does not demonstrate at least two years of sustained improvement toward meeting the standard. <p>AND ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The narrative is focused on describing circumstances 	<p>The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting this goal over the term of the contract</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OR The school does not have a demonstrated record of meeting all standards in each of the years in the contract term, <i>however...</i> • The narrative describes specific adult (teacher, leader, board) actions taken to improve performance and outcomes by addressing the root cause of the inadequate performance; <p>AND</p>	<p>The application provides evidence that the school has met a majority of this goal over the term of the contract</p> <p>OR</p> <p>An evaluation of <i>all</i> data and evidence (all available academic performance data, including state assessment data) demonstrates that the two most recent school year have shown sustained improvement toward meeting the standard.</p>

	<p>connected to the poor performance and/or excuses for the poor performance (e.g. serving a disproportionately high rate of students with disabilities, serving a disproportionately high rate of “at-risk” students, a lack of funding, teacher/administrator turnover, etc.), and/or either does not describe specific adult improvement actions taken or describes minimal adult improvement actions taken;</p> <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review team is not able to verify implementation of the reported adult improvement actions because there is no observable, verifiable evidence presented; <p>Or</p> <p>The narrative fails to identify any measurable successes during the most recent year, or evaluation of the data and evidence directly contradicts reported successes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review team can verify the implementation of reported improvement actions by evaluating specific evidence that is observable, verifiable, and readily available; <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The narrative identifies measurable successes during the most recent year resulting from the improvement actions taken; <p>AND</p> <p>An evaluation of the data and evidence supports the observable and reported successes.</p>	
<p>Score: _____</p>			

Comments:

3. If the school has **not** maintained a C or better letter grade for Achievement and Progress in each of the last two years, it provides a narrative that addresses the improvement actions undertaken and the results of those actions. The purpose is to demonstrate substantial progress toward attaining and maintaining a C or higher letter grade in both Achievement and Progress.

4. The school, using results of its local report cards, Appendix G and Annual Reports over each of the contract years, makes a persuasive case that it provides a quality option/outperforms a majority of comparison schools identified by the Sponsor as having similar demographics, grade bands, and proximity of location.

0	1	2	3
The application provides no evidence of progress towards meeting this goal over the term of the contract	The application provides inconclusive evidence of progress toward meeting this goal over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting this goal over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence that the school has met this goal over the term of the contract
Score: ____			
Comments:			

5. The school, using raw and summarized results of data provided to the sponsor, makes a persuasive case that it has met or exceeded its school or mission specific goals over the terms of the contract.

0	1	2	3
The application provides no evidence of progress	The application provides inconclusive	The application provides evidence of progress toward	The application provides evidence that the school has

towards meeting this goal over the term of the contract	evidence of progress toward meeting this goal over the term of the contract	meeting this goal over the term of the contract	met this goal over the term of the contract
Score: ____			
Comments:			

6. The school demonstrates the ability to recognize and respond to setbacks; to course correct and improve. The applicant details any material modifications to the academic plan, such as changes to curriculum or assessments, occurring over the contract term and describes the impact on the school's performance. (do not repeat information already addressed in Question 3, if answered)

0	1	2	3
The application provides no evidence of progress towards meeting the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence that the school has met a majority of the goals over the term of the contract
Score: ____			
Comments:			

II. Operations/Governance

1. Does the school provide convincing evidence that they have met or progressed towards meeting the "Operations/Governance" performance framework over the term of the contract?

0	1	2	3
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The application provides no evidence of that the school met any of the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence that the school has met a majority of the goals over the term of the contract
Score: _____			
Comments:			

2. Does the applicant provide evidence that the governing authority fully implements the school's bylaws or code of regulations, and has a strong succession plan?

0	1	2	3
The application provides no evidence of that the school met any of this goal over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting this goal over the term of the contract, but there are weaknesses and the succession plan is not convincing	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting this goal over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence that the school fully implements its bylaws or code or regulation over the term of the contract and has a strong succession plan
Score: _____			
Comments:			

3. Does the applicant provide convincing evidence that the governing authority meaningfully evaluates the administrator and management company, if applicable?

0	1	2	3
The application provides no evidence of that the school met any of	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting the goals	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting the goals	The application provides evidence that the school has met a majority of

the over the term of the contract	over the term of the contract	over the term of the contract	the goals over the term of the contract
Score: _____			
Comments:			

4. Does the applicant provide evidence that the school has been faithful to the terms of its contract and any material modifications to the governance/operational plan occurring over the course of the contract term? Does the applicant provide evidence of current compliance in areas for which the school was found previously to be non-compliant?

0	1	2	3
The application provides no evidence of that the school met any of the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence that the school has met a majority of the goals over the term of the contract
Score: _____			
Comments:			

III. Financial Performance

1. Does the applicant provide evidence that the school has met or progressed toward meeting financial performance framework standards over the term of the contract?

0	1 Partially meets	2 Meets	3 Exceeds
The application provides no evidence of that the school met any of the over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence of progress toward meeting the goals over the term of the contract	The application provides evidence that the school has met a majority of the goals over the term of the contract
Score: _____			
Comments:			

2. Is the school current in meeting its liabilities, including, but not limited to, payroll, taxes, debt service payment, and employee benefits?

0	1	2	3
The application provides no evidence of that the school is current in meeting its liabilities, including but not limited to payroll, taxes, debt service payments, and employee benefits.	The application provides evidence of that the school is meeting most of its liabilities, including but not limited to payroll, taxes, debt service payments, and employee benefits.	The application provides evidence of that the school is meeting all of its liabilities, including but not limited to payroll, taxes, debt service payments, and employee benefits.	The application provides evidence of that the school is meeting all of its liabilities, including but not limited to payroll, taxes, and employee benefits, and has no other debt obligations.
Score: _____			

Comments:

3. Does the school thoroughly explain any material modifications to the financial plan occurring over the course of the contract term and describe the impact on the school's financial performance and how the changes furthered the schools vision, mission, and financial position?

0	1	2	3
The school made material modification(s) to the financial plan over the course of the contract terms but provided no evidence of positive impact on student performance.	The school made material modification(s) to the financial plan over the course of the contract terms and provided some evidence of positive impact on student performance.	The school made material modification(s) to the financial plan over the course of the contract terms and provided evidence of positive impact on student performance over multiple grades or years.	The school made material modification(s) to the financial plan over the course of the contract terms and provided evidence of positive impact on student performance over multiple grades and years.
Score: _____			
Comments:			

Detail any audits and explain any compliance findings for each year over the term of the contract.

For each year in which the school had significant deficiency, material weakness, or repeat findings identified in the external audit, the school **must** provide a narrative explaining the improvement actions made to meet financial compliance requirements and the effectiveness of those actions in improving financial compliance. Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and changes in the audit findings in subsequent years. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining financial compliance. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable.

For schools that have earned a D or lower letter grade in Achievement and/or Value Added, address how the school has prioritized resources toward proven programs and methods linked to improved student achievement until the school earns a grade of C or better for two consecutive years.

IV. Future Plans

Does the school describe its plans for a new contract term, including details on what the governing authority intends to accomplish, including goals, and any significant changes to the essential terms of the school’s academic plan, governance/operations and financial plans?

0	1	2	3
The school made material modification(s) to the financial plan over the course of the contract terms, but provided no evidence of positive impact on student performance.	The school made material modification(s) to the financial plan over the course of the contract terms, and provided some evidence of positive impact on student performance.	The school made material modification(s) to the financial plan over the course of the contract terms, and provided evidence of positive impact on student performance over multiple grades or years.	The school made material modification(s) to the financial plan over the course of the contract terms, and provided evidence of positive impact on student performance over multiple grades and years.
Score: _____			
Comments:			

1. Does the school provide a five-year projected budget and budget narrative for the next contract term using the format prescribed by the Department of Education?
2. provide a budget narrative clarifying the assumptions on which the school bases its key revenue and expenditure projections. In addition, the budget and narrative

must describe any anticipated changes to the school’s financial position and clearly articulate the financial impact of any proposed modifications on other aspects of the school’s education program and operations (e.g., changes in staffing, increased/decreased enrollment, facilities, etc.).

0	1	2	3
<p>The applicant provides a partial five-year projected budget for the next contract term. The budget narrative does not make clear the assumptions on which the school bases its key revenue and expenditure projections. The budget and narrative do not describe any anticipated changes in the school’s financial position or articulate the financial impact of any proposed modifications on other aspects of the school’s educational program and operations.</p>	<p>The applicant provides a five-year projected budget for the next contract term. The budget narrative makes clear some of the assumptions on which the school bases its key revenue and expenditure projections. The budget and narrative do not describe any anticipated changes in the school’s financial position or articulate the financial impact of any proposed modifications on other aspects of the school’s educational program and operations.</p>	<p>The applicant provides a five-year projected budget for the next contract term. The budget narrative makes clear some of the assumptions on which the school bases its key revenue and expenditure projections. The budget and narrative describe any anticipated changes in the school’s financial position and clearly articulates the financial impact of any proposed modifications on other aspects of the school’s educational program and operations.</p>	<p>The applicant provides a five-year projected budget for the next contract term. The budget narrative makes clear the assumptions on which the school bases its key revenue and expenditure projections. The budget and narrative describe any anticipated changes in the school’s financial position and clearly articulates the financial impact of any proposed modifications on other aspects of the school’s educational program and operations.</p>
<p>Score: _____</p>			
<p>Comments:</p>			

The Renewal Decision

Based upon the totality of information and evidence collected over the course of the charter term - including reviewer scores and comments, the application for renewal, previous evaluation visits, the renewal visit, as well as other pertinent information - RAA produces a draft report of its findings which contains a preliminary renewal recommendation.

To be considered for contract renewal, the school is expected to have “met” the performance standards as specified in the contract, which is the sponsors minimum expectation for the school, in all academic, financial, and organizational/operations indicators. Some indicators will factor more heavily into decisions about renewal or non-renewal, as well as about probation, suspension, and termination (for example, achievement, Value Added, and performance vs the local market will weigh more heavily than gap closing and indicators met on the Academic dimension). An inability to achieve minor elements of the standards may not prevent consideration of contract renewal, based on the totality of the circumstances, which will be subject to the sponsor’s sole and complete discretion.

RAA shares the draft report with the school and invites factual corrections to ensure accuracy. Where appropriate, RAA may require the school to provide additional information and documentation.

Where the RAA makes a preliminary recommendation of non-renewal, it provides the school an opportunity to provide written comments in opposition to the recommendation. In addition, RAA offers an opportunity to have RAA appear at the school to listen to a presentation of evidence in opposition to the preliminary non-renewal recommendation.

Based on the evidence it has compiled and analyzed, including any evidence in opposition to a preliminary non-renewal recommendation, RAA prepares its final recommendation report for the RAA Board of Directors. RAA sends the final report to the Directors and the school.

RAA will notify the school in writing before January 15 and will include the reasons for the proposed action in detail, the effective date of the termination or non-renewal, and a statement that the school may, within fourteen days of receiving the notice, request an informal hearing before the sponsor. The informal hearing will be held within fourteen days of the receipt for a hearing request. Not later than fourteen days following the hearing, RAA will issue a written decision either affirming or rescinding the decision to terminate or not to renew the contract.

Timeline

- Renewal applications will be accepted September 10 through November 1, 2018 but must be sent via email to shughes@richlandacademy.com no later than November 1, 2018 by 5:00 pm.
- The Richland Academy of the Arts Board of Directors will vote on the renewal of the application no later than January 10, 2019.
- A summary of the renewal application and renewal decisions will be posted on the RAA website.

Application Actions	Required Dates	Responses and Outcomes
Renewal Application Accepted	September 10- November 1, 2018	Application is due on November 1, 2018 by 5:00 pm. via email to Sheri Hughes, shughes@richlandacademy.com
Completed Renewal Application due to RAA Office by 5:00 p.m.	November 1, 2018	Completed renewal applications are due to the Education Division office of Richland Academy of the Arts (RAA) by 5 p.m. per <u>Renewal Application Submission Instructions</u> listed below. All documents and contract attachments must be included with the application.
Renewal Contract Team Review process	December 1, 2018	The renewal contract review team will review, score and make a determination on the quality of the renewal application and recommendation consensus to RAA Board of Directors.
Interview with Applicant(s)	Between December 1–15, 2018	Applicants that RAA determines an interview is necessary to complete the renewal process will participate in an interview at an agreeable date, time, location and mode.
Final Renewal Decision & Notification	RAA Board vote by January 10, applicant notification before January 15, 2019	RAA Board of Directors will vote on the renewal of the application and renewal applicants will be notified of decision via email before Jan 15, 2019.
Contract Adoption	No later than April 26, 2019	School Governing Authority & RAA must fully execute the charter contract.
Contract Execution	July 1, 2019	School Governing Authority officially implements the charter contract.

Please contact Sheri Hughes at shughes@richlandacademy.com or 419-522-8224, ext. 229 if you need assistance with the renewal application.