

New Jersey Department of Education,
Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools

# Renewal Application TemplateRenewal Cohort 2025

Updated July 2024

## Introduction

As the State Education Agency and sole charter authorizer in the state of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Education (Department) holds all charter schools accountable for providing students with a high-quality public education. The Department relies on the [Performance Framework](https://www.state.nj.us/education/chartsch/accountability/framework.shtml) to evaluate all public charter schools in New Jersey. The Performance Framework consists of three components: academic, fiscal and organizational. It outlines the criteria the Department uses to assess viability in those three areas. In August 2015, the Organizational Performance Framework was revised to provide clear and precise criteria for the organizational component of the Performance Framework. A charter school’s performance against the criteria set forth in the Performance Framework is used in all high-stakes decision-making, including decisions regarding replication, expansion, renewal, probation and closure.

The renewal application aligns with the indicators within the Performance Framework. The decision to renew a charter will be based on a comprehensive review guided by the following three questions:

1. Is the school’s academic program a success?
2. Is the school financially viable?
3. Is the school equitable and organizationally sound?

A successful application delivers evidence-backed statements to support the renewal of the school’s charter. The application should also identify potential areas of concern, address discrepancies between current and anticipated outcomes and provide a well-conceived strategic plan for the next five-year charter term. Note that, if renewed, the completed renewal application becomes the school’s new charter contract.

After receiving the renewal application, the Department conducts a site visit to each charter school up for renewal. The site visit may include interviews with key stakeholders, classroom observations and a review of key documents. The findings gathered from the site visit augment the Department’s comprehensive review of the charter school pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:11-2.3(b), which includes: student performance on statewide and local assessments; annual reports; monitoring visit results; financial reports; public comments; possible segregative effect of charter school enrollment on district(s) of residence; financial impact on district(s) of residence; and other relevant evidence. The results of this comprehensive review are considered prior to making a decision regarding the renewal of a school’s charter for a subsequent five-year period.

## Renewal Process Guidelines

### Application Submission Deadline

The renewal application for charter schools eligible for renewal in 2024 is due to the district board(s) of education or State district superintendent of the charter school’s district(s) of residence, the executive county superintendent, and the Commissioner of Education by **4:15 p.m., Tuesday, October 15, 2024.**

### Submission Process for the Renewal Application

The renewal application must be submitted via Homeroom as a Word document titled “Renewal Application 2025.” To submit the report, upload it to the folder “Renewal Application 2025” on the charter school’s Homeroom site. Each Appendix must be saved as a separate Excel, Word or PDF document and uploaded to the same “Renewal Application 2025” folder following the file naming conventions found in Homeroom.

### Additional Submission Requirements

A copy of the application must be submitted to the respective district board(s) of education or State district superintendent of the charter school’s district(s) of residence and executive county superintendent no later than 4:15 p.m. on Tuesday, October 15, 2024. The paper copies require a cover page, which must include the charter school’s name and the date of the application.

### Written Comment Period

Pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:11-2.3(b)9, the district board(s) of education or State district superintendent(s) of the district of residence of a charter school may submit comments regarding the renewal application of the charter school to the Commissioner within 30 days of receipt.

### Application Review

The application for renewal will be reviewed and evaluated by the Department.

### On-Site Renewal Visit

The Department review team will conduct an on-site visit of the charter school, which may include classroom visits, interviews with key stakeholders and document review.

### Renewal Determination

The Commissioner will grant or deny the renewal of the charter by January 31, 2025.

**Note:** All applications must be clear and complete in order to be evaluated.

## Application Content and Format

The prescribed content and format for the renewal application are specified below.

### Document Length

The document may not exceed 30 pages, not including the cover page, table of contents, charts and appendices.

### Format

All pages should use standard one-inch margins, be paginated, with all text easily readable in font no smaller than type size 11 point.

### Cover Page

Provide a cover page that includes the school’s name and the date of the application. The bottom of the cover page should also note that the report was transmitted to the district board(s) of education of the charter school’s district(s) of residence and executive county superintendent of the district(s) of residence.

### Table of Contents

Provide a clearly labeled table of contents naming all major sections and appendices with corresponding page numbers.

### Appendices

All supplementary documents should be identified appropriately and properly labeled as appendices at the end of the application. The appendices should not exceed 10 pages in total.

## Renewal Application Questions

Table 1: Basic Information about the School

Provide all enrollment numbers as of the last day of school for students in 2023 - 2024

| **Basic Information** | **Content Column** |
| --- | --- |
| Name of School  |  |
| Mission (Please state the mission) |  |
| Approved District or Region of Residence |  |
| Total Actual K–12 Enrollment  |  |
| Total Actual Pre-K Enrollment |  |
| 2024-2025 Grade Levels Served |  |
| Number and Percentage of Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Students  |  |
| Number and Percentage of students with disabilities (SWD) |  |
| Number and Percentage of multilingual learners (ML) |  |
| Number and Percentage of White Students |  |
| Number and Percentage of Black Students |  |
| Number and Percentage of Hispanic Students |  |
| Number and Percentage of Asian Students |  |
| Number and Percentage of American Indian Students |  |
| Number and Percentage of Hawaiian Native Students |  |
| Number and Percentage of Students Two or More Races |  |

## Organizational Performance Areas

### Mission and Key Design Elements

The following questions are aligned with the Organizational Performance Framework Performance Area 1: Education Program and Capacity.

#### 1.1. Mission & Key Design Elements

1. Describe the school’s educational philosophy.
2. Identify the school’s key design elements as detailed in the 2020 charter renewal application. Describe any revisions made to the key design elements throughout the current charter term.
3. If applicable, describe any proposed changes to the Commissioner-approved mission for the upcoming charter term. Please detail how any proposed changes have been communicated to all stakeholder groups.

#### 1.2. Curriculum

1. Describe the school’s process (and rationale) for selecting, developing, reviewing and revising the curriculum to ensure alignment with New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). Please specify how the school’s curriculum addresses the needs of all learners.

#### 1.3. Instruction

* 1. Complete the *Description of Instructional Practices* template found in [Appendix A](#AppendixA).

#### 1.4. Assessment

1. Describe the school’s assessment system and how it is used to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning.
2. Describe how the school uses other data (qualitative and quantitative) to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program.

#### 1.5. Organizational Capacity

1. Describe the school’s organizational structure and roles and responsibilities of key personnel. Be sure to include the following in your response:
	1. Process and system for decision-making;
	2. Process and system for evaluating school leaders;
	3. Process and system for evaluating and coaching teachers; and
	4. Process and system for staff professional development.

### School Climate and Culture

The following questions are aligned with the [*Organizational*](https://www.state.nj.us/education/chartsch/accountability/docs/PerformanceFrameworkTA.pdf) *Performance Framewor*k, Performance Area 2: School Culture & Climate.

#### 2.1. School Culture & Climate

1. Describe how the school promotes a culture of learning, scholarship and high expectations. Be sure to include the following in your response:
	1. How the school’s overall learning environment aligns with its educational program. (Evidence may include, for example, student-led organizations, student achievements and recognition, adult learning communities, levels of disciplinary referrals, class and staff attendance, and participation in school events and activities);
	2. How the school supports the social and emotional health of its students; and
	3. How the school supports staff in creating a classroom environment conducive to student learning.

#### 2.2. Family & Community Engagement

1. Explain how the school promotes family and community involvement. Be sure to include:
	1. Specific examples of how the school partners with families to support students’ academic growth and achievement and social-emotional growth;
	2. Evidence of how plans have been realized; and
	3. Plans to improve the school’s partnerships with families.
2. Describe the various partnerships the school has developed with educational institutions and/or community organizations. Be sure to include:
	1. How these relationships promote and help achieve the school’s mission;
	2. How they align with the school’s education program; and
	3. Plans to improve the school’s partnerships with the community.

### Board Governance

The following questions are aligned with the Organizational Performance Framework, Performance Area 3: Board Governance.

#### 3.1. Board Capacity

1. Provide evidence that the board of trustees governs the school effectively. Be sure to include the following in your response:
	1. The name, email address, board title and terms of each of the board’s current members;
	2. Evidence that the board has the appropriate skills (legal, fiscal, educational, community, etc.) and experience to govern the school effectively;
	3. Information on the board’s priorities for recruitment of additional members and how the board recruits and selects new board members;
	4. Evidence that the board sets school goals aligned to the mission;
	5. Evidence that the board regularly monitors progress relative to its priorities;
	6. Evidence that the board updates school policies to ensure compliance with state statute, Department expectations and applicable requirements to facilitate efficient, effective operations;
	7. Evidence that the board has adequate filled seats and regularly meets quorum, according to its bylaws; and
	8. Evidence that the board evaluates the school leader(s), school business administrator, and/or management organization on an annual basis and holds these individuals accountable for meeting specified goals.

### Access and Equity

The following questions are aligned to the [*Organizational*](https://www.state.nj.us/education/chartsch/accountability/docs/PerformanceFrameworkTA.pdf) Performance Framework, Performance Area 4: Access and Equity.

#### 4.2. Special Education

1. Describe the steps the school takes to identify students in need of Special Education services.
2. Describe the special educational programs and range of services the school provides for identified students.
3. Submit a copy of the school’s RTI, I&RS and/or Referral Intervention Services. Upload to the “Renewal Application 2025” folder in Homeroom saved as a separate document titled “RTI”, “I&RS,” or “Referral Intervention Services.”

#### 4.3. Multilingual Learners

1. Describe the steps the school takes to identify multilingual learners (ML).
2. Describe the programs and range of services the school provides for identified ML students.

### Fiscal Performance Areas

The following items are aligned with the Performance Framework, Section II. Financial Performance.

#### Financial Framework

1. Based on the Performance Framework Financial Ratios reported in the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR):
	1. Provide an explanation for any Near Term or Sustainability Ratios that did not meet standard; and
	2. Provide a plan with timeline for improving any ratios that do not meet standard.

**Note:** please submit this information for current charter term. For FY2023-2024 only, please submit to OCRS Homeroom upon receipt of the FY2023-2024 ACFR. The statutory ACFR deadline is December 5, 2024.

#### Financial Audit

1. *If applicable,*over the last charter term, provide an explanation for the occurrence of the status of current and repeat findings from the Auditor’s Management Report (AMR) and provide a plan including a timeline on resolution of these findings.
2. During the charter term, if the school received significant deficiency or material weaknesses in the ACFR, Schedule K-6, please explain deficiencies/weaknesses and actions taken to remediate.

#### Budget Information

1. **Using the spreadsheet titled, “Renewal App Budget Sum-Years 1–5,”** prepare a budget summary covering projected sources of revenue and planned expenditures for Years 1–5**. The budget(s) should be based on realistic/expected enrollment and not necessarily the maximum enrollment.** If requesting an expansion to the school’s maximum enrollment, please provide two five-year budgets:
	1. Budget Summary 1 - without expansion for Years 1–5
	2. Budget Summary 2 - with expansion for Years 1–5
2. Provide an itemized Budget Narrative for fiscal year 2025-2026. If the school is planning to expand, provide an additional budget narrative reflecting the expansion. ****A Budget Narrative Template can be found on the second tab of the “Renewal App Budget Sum-Years 1–5”.****
3. For years 2026-2030, provide a detailed itemized budget narrative and rationale for budget line items that have significant changes from year to year (such as planned facilities expansion, capital investments, or any change not due to cost-of-living increases.)
4. Using the spreadsheet titled, “Renewal App Budget Sum-Years 1–5,” prepare a Cash Flow Schedule for the 2025-2026 school year only.

##### Note:

* Use the most recent actual revenues available from the latest enrollment count. Prepare the five-year budget assuming revenues are frozen except for increase in enrollment. The purpose of the five-year budget projection is to forecast significant changes in expenses and assess future fiscal viability. Please note that these budgets are solely for forecasting.
* Do not include any reliance on outside fundraising unless the school can document that funding has been secured.
* Charter Schools are required to maintain a separate escrow account of $75,000 for the express purpose of having funds available in the event of a corporate dissolution due to charter surrender, nonrenewal or revocation. A total of $75,000 must be reserved in the escrow account, due five years from the date of signature of the Charter Agreement. This reserve must be maintained outside of the General Fund and cannot be used for operational purposes. The charter school may choose to obtain a surety bond to meet this requirement. Failure to provide for a $75,000 escrow account or surety bond by the end of the four-year period shall be deemed a material violation of the charter agreement.
* The escrow account is not included on the Budget Summary. It does, however, affect the cash flow. On the Cash Flow Schedule, the amount expected to be contributed for the Escrow Account during the first fiscal year can be any amount up to $75,000. The reserve should be manually populated in the Budget column titled “Escrow Account Reserve” and distributed to the appropriate month(s).

### Five Year Planning

#### Maximum Enrollment

1. Based on the school’s **currently approved maximum enrollment,** provide a five-year maximum enrollment chart by grade level, in the prescribed format below. If your charter is renewed **without** expansion, this chart will serve as the maximum enrollment chart of the school over the next five years**. Note that schools must allow for the natural progression of students from year-to-year;** they may not account for year-to-year attrition in their maximum enrollment charts. Please refer to the renewal fiscal checklist provided to the School Business Administrator for the school’s current maximum enrollment chart.

Table 2: Current Approved Maximum Enrollment Chart

| **Grade** | **2024-2025****(current maximum)**  | **2024-2025****(actual enrollment)** | **2024-2025****(maximum)** | **2025-2026****(maximum)** | **2026-2027****(maximum)** | **2027-2028****(maximum)** | **2028-2029****(maximum)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pre-K |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| K |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. If the school requests an increase to its maximum enrollment over the next charter term, provide a **second** enrollment chart below reflecting this request, in the prescribed format. If your charter is renewed with expansion, this chart will serve as the maximum enrollment chart of the school over the next five years. Any increase in enrollment is an amendment to the school’s charter even if the intent of the school’s application or prior amendments was to progress to a grade that is higher than the one presently approved.

**Only one enrollment chart is needed if your school intends to remain at maximum enrollment. If two charts are presented, it is assumed the school is requesting to permanently reduce/increase enrollment.**

**Note that from one charter term to the next, maximum enrollment does not automatically progress to the next grade(s) regardless of the intent of the original application (with or without amendments).** For example, if original charter ended at grade four, despite the perceived intent to progress to grades 5–8 in the renewal charter term, 2 enrollment charts must be presented (chart without expansion ending at grade four and chart with expansion to grades (5–8).

1. Provide a board resolution submitting the application which includes the requested enrollment increase.

Table 3: Proposed Maximum Enrollment Changes

| **Grade** | **2024-2025 (current maximum)**  | **2024-2025 (actual enrollment)** | **2025-2026(maximum)** | **2026-2027****(maximum)** | **2027-2028 (maximum)** | **2028-2029 (maximum)** | **2029-2030 (maximum)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pre-K |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| K |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Note:** Requests for expansion of enrollment will be considered by the Commissioner during the renewal process and a decision will be made at the time of a renewal determination.

#### Facility

1. Provide detailed information on the school's facility plans for the five years of the next charter. The plan should include an adequate and detailed financial arrangement and timeline for the facility.

#### Five-Year Planning

1. Describe the changes and improvements the school will undertake in the next five years based on the school's examination of results and outcomes.
2. Describe any significant changes the school expects to make in the following areas over the next charter term:
	1. Amendments to your school’s charter; and
	2. Governance and/or Education Service Provider (ESP) or Charter Management Organization (CMO) structure.

Note:Questions 3(c) and 3(d) should only be answered by schools requesting expansion into another grade span. For example, a school requesting expansion from K–5 to K–8 over the next charter term is required to answer the questions below. A K–3 school requesting expansion to K–5, but not in to grades 6–8 is **not** required to respond to these two questions.

1. Provide a synopsis of the proposed educational program including key components of the education model and any unique or innovative features of the proposed expansion. Briefly explain the evidence base and performance record that demonstrate the expansion model will be successful in improving academic achievement for the student population. Highlight the following in your response:
	1. Curricular choices;
	2. Educational approaches; and
	3. Instructional strategies.
2. Describe the team’s individual and collective qualifications for implementing the new school design successfully, including capacity in areas such as:
	1. School leadership, administration, and governance;
	2. Staffing and recruiting;
	3. Goal setting and performance management; and
	4. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

## Appendix A:Description of Instructional Practices Template

Please provide a short description of how the school defines high-quality instruction and a description of what instructional practices, behavioral expectations, and types of accommodations the Department review team should expect to see during the renewal site visit.

### Instructional Practices

#### Guiding Questions:

* What should the team see in classrooms that will let them know what students are expected to learn?
* What should the team see in classrooms that will let them know what students are learning?
* What will teachers be doing that will demonstrate that they are implementing the school’s instructional model?
* How does the school define high-quality teaching and what should high-quality teaching look like in the classroom?

#### School’s Description:

### Behavioral Expectations

#### Guiding Questions:

* What is expected of students in terms of behavior?
* What interventions should the team expect to see if behavioral expectations are not met?
* What might observers see teachers doing to encourage students to meet the behavioral expectations?

#### School’s Description:

### Accommodations

#### Guiding Questions:

* What might the team see in classrooms to show that the school is supporting students with diverse learning needs?
* Describe the continuum of services offered to students needing accommodations or modifications.
* How might the team know teachers are implementing IEP accommodations?
* How are teachers expected to deliver ESL instruction in the relevant classrooms?

#### School’s Description: