

This presentation focuses on the charter renewal process.

Information regarding the PCSC and its portfolio schools, including performance outcomes and student demographics, is available in the PCSC's 2016 Annual Report.

**“Performance-based accountability is the  
cornerstone of charter schools.”**

~ Allison Consoletti, Center for Education Reform

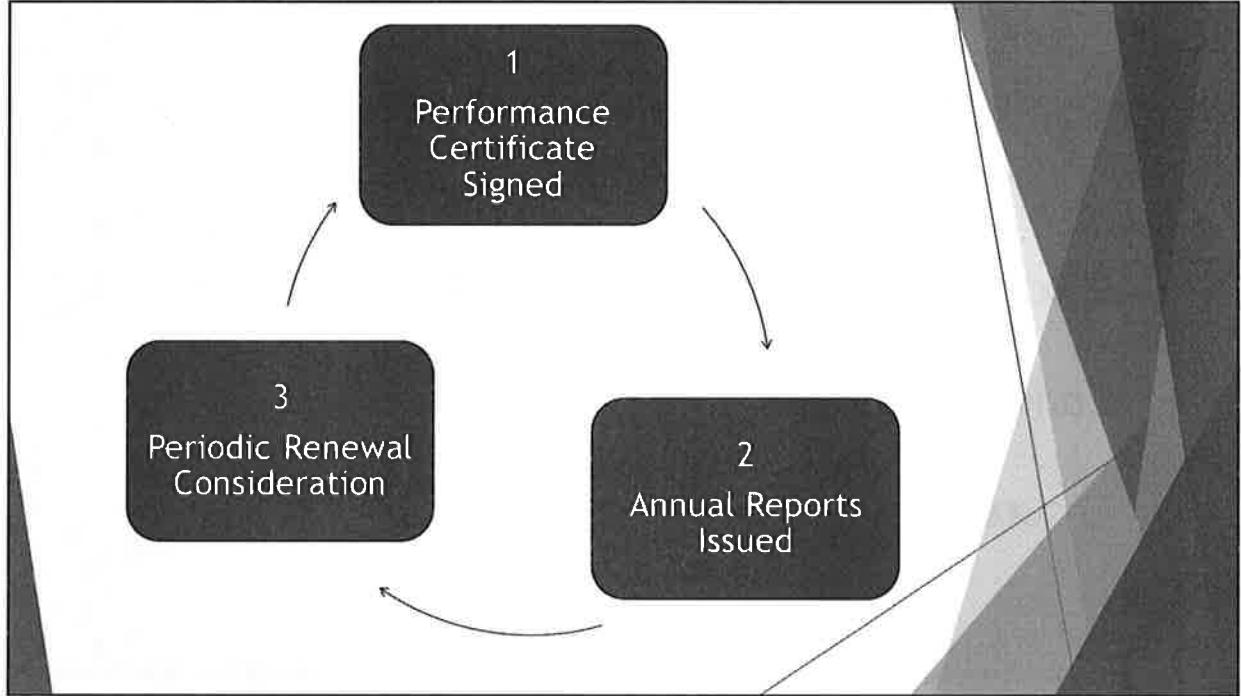
**Charter renewals are:**

- A nationally-recognized best practice
- Based on established performance standards
- Conducted every 5 years

Charter renewal is a process through which an authorizer evaluates the performance outcomes of a public charter school. The goal is to determine whether it is in the best interest of students and taxpayers for the school to continue operating.

This is so central to the concept of public charter schools that National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Model Charter Law, second edition (Oct 2016) includes renewal decision-making in the definition of a charter school authorizer. The definition of a charter school includes accountability to established performance standards via a charter contract (performance certificate).

In Idaho, charter schools are considered for renewal after their initial 3 years of operation, and every 5 years thereafter.



The five-year cycle looks like this:

Performance certificate contains indicators, measures, and metrics establishing clear expectations for school outcomes. Schools have the opportunity to include mission-specific measures that reflect their unique educational focus or student population.

Authorizer issues reports on an annual basis, advising schools of their status as it relates to the performance outcome expectations. No sanctions are placed on schools regardless of their outcomes. They are simply notified and encouraged to address any concerns as they see fit.

After 5 years, schools are considered for renewal based on their performance outcomes. If renewed, we sign a new performance certificate and resume the cycle.

## Priorities for Renewal Process

- Maximize opportunity for school input
- Consider context
- Ensure public transparency

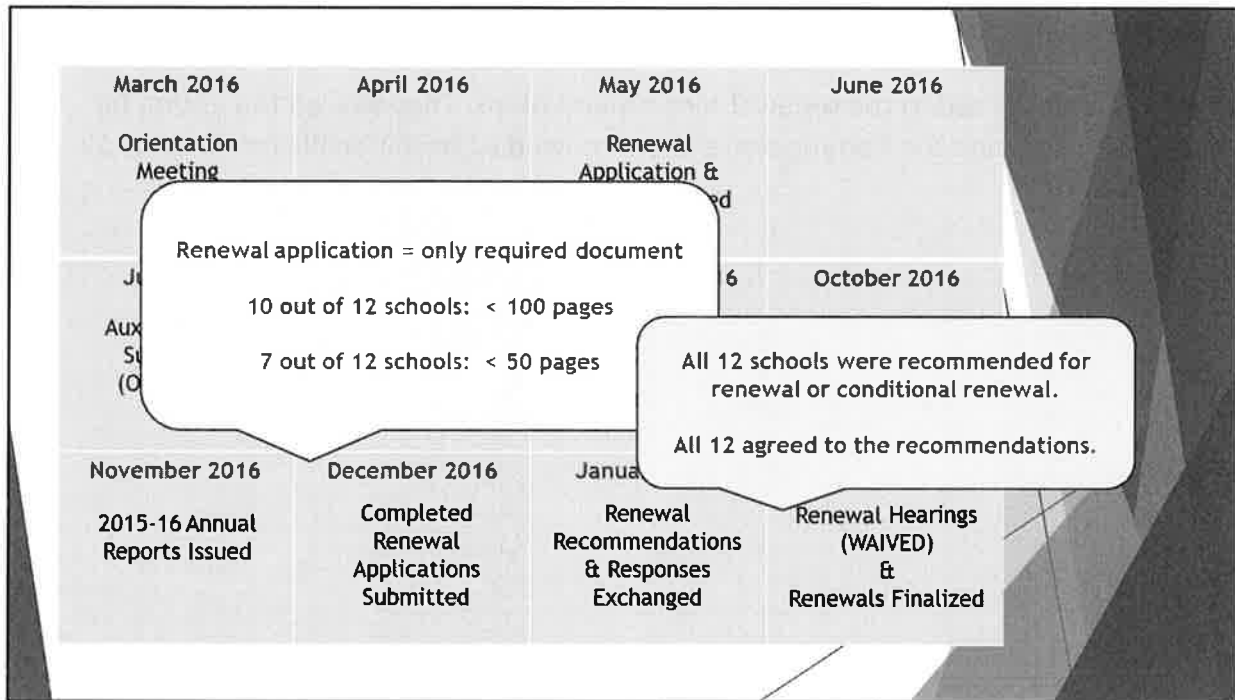
In response to 2013 legislation, the Commission considered its first round of renewals in early 2017.

Statute provides some guidance regarding the renewal process. As we fleshed it out to a practical level, we wanted to create a fair and transparent process that ultimately prioritized the interests of students.

That process would include multiple opportunities for schools to share their perspective.

We also believed it was critical to consider context. What is the school's stated purpose? What kinds of students are served by the school? Is the school doing a good job in the context of who they are and the students they enroll?

Finally, we wanted to ensure that the public had access to all the information in which the Commission grounded its decision. Complete renewal exhibits are available on the PCSC's website (see Feb 2017 meeting materials).



A full year ahead, PCSC staff met with leadership of each school to orient them to the process. This included making them aware of upcoming opportunities to provide contextual and performance data of which they wanted the Commission to be aware.

The renewal application & guidance, distributed in May, described what topics should be addressed in the renewal application. It also provided guidance for how to submit meaningful auxiliary data, if the school wished to do so.

In fall, we conducted a site visit whose primary purposes were to build our contextual understanding of each school and to get the opinion of an outside expert with relevant experience. For example, a STEM school was observed by the longtime administrator of a successful, STEM charter school in a different part of the state. Virtual and alternative schools were visited by educators with many years of experience operating those types of schools.

A series of statutory deadlines were met in November through February, when the Commission made its final decisions regarding all 12 schools under consideration.

Only one document was required from schools – the renewal application. The

application was limited to 25 pages, plus optional supporting documentation. A few schools chose to submit a large volume of documents. 10 out of 12 submitted fewer than 100 pages; 7 of those submitted fewer than 50 pages.

All 12 schools agreed to the renewal recommendations. They waived the option for public hearings, and the Commission either renewed or conditionally renewed all 12 charters.

CONTEXT	CONDITION
Charter located in low-proficiency district	Proficiency standard compared to district rather than state
Charter with highly mobile population	Growth standard for continuously-enrolled students only
Charter enrolling struggling students	Norm-referenced growth comparison standard
Charter enrolling high schoolers behind cohort	Extended cohort standard based on average 5-year grad rate for alternatives

In the case of conditional renewals, context was particularly important. The conditions were developed upon lengthy discussion. We took into consideration student demographics and information provided by the schools.

Some of the actual recommendations and rationale are included in packets (see Renewal Conditions: Examples from February 2017 document). All are available on our website in the February 2017 meeting materials.

**What about high-performing schools?**

**Renewed Without  
Conditions!**

**Guaranteed  
Automatic  
Renewal!**

Schools with a history of strong performance outcomes (relative to the populations they serve) were renewed for another 5 years, without conditions.

Schools meeting all the standards in their performance certificates received guaranteed, automatic renewal – no site visit or application required.



## Refining the Process

- Continue discussion with schools
- Ensure understanding of site visit purpose
- Extend recommendation response time
- Update performance framework

We've already had opportunity to listen to feedback from schools about what parts of the process did and didn't work well for them. We'll continue to seek input and respond as appropriate.

We want to help schools understand that the site visit is intended to give schools an opportunity to help us understand them better – not to gather evidence for school closure. Under the law, renewal decisions need to be based on performance outcomes as they relate to pre-established standards in the performance certificate. There were several cases this year when site visits clarified that schools that looked unsuccessful on paper were actually doing some great work.

Extending the time schools have to respond to renewal recommendations in January would eliminate the perceived need to provide, in December, any possible document one might need in case the school chooses to go to hearing. Instead, they could wait to see whether they agree with the recommendation and only gather exhibits if they decide to proceed with a hearing.

We are also working on updating the performance framework that contains our accountability measures. In fact, we're about to go out for a second round of stakeholder comment. We've tried to ensure that the framework incorporates additional flexibility to reflect the successes of different types of schools while still maintaining meaningful standards of accountability.

# Idaho Public Charter School Commission

...protecting student and public interests by balancing high standards of accountability with respect for the autonomy of public charter schools and implementing best authorizing practices to ensure the excellence of public charter school options available to Idaho families.