



2023- 2024

Charter Renewal Handbook

The mission of the Charter Institute at Erskine is to authorize high-quality charter schools that elevate educational opportunities through innovation and creativity.

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Table of Contents



Mission and Purpose	1
South Carolina Charter Act Renewal Requirements	1
Renewal Overview	2
School Board and School Leader Roles	2
Charter Renewal Timeline	
▪ Renewal Orientation	3
▪ Preliminary School Site Visit	3
▪ Preliminary Renewal Performance Report	3
▪ Renewal Application	4
▪ Renewal Submission Preparation	4
▪ Renewal Submission Deadline	4
▪ Board Meeting Visit	5
▪ Renewal Committee Site Visit	5
▪ Renewal Recommendation Report	5
▪ CIE Board Renewal Decision	5
Renewal Application Guidance	6
Renewal Site Visit Information	7
Performance Framework Resource and Contacts	8
Appendix	
▪ Renewal Site Visit Checklist	
▪ Renewal Site Visit Classroom Observation Form	
▪ Strategic Planning Road Map	



Mission and Purpose of Renewal

The mission of the Charter Institute at Erskine (CIE) is to authorize high-quality charter schools that elevate educational opportunities through innovation and creativity. The authority to operate a charter school is granted through a limited-term, renewable contract. Contract renewal is not automatic; it must be earned through strong academic results, financial viability, and operational effectiveness. The renewal process is designed to provide the sponsor authorizer with all the relevant information necessary to make an informed renewal decision and to provide the school a fair and transparent opportunity to present their performance record over the charter term.

South Carolina Charter Act Renewal Requirements

According to code 59-40-110 of the South Carolina Charter Act of 1996, a charter school is required to submit information and documentation to the sponsor to determine whether a charter merits renewal. Schools have **120 days** before the end of the school year for the term of the charter contract to provide the following:

- 1.) **Academics** ~ A report on the progress of the charter school in achieving the goals, objectives, pupil achievements standards, and other terms of the initially approved charter application.
- 2.) **Finance** ~ A financial statement that discloses the costs of administration, instruction, and other spending categories for the charter school that is understandable to the public and allows comparison of these costs to other schools.
- 3.) **Governance** ~ Any proposed material changes to the current charter or charter school contract to be implemented in the next ten-year charter term.

Renewal Overview

The Charter Institute at Erskine makes renewal recommendations based on a variety of evidence gathered and analyzed over the course of a charter's term. Evidence related to the charter school's performance, including quantitative and qualitative evidence collected through the district's performance frameworks (ARCS, CSS), renewal site visits, renewal application, and document submissions will determine if a charter school has made an adequate case for renewal.

The Institute uses the following interconnected questions as a focus for its renewal reviews:

- Is the charter school an academic success?
- Is the charter school an effective, viable organization?
- Is the charter school fiscally sound?
- Are the proposed plans and updated goals reasonable, feasible, and achievable during the next charter cycle?

School Board and School Leader Roles

The renewal process requires the involvement of both the school board and the school leader. The school leader will be the main point of contact; however, the school board is expected to be engaged with the renewal process. In addition, key school staff (business manager, curriculum coordinator, etc.) will be involved in the renewal work. Charter renewal is a collaborative effort that requires input from multiple parties. The renewal goal is to utilize evidence from past performance to make a strategic plan for the next charter cycle. Outlined below is an overview of the roles:

School Leader	School Board
Academic Submission - Updated School Goals	Strategic Plan – 10 yr. enrollment projection
Financial Submissions - 5/10yr. Budget-Cash Flow, Enrollment projections	Board Meeting and Minutes Checklist
Organization Chart	Review of By-Laws
Review of Policies & Procedures	Review of Policies & Procedures

Charter Renewal Timeline

In South Carolina the charter renewal process occurs every 10 years from the school opening date indicated in the charter contract. The charter renewal process begins early spring of the year prior to the expiration of the charter.

JANUARY

RENEWAL ORIENTATION

In January prior to a charter's expiration year, a renewal orientation will be conducted with the school board and school leader of each school up for renewal. During this orientation, the renewal process, expectations, requirements, and timeline will be explained.

MARCH

PRELIMINARY RENEWAL SITE VISIT

A preliminary renewal site visit will be coordinated with the school leader to take place in March. The renewal site visit serves to provide additional context and insight into a school's performance. The site visit is an opportunity to experience the school community and discuss aspects of their program that may not be captured through data and document review. The goal is to provide access to observational and anecdotal information about the school's performance.

APRIL

PRELIMINARY RENEWAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Renewal schools will be given a preliminary renewal performance report. This report provides cumulative evidence of a school's performance in relation to the expectations set by the district's performance frameworks. Schools authorized by CIE are evaluated by indicators set by departmental ARCS (Actions, Results, Commitment, Support) and the CSS (Comprehensive School Snapshot). Data from the preliminary report will assist schools in updating their goals and will provide planning guidance for the next charter cycle.

JUNE

SUBMIT RENEWAL APPLICATION

The school board and school leader will prepare and submit a Charter Renewal Application by a **June 1st deadline**. The Renewal Application provides each school an opportunity to summarize its performance over the course of its charter term, discuss its past and current record of performance, and supplement, clarify, or correct information contained in the Preliminary Renewal Performance Report. This is also an opportunity to outline future plans, priorities, and potential modifications to its charter.

JUNE - AUGUST

RENEWAL SUBMISSION PREPARATION

The renewal process should not interrupt the day-to-day operations at a school level. As a result, CIE's renewal process intentionally utilizes the summer months to prepare the required renewal submissions outlined in the South Carolina Charter School Act.

The following must be updated and submitted:

- 5/10-year budget with enrollment projections
- 10-year enrollment projection
- 10-year cash flow report
- Organization chart
- Updated school goals

The following (if applicable) must be updated in the school's charter:

- School location change
- Grade span & student capacity
- Changes to enrollment policies & procedures
- Changes to financial policies & procedures

SEPTEMBER

DEADLINE FOR RENEWAL SUBMISSIONS

The deadline for renewal document submission to the Charter Institute at Erskine is by **5PM on September 30th**.

OCTOBER

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING VISIT

During this meeting, the school board will provide an update on their progress toward completing the renewal requirements and will discuss the school's strategic plan (*Appendix: Strategic Planning Roadmap*) for the next charter cycle.

RENEWAL COMMITTEE SCHOOL SITE VISIT

After initial renewal documents are submitted in September, the CIE Renewal Committee will review and provide feedback. During the site visit, the CIE Renewal Committee will meet with the school leadership team to discuss their submissions and to request any additional information. The team will also conduct stakeholder focus groups to identify vital information and issues that stakeholders believe are important for continuing the success of the school.

NOVEMBER

RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION REPORT

CHARTER INSTITUTE AT ERSKINE BOARD HEARING

Following the analysis of collected renewal data, the Director of Authorization will write a renewal recommendation report for each school requesting renewal. This information will be presented to the Charter Institute at Erskine Board of Directors at the November meeting. CIE Board members will vote to make a final renewal decision.

DECEMBER

CHARTER RENEWAL DECISION

The CIE Authorization Department will issue a letter to communicate the renewal decision to the school board, school leader, and other stakeholders. Following a decision to renew a charter, the authorizer and the school will negotiate the charter contract that will govern the new charter term.

Renewal Application Guidance

The school will have access to a Preliminary Performance Report in advance of completing their renewal application. This performance report will provide a cumulative record of the charter school's performance in relation to the criteria for renewal, the schools' obligations outlined in its charter, authorizer policy, and state law. The purpose of this component of the process is to inform the school leadership of the school's performance so that there are no surprises as the process proceeds. The preliminary performance report also serves a critical role in guiding the school in developing its Renewal Application to focus on and respond to its record of performance.

The Charter Renewal Application is available on our website (erskinecharters.org) in an online fill-able form. Charter Renewal Applications must be submitted to the Charter Institute at Erskine in **both print and electronic form by 5 PM on June 1st**.

FORMAT FOR SUBMISSIONS

- The renewal application should not exceed 10 (ten) pages, excluding attachments.
- Attachments should not exceed 10 (ten) pages.
- The application must be signed by both the School Leader/Director and the Board Chair/President.
- The application should have standard one-inch margins, be clearly paginated, and use at least 11-point font.
- Any attachment should provide information that a) meaningfully augments the body of evidence already collected on the school's performance, or b) illustrates or supports plans or strategies for the next charter term that would be material to the charter contract for the renewal term. Applicants should reference attachments clearly in the application.
- The electronic and print versions of the application should be identical in content, including all attachments.

Renewal Site Visits

The Charter Institute at Erskine typically conducts two site visits (preliminary & follow-up) during the renewal process to determine the effectiveness of the school. The preliminary renewal site visit will occur in March the year prior to the end of the charter term. The purpose of this visit will be to collect evidence relating to the school's performance in relation to the mission and vision outlined in their charter. Information gathered during this visit will enable the renewal team to prepare a Preliminary Renewal Report that will be shared with the school before the renewal application deadline. A follow-up renewal site visit will take place the following year in October. During this visit, the renewal team will meet with the school leadership to review renewal submissions and to conduct stakeholder interviews. The renewal team may also gather additional documentation or other evidence where necessary and appropriate.

Pre-visit Planning and Preparation

The school leader will act as the coordinator and liaison for the site visit, although the charter school may designate another person to assume this role. The site visit coordinator should be knowledgeable about the charter school's schedule and be able to communicate quickly with various stakeholders. The site visit coordinator will work with the Director of Authorization at CIE to plan the renewal site visit. Please see the *Appendix: Renewal Site Visit Checklist* to review expectations and the pre-visit planning timeline.

Classroom Observation Form

The site visit will include an opportunity for the school to highlight components of their program that are unique to their mission and vision. Before the site visit, the school leader will be asked to provide information that is specific to the school in a classroom observation form (*Appendix: Renewal Site Visit Classroom Observation Form*). This form will identify key design elements of the charter school that the renewal site visit team will be able to observe in action during classroom observations. The form may be submitted one month prior to the scheduled preliminary site visit to kolcott@erskinecharters.org.

Stakeholder Focus Groups

To conduct an inclusive and comprehensive charter renewal process, the Charter Institute at Erskine believes there should be opportunities for stakeholders to submit ideas, suggestions, and recommendations. During the renewal site visit parents, students, teachers, and board members will be surveyed and asked to identify vital issues that in their view are important for continuing the success of the school. It is the school's responsibility to gather a representative group from each category (parents, students, teachers/staff, board members) through an open invitation, and to inform each participant of the time and place of the meeting. Focus group composition should not include more than 10 individuals. A list of questions will be provided in advance of the site visit. The school site visit coordinator should review the list of questions and determine an appropriate amount of time to conduct the focus groups.

Performance Framework

The Charter Institute at Erskine has developed a progress monitoring system (ARCS & CSS) to evaluate schools in a fair, transparent, and consistent manner. Through this performance framework schools are provided with data that will support and inform their strategic planning.

ARCS (Actions, Results, Commitment, Support)

- Every Institute department builds a set of pre-determined indicators to set standards for the **'Actions'** of each school quarterly
- The **'Results'** of the school's actions are recorded, quantitatively/qualitatively in the Institute Dropbox database
- Institute departments evaluate the **'Commitment'** ratings biannually for each school based on pre-determined formulae.
- The final department rating for each school every quarter will trigger the level of **'Support'** from the Institute

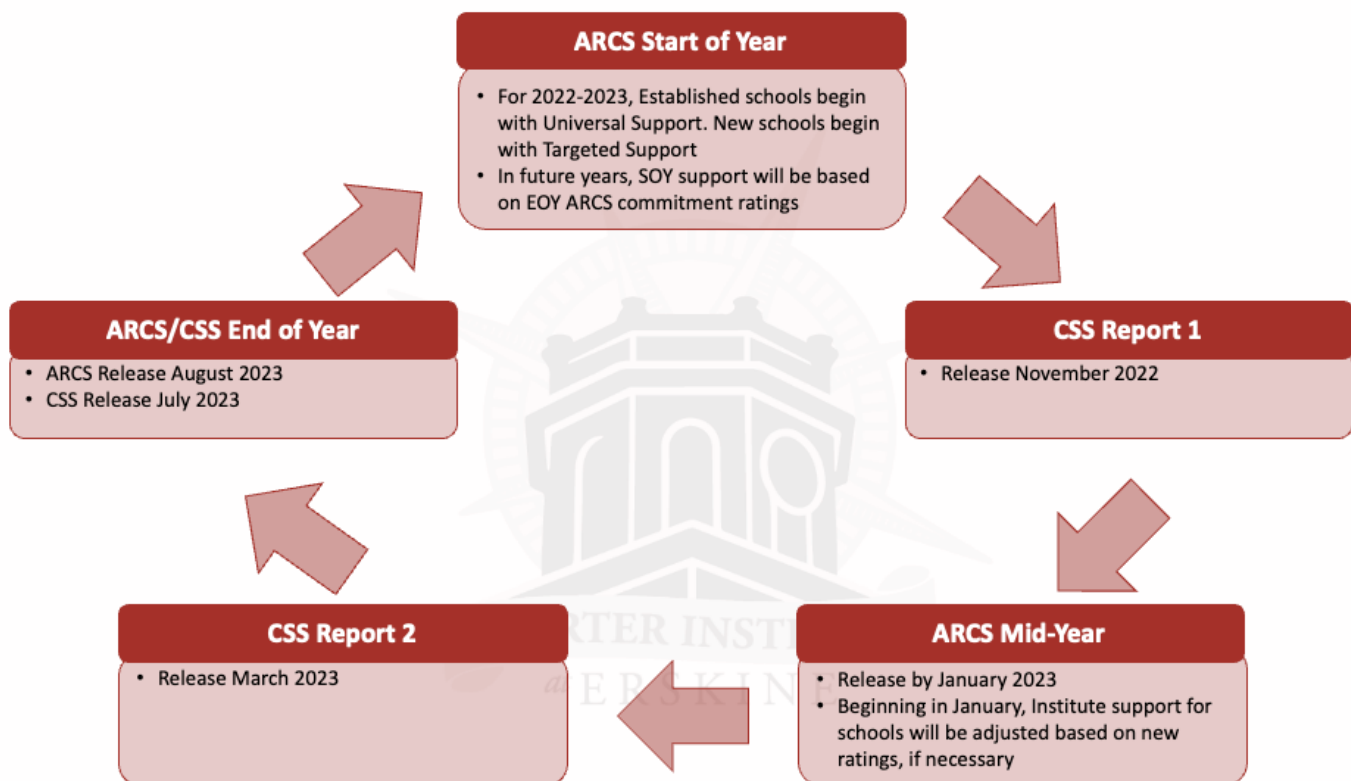
[Link to ARCS Standards](#)

Charter Institute at Erskine Department Contacts for ARCS Standards

- Accountability: Heather Holliday, hholliday@erskinecharters.org
- Authorization: Kristin Olcott, kolcott@erskinecharters.org
- Federal Programs: Jeanie Glover, jglover@erskinecharters.org
- Finance: John Li, jli@erskinecharters.org
- Governance: Dr. Bill Roach, broach@erskinecharters.org
- PowerSchool: Jason Jones, jjones@erskinecharters.org
- Student Services: Sarah Love, slove@erskinecharters.org

CSS (Comprehensive School Snapshot)

- Web-based graphic report shared with school and Institute stakeholders
- Provides summary information of school performance for each area of ARCS (Accountability, Authorization, Federal Programs, Finance, Governance, PowerSchool, Student Services)
- Snapshot of school performance on the most relevant and critical ARCS metrics
- Completed three times a year.



APPENDIX

Charter Renewal Site Visit Checklist

- Review the Charter Renewal Handbook
- Schedule a phone call with the School Renewal Coordinator & Director of Authorization
- Select a preliminary site visit date in March & October (Ensure that no field trips, special events, or school-wide testing is scheduled for the day of the site visit)
- Prepare school specific information in the *Renewal Site Visit Classroom Observation Form*
- Submit the *Renewal Site Visit Classroom Observation Form* to the Director of Authorization.
- Inform teachers that classroom observations will be part of the renewal site visits. However, assure teachers that the purpose of classroom visits is to collect evidence and capture schoolwide trends –not to evaluate individual teaching and/or teachers.
- Provide a master class schedule for the day of the visit that clearly indicates the teacher, subjects, time, and location (room assignments) for all classes. Please identify on the schedule which classes are special education, inclusion, pullout, or substantially separate placements. Send this information to the Director of Authorization.
- If the site visit includes virtual components, send the appropriate links to Director of Authorization.
- Speak with stakeholders to orient them to the purpose and expectations of the renewal site visit. Schedule focus groups to meet on the site visit date.
- Identify space that can serve as a meeting room to hold stakeholder focus groups and that may be utilized by the site visit team throughout the day.
- Work with the Director of Authorization to determine the agenda for the visit. The agenda must be finalized one week prior to the visit.
- Distribute the agenda to the school community.
- Identify staff members who will be available to accompany the renewal team throughout the site visit.
- Provide parking instructions for visitors.
- Finalize the visit schedule and logistics with the Director of Authorization at least one day prior to the visit.
- Have school board members and school leadership team greet the site visit team and orient them to the school and building.
- Determine who should attend the closing meeting at the end of the site visit.



Renewal Site Visit Classroom Observation Form

School Instructions: Inform teachers that classroom observations will be part of the renewal site visits. However, assure teachers that the purpose of classroom visits is to collect evidence and capture schoolwide trends –not to evaluate individual teaching and/or teachers. In the highlighted sections of the form, please add information that is specific to your school. **Include only what you would expect site visit team members to be able to observe in most or all classrooms during a 15–20-minute visit.**

School Name:

Date of Renewal Visit:

Subject:	Grade:	Class Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Gen Ed <input type="checkbox"/> SPED <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	Observation start time:	Observation end time:	Renewal Team Observer:
Teacher:					

School Mission:

School Mission/Vision in Classrooms	List evidence and describe how the school's mission is being implemented in classrooms.
What will site visitors observe in classrooms related to the school's mission?	
Expected Common Instructional Practices	List evidence and describe the implementation of common instructional practices
What are school-wide common instructional practices utilized in classrooms to provide high-quality instruction?	

<p align="center">Support for All Learners</p>	<p>List evidence and describe observed supports for learners working at different academic levels</p>
<p>What key strategies/practices are teachers expected to use to differentiate instruction and meet the academic needs of all students?</p>	
<p align="center">Student Engagement</p>	<p>Describe observed instructional practices that are used to motivate and engage students.</p>
<p>What student engagement strategies are commonly practiced in classrooms?</p>	<p>What percentage of students appear to be on task and participating? <input type="checkbox"/> 100% <input type="checkbox"/> 75% <input type="checkbox"/> 50% <input type="checkbox"/> 25% or less</p>
<p align="center">Learning Environment</p>	<p>List evidence and describe the implementation of common instructional practices</p>
<p>List key elements of the school's behavior system that would be visible to site visitors?</p>	<p>Is the classroom environment conducive to learning? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no</p>



Charter Renewal Stakeholders Survey

To conduct an inclusive and comprehensive charter renewal process, the Charter Institute at Erskine believes there should be opportunities for stakeholders to submit ideas, suggestions, and recommendations. Parents, teachers, and students will be surveyed and asked to identify vital issues that in their view are important for continuing the success of the school. The interview results will be aggregated into a report that will be submitted to the Charter Institute at Erskine Board for review before the final recommendation for renewal.

Student Survey Questions

- Q1 Why did you want to enroll in your school?
- Q2 How would you describe your school to someone not familiar with it?
- Q3 Which classroom activities do you learn from the most?
- Q4 What are three things that would improve your school the most?
- Q5 What advice would you give to a new student at your school?

Parent Survey Questions

- Q1 Why did you select this school for your child(ren)?
- Q2 How would you rate your child's overall academic performance?
- Q3 How well do you think the school addresses your child(ren)'s learning needs?
- Q4 How can this school improve instruction and success for your child(ren)?
- Q5 How does the school partner with parents to educate students?

Teacher/Staff Survey Questions

- Q1 Why did you choose to work at this school?
- Q2 How would you rate the overall school climate?
- Q3 What is the most challenging aspect(s) of your job?
- Q4 What can your school do to improve instruction and success for all students?
- Q5 Would you recommend this school to families and colleagues?

Board Member Survey Questions

- Q1 Why did you choose to serve on this school board?
- Q2 How would you describe this school to a community member?
- Q3 What are your board's greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
- Q4 What has been the most rewarding or successful achievement of the school?
- Q5 What goals do you have for the next charter cycle?

Strategic Planning Roadmap

It is helpful from time to time to stand back and assess whether the hopes and aspirations contained in your charter are still relevant to your school, students, and community. During charter renewal process the school leadership will be provided with stakeholder feedback and a preliminary renewal report to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current status of the school academically, financially, operationally, and culturally. The primary responsibility of the school board is to utilize this data to determine the strategic direction the school will take over the next charter cycle.

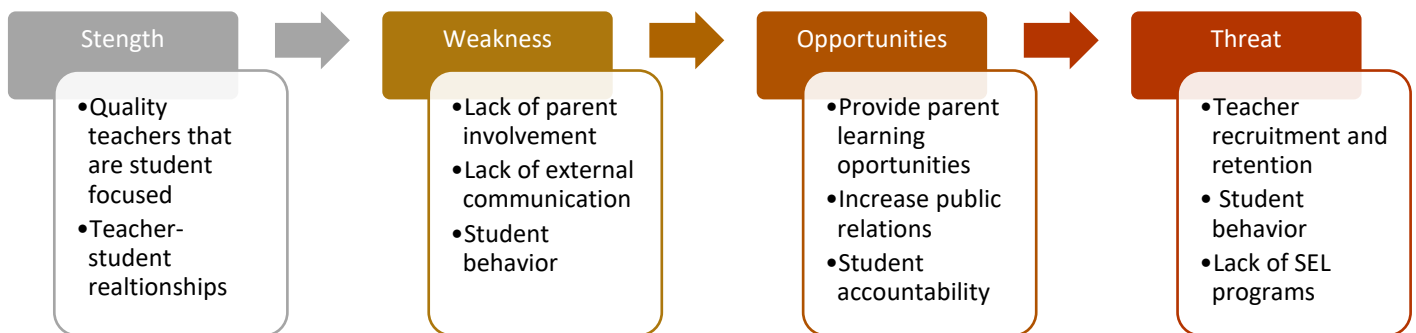
This guide can be used as a starting point for developing a strategic plan. The guide is not all-inclusive but should provide the board with a basic outline to begin the strategic planning process.

Critical Data for Planning

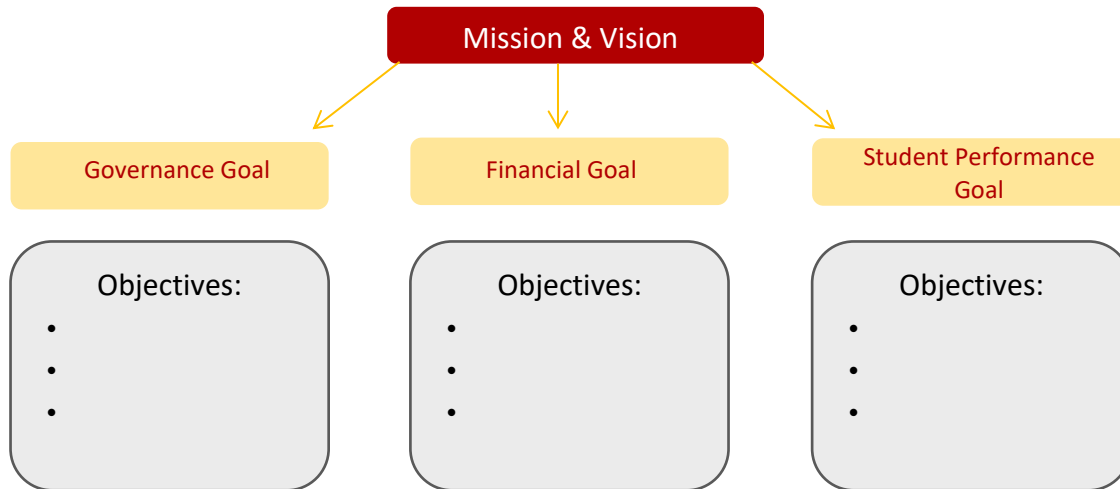
The table below includes various data that might be relevant as you work to complete the strategic plan.

Performance	Demographic	Process	Perception
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIE Preliminary Performance Report State Report Card MAP Testing Classroom assessment results Student work samples Reading Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School location and size of student body Student characteristics (poverty, IEP, language proficiency, race/ethnicity) Student enrollment rates Staff characteristics (experience, attendance, turnover) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic interventions available to students Discipline referrals & suspension rates. Schedules & class size Family & community involvement Services and/or programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder interviews Teaching & learning conditions (staff survey) Self-assessment results Focus group data from key constituents

Gather, Review, and Analyze Data – As data is gathered it might be helpful to complete a situational analysis. A tool such as a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threat) analysis will enable you to synthesize and evaluate the school’s current performance.



Identify and Set Goals - A good strategic plan includes 3 to 5 goals and should include at least a student performance goal, a financial goal, and a governance goal.



Select and Define Objectives – While the goals will give a clear statement of what the school wants to achieve, the objectives will break that goal down into more measurable and actionable steps.

Strategies – Develop specific strategies that will be implemented to accomplish the objectives of each goal.

- What changes or updates are required to realize your vision and meet the objectives?
- What benchmarks will be used as indicators of success and allow the school to track Progress toward achieving each objective?
- How will you know that implementation is on track to achieve the desired outcomes?

Implementation Plan – What is the timeline, resources, and people necessary to implement the identified strategies? How will the plan be announced and disseminated to school leadership, staff, parents, and the community?

Evaluate Progress – Determine how progress will be assessed and how impact of the strategic plan will be measured (“*Is what we are doing making a difference?*”). Periodically review progress towards the goals. Plan to include a quarterly update on progress during the regularly scheduled board meeting.