

Charter Schools Authorizing Primer

Portland Public Schools

2019-2020



Welcome to your role as a Charter School Authorizer. As a member of the PPS Board of Education Charter Schools Committee, you are serving a critical role in providing oversight and recommendations for the charter schools in the District's portfolio. This booklet serves as an introduction and resource for your work. The PPS Charter Schools Office is committed to supporting the highest outcomes for students attending the charter schools currently authorized by PPS, and to provide informed recommendations to the Board Charter Schools Committee in service to the District's students and families.

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The mission of the PPS Charter Schools Office is to:

- *support and monitor a high performing and innovative PPS charter school portfolio*
- *promote equity and learning for all students*
- *advocate and act as a liaison for PPS charter schools and for the district in its role as a charter school authorizer*
- *educate the district, parents, stakeholders, and community partners about charter schools*

This mission is pursued through the creation and implementation of:

- *transparent, equitable practices as recommended by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)*
- *a rigorous application process for new charter schools, including review by an internal PPS team of reviewers*
- *ongoing oversight through annual evaluation of academic, financial, and organizational performance to support and continuously improve high quality charter schools*
- *productive partnerships with PPS charter schools and other stakeholders, including parents, community, and district*
- *systemic commitment to equity and high educational achievement for all students*

2019-20 Annual Charter School Board Business Calendar

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| 5-year Contract Renewal: | Portland Village Charter School KairosPDX Academy Charter School |
| 1-year Contract Extensions: | Opal Charter School Portland Arthur Academy Charter School |

Charter Schools Committee Meetings:

- **Prior to Winter Break** – Initial meeting to review annual charter authorizing requirements and set calendar (1 hr)
- **Week of February 3, 2020** - Charter Schools Committee holds meeting with Charter Schools Office and all 4 charter schools to review relevant school data (2 renewals, 2 1-yr extensions) (2hrs)
- **By Feb 14, 2020** – Renewal Public Hearings for Portland Village School and KairosPDX (2hrs each) (*ORS 338.065(5)(c), within 45 days after receiving written renewal request*)
- **Week of February 18, 2020** – If needed (this meeting is not statutory), follow up to Renewal Public Hearings, review staff recommendation for all 4 schools (1hr)

Full Board Meetings:

- **March 3, 2020** – Agenda item for charter schools renewal/extensions (presentation, Q&A); ***if no vote at meeting, then:***
- **March 17, 2020** –Board vote (business agenda, no presentations) (*ORS 338.065(5)(d), within 30 days after public hearing*)

Charter Schools 101

Charter schools first came into existence in Oregon in 1999, through **ORS 338, the Charter School Law**. The law states the intention as follows:

ORS 338.015 Legislative intent; goals. It is the intent of this chapter that new types of schools, called public charter schools, be created as a legitimate avenue for parents, educators and community members to take responsible risks to create new, innovative and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system. The Legislative Assembly seeks to create an atmosphere in Oregon's public school system where research and development of new learning opportunities are actively pursued. The provisions of this chapter should be interpreted liberally to support the goals of this section and to advance a renewed commitment by this state to the mission, goals and diversity of public education. It is the intent that public charter schools may serve as models and catalysts for the improvement of other public schools and the public school system.

The goals of public charter schools shall be to:

- (1) Increase student learning and achievement;*
- (2) Increase choices of learning opportunities for students;*
- (3) Better meet individual student academic needs and interests;*
- (4) Build stronger working relationships among educators, parents and other community members;*
- (5) Encourage the use of different and innovative learning methods;*
- (6) Provide opportunities in small learning environments for flexibility and innovation, which may be applied, if proven effective, to other public schools;*
- (7) Create new professional opportunities for teachers;*
- (8) Establish additional forms of accountability for schools; and*
- (9) Create innovative measurement tools. [1999 c.200 §1]*

The agreement made with charter schools is that they will be afforded **greater autonomy** over curriculum, personnel, scheduling, school climate, governance, and finances (to name a few) **in exchange for greater accountability** for achieving the promised results. Failing charter schools can have their charters revoked, or be non-renewed. Charter schools undergo rigorous oversight by their authorizers so interventions can be applied quickly before issues can lead to revocation or non-renewal.

All Oregon charter schools must have 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. Because of Oregon's relatively small population and some elements of ORS 338, the Charter School Law, large Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) that rapidly replicate the same program in many locations have not been interested in setting up schools in Oregon. That has allowed a wide diversity of teacher/community/parent developed school models to thrive. Oregon's charter schools are nearly entirely "single school" models, operating as educational labs for specific pedagogical, curricular, cultural, or school climate goals.

There are 8 total charter schools in the city of Portland serving about 2,000 students; PPS sponsors six of them (~1400 students), and ODE sponsors the other two (~500 students). The district accepts applications for new charter schools every year on July 15, alternating years for applications inclusive of grades 9-12 and applications not inclusive of grades 9-12. The new school application review and approval or denial process occurs between July and November each year. There were no new school applications to consider for the 2019-20 year.

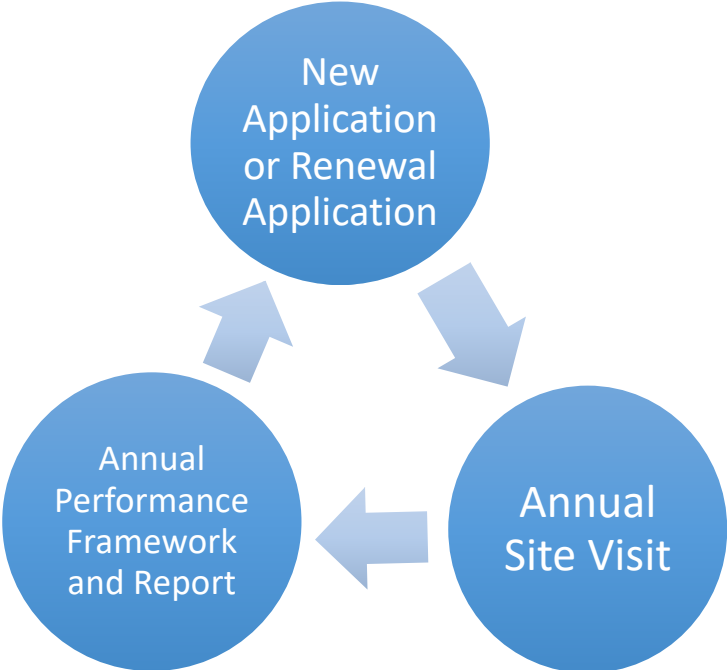
Existing charter schools operate under a contract (the "charter") with the sponsoring district, and must apply for a renewal of the contract in the final year of each contract's term. When a PPS charter school is up for renewal, its Renewal Application is due January 2, 180 days prior to expiration of its current charter (June 30). The renewal review and approval or denial process occurs between January and March. Ideally, the renewal contract is negotiated before expiration of the current contract (June 30), however statute provides for extending the current contract until the renewal contract is completed, "*...an expiring charter shall remain in effect until a new charter is negotiated.*" ORS 338.065(e)

Charter Schools Annual Performance Framework and Report

Charter schools are held accountable for their outcomes through the annual reporting cycle, as evidenced by the Annual Performance Framework and Report ("Framework"). The Framework is informed by best practice from the Core Performance Framework and Guidance, developed by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). This Framework is designed to measure each charter school's academic, financial, and organizational performance on an annual basis to provide ongoing monitoring of outcomes, sustainability, and stability.

Each school that comes before the Charter Schools Committee for charter renewal or contract extension will have data from the Framework submitted with its information packet. In addition to providing information regarding school performance in a timely manner, this process contributes to the continuous improvement of each charter school and the partnership between the schools and the PPS Charter Schools Office.

PPS Charter School Cyclical Accountability Process



Note: If a Charter School fails to meet Performance Benchmarks for two consecutive years, a Plan of Action will be initiated. The Plan of Action will be developed by the school, reviewed and approved by the Charter School Office, and monitored with explicit deadlines by the Charter School Office. If the Plan of Action goals are not met within an additional calendar year, this may be grounds for termination.

Portland's Charter School Landscape

Since the passage of the Charter School Law in 1999, there have been 11 charter schools opened out of 46 charter school applications in PPS. The number of applications submitted has declined in recent years, with only one (incomplete) application received since 2013. Applications are reviewed thoroughly, and subjected to the scrutiny of multiple reviewers in areas of academic, financial, and organizational expertise. The most common reason for charter school closures in Oregon is financial unsustainability.

There are currently six charter schools in the District's portfolio, the highest number of schools in a single district in Oregon. Because of this concentration of charter schools within the District, the PPS Charter Schools Office is able to realize an economy of scale in oversight processes such as annual evaluations, contract renewals and extensions, and communication with Charter School Directors. There is a standardized annual calendar of deliverables from the charter schools, and schools use common templates for reporting to the District. The PPS charter schools range in age from the oldest, Opal School, opened in 2001, to the youngest, KairosPDX Academy, opened in 2014. Charter schools are found in all geographical quadrants of Portland, offer varied educational programs, accept students by lottery from anywhere in the PPS District, and generally have strong support from their communities of families.

PPS Charter Schools:

The Emerson School **Year Opened:** 2003 **Grades:** K-5 **Enrollment:** 144

Located in Northwest Portland, Emerson uses a project-based, integrated approach to continually build on students' previous learning and experiences. Real-world problem solving, field studies, and service learning are combined with focused instruction in language arts and math, and a school wide social emotional learning program grounded in Positive Discipline. **Website:** www.emersonschool.org

KairosPDX Academy **Year Opened:** 2014 **Grades:** K-5 **Enrollment:** 225 (growing to 244)

KairosPDX is focused on delivering excellent, equitable education to underserved children, their families and their communities in North Portland, with a goal of closing Portland's achievement gap. With a year-round schedule, curriculum engages children in culturally relevant, inquiry-based instruction, rooted in multicultural education, STEM instruction, and service learning. KairosPDX is currently housed in PPS' Humboldt Elementary School building.

Website: www.kairospdx.org

Le Monde French Immersion **Year Opened:** 2012 **Grades:** K-8 **Enrollment:** 375 (growing to 450)

Located on E. Burnside St., Le Monde's mission is to educate children in a full immersion environment in the French language that honors the best international academic traditions and develops students who are inquisitive, reflective, communicative, and caring. **Website:** www.lemondeimmersion.org

Opal School **Year Opened:** 2001 **Grades:** K-5 **Enrollment:** 88

Housed in the CM2 Children's Museum in SW Portland, Opal's guiding principles are inspired and influenced by the work of early childhood educators in Reggio Emilia, Italy, neuroscience research, and constructivist practices. **Website:** www.portlandcm.org

Portland Arthur Academy **Year Opened:** 2005 **Grades:** K-5 **Enrollment:** 175

Portland Arthur Academy is an academically-focused elementary charter school in SE Portland that uses a highly researched Direct Instruction program. The skills taught are sequenced to maximize student success. **Website:** www.arthuracademy.org

Portland Village School **Year Opened:** 2007 **Grades:** K-8 **Enrollment:** 400

Located in North Portland, Portland Village School offers a Waldorf-methods-inspired public education, to advance an arts-integrated education that teaches respect and reverence by developing the head, heart, and hands in children from all backgrounds and cultures.

Website: www.portlandvillageschool.org

Portland Public Schools is a member of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), which recommends the following Principles for Quality Charter School Authorizing:

| NACSA Principles for Quality Charter School Authorizing | |
|--|---|
| Maintain High Standards for Schools | <p>A Quality Authorizer...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets high standards for approving charter applicants. • Maintains high standards for the schools it oversees. • Effectively cultivates quality charter schools that meet identified educational needs. • Oversees charter schools that, over time, meet the performance standards and targets on a range of measures and metrics set forth in their charter contracts. (<i>Performance Framework</i>) • Closes schools that fail to meet standards and targets set forth in law and by contract. |
| Uphold School Autonomy | <p>A Quality Authorizer...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honors and preserves core autonomies crucial to school success including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Governing board independence from the authorizer; ○ Personnel; ○ School vision and culture; ○ Instructional programming, design, and use of time; and ○ Budgeting • Assumes responsibility not for the success or failure of individual schools, but for holding schools accountable for their performance. • Minimizes administrative and compliance burdens on schools. • Focuses on holding schools accountable for outcomes rather than processes. |
| Protect Student & Public Interests | <p>A Quality Authorizer...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes the well-being and interests of students the fundamental value informing all the authorizer’s actions and decisions. • Holds schools accountable for fulfilling fundamental public-education obligations to all students, which includes providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nonselective, nondiscriminatory access to all eligible students; ○ Fair treatment in admissions and disciplinary actions for all students; and ○ Appropriate services for all students, including those with disabilities and English learners, in accordance with applicable law. • Holds schools accountable for fulfilling fundamental obligations to the public, which includes providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sound governance, management, and stewardship of public funds; and ○ Public information and operational transparency in accordance with law. • Ensures in its own work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ethical conduct; ○ Focus on the mission of chartering high-quality schools; ○ Clarity, consistency, and public transparency in authorizing policies, practices, and decisions; ○ Effective and efficient public stewardship; and ○ Compliance with applicable laws and regulations • Supports parents and students in being well-informed about the quality of education provided by charter schools. |