



Spokane Public Schools

A Look at Charter Authorizing in Spokane

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Background

RCW 28A.710.180 on Charter schools outlines the responsibilities for WA State Authorizers:

(1) Each authorizer must continually monitor the performance and legal compliance of the charter schools under its jurisdiction, including collecting and analyzing data to support ongoing evaluation according to the performance framework in the charter contract.

We monitor the frameworks through established benchmarks that the schools must meet. This is done through documentation provided according to established timelines and housed in an online platform called Charter Tools.

The SPS Financial and Organizational Performance Frameworks were approved in 2016 and the Academic Framework was approved in April 2018.

The SPS frameworks are closely aligned with those of the WA State Commission and supported by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA).

For purposes of our reporting, we consider the 16/17 school year to be the 'baseline' for each school (they were afforded a re-start due to the court ruling in Sept. 2015) and they just completed their second full year of operation as charter schools.

Financial Framework

The Financial Performance Framework is a reporting tool that provides SPS with the necessary data to assess the financial health and viability of charter schools in its portfolio for the purposes of an annual review.

The framework summarizes a charter school's financial health while taking into account the school's financial trends over a period of three years. The measures are designed to be complementary. No single measure gives a full picture of the financial situation of a school.

Taken together, however, the measures provide a comprehensive assessment of the school's financial health and viability based on a school's historic trends, near-term financial situation, and future viability.

Financial, continued...

These are the broad areas (for schools in years 1-2) monitored within the financial framework:

Current Ratio (Near-Term) <i>Current ratio is greater than or equal to 1.0</i>	Unrestricted Days Cash (Near-Term) <i>30 days cash</i>	Enrollment Variance (Near-Term) <i>Enrollment variance equals or exceeds 95%</i>
Debt Default (Near-Term) <i>School is not in default of loan of covenant(s) and/or is not delinquent with debt service</i>	Total Margin (Sustainability) <i>Must be positive in both years</i>	Debt to Asset Ratio (Sustainability) <i>Debt to asset ratio is less than .90</i>
Cash Flow (Sustainability) <i>Positive one year cash flow</i>		

Organizational Framework

The purpose of the Organizational Performance Framework is to communicate to the charter school and public the compliance-related standards that all charter schools authorized by SPS must meet. The Organizational Framework lists the standards which align to state and federal law, rules, regulations, and the charter contract.

The expectations set out in the Organizational Framework derive from state and federal law as well as the operating terms in the charter application. Of the three frameworks, the Organizational Framework is most closely aligned with the charter contract in terms of documenting operational expectations such as special education, accounting practices, reporting requirements, and the like.

SPS intends to maximize school operational autonomy by articulating the base set of state and federal laws, rules and regulations with regard to legal, operational, and ethical expectations that are common to all public schools. Everything else related to school operations can remain within the school's purview to manage, control, and change as school leadership sees fit.

Organizational, continued.....

These are the broad areas monitored within the Organizational framework:

Education Program <i>Material terms of the charter, educ. Requirements, students with disabilities rights, ELL rights</i>	Financial Mgmt & Oversight <i>Financial reporting and compliance, GAAP</i>	Governance & Reporting <i>Governance requirements, management accountability, and reporting requirements</i>
Students, Parents, & Employees <i>Rights of students, recurrent enrollment, teacher/staff credentials, employee rights, background checks</i>	School Environment <i>Facilities & transportation, health & safety, information management</i>	Additional Obligation <i>Includes all other obligations</i>

Academic Framework

The Academic Performance Framework includes measures that allows Spokane Public Schools (SPS) to evaluate charter school academic performance.

Spokane Public School's draft Academic framework has been carefully crafted to follow all aspects of RCW 28A.710.170. This law outlines the necessary components that all approved charter authorizers in the state of Washington must include.

Academic, continued....

These are the areas monitored within the Academic framework:

<p>State and Federal Accountability <i>3 year and annual composite index</i></p>	<p>Comparison to schools serving similar students (proficiency & growth) <i>Various subgroup comparisons</i></p>
<p>College and Career Readiness <i>Graduation rate for high schools, post-secondary efforts for K-8 schools</i></p>	<p>School Specific Goals <i>Schools, in conjunction with the authorizer, determine goals that are specific to their mission or instructional program</i></p>

Authorizing Process

As required by law, we issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) each calendar year. In the RFP we outline our vision for authorizing and offer suggestions of what types of schools would complement the Portfolio of Options that are offered to the families of Spokane.

We use both internal staff and national experts in the field of application review to create a well-rounded evaluation team.

NACSA principals and standards are the guide used to evaluate applications.

SPS is closely aligned with the Washington Charter Schools Commission's timeline and practices to provide continuity across the state.

Spokane's Charter Schools

Spokane Public Schools has authorized two charter schools. Both schools opened in August 2015.

Each school was started by a local Spokane educator.

The district has a collegial relationship with the schools and we continue to seek ways in which to partner for shared services, professional development and more.

Pride Prep Charter School

Approved to offer grades 6-12, they are currently serving 396 students in grades 6-9.

There is a personalized learning approach using the Summit educational platform; in addition they are now implementing the International Baccalaureate programs.

They employ a hands-on approach to learning and students take ownership in shaping the learning environment.

Student Demographics and compared to Spokane Public Schools

Demographic sub group	Pride Prep % of students	SPS % of students
Special Education	16%	16.6%
Free or Reduced-Price Meals	53%	56.7%
Section 504	3%	3.7%
African American	9%	3.1%
Hispanic	4%	10.2%
Asian	1%	2.6%
American Indian	3.5%	1.3%
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	.5%	1.7%
Two or more races	9%	13%
White	73%	68.2%

Spokane International Academy (SIA) Charter

Approved to offer grades K-8, they are currently serving 401 students in grades K-3 and 5-8.

Their mission is to offer an international education combined with world language learning. They are implementing the International Baccalaureate programs.

Student Demographics and compared to Spokane Public Schools

Demographic sub group	SIA % of students	SPS % of students
Special Education	9%	16.6%
Free or Reduced-Price Meals	42%	56.7%
Section 504	2.4%	3.7%
African American	3%	3.1%
Hispanic	11%	10.2%
Asian	1.5%	2.6%
American Indian	1%	1.3%
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0%	1.7%
Two or more races	12.5%	13%
White	71%	68.2%

Closing Remarks and Questions

We appreciate the collaboration opportunities that we have with the Washington State Charter Commission to share best practices and align our work.

We also appreciate the staff at the State Board of Education, especially Kaaren Heikes, for being responsive to our needs and a pleasure to work with.