

Idaho Public Charter School Commission
2019 Annual Report

IDAHO PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION

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ALAN REED, CHAIRMAN

JENN THOMPSON, INTERIM DIRECTOR

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION



Alan Reed, Chairman
Term Ends 2022
Appointed by Pro Tem



Brian Scigliano, Vice Chair
Term Ends 2020
Appointed by Governor



Sherrilynn Bair
Term Ends 2020
Appointed by Governor



Nils Peterson
Term Ends 2023
Appointed by Speaker



Wanda Quinn
Term Ends 2020
Appointed by Governor



Kathleen "Kitty" Kunz
Term Ends 2023
Appointed by Pro Tem



Julie Van Orden
Term Ends 2023
Appointed by Speaker

MISSION STATEMENT

The Public Charter School Commission's mission is to ensure PCSC-authorized public charter schools' compliance with Idaho statute, 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.

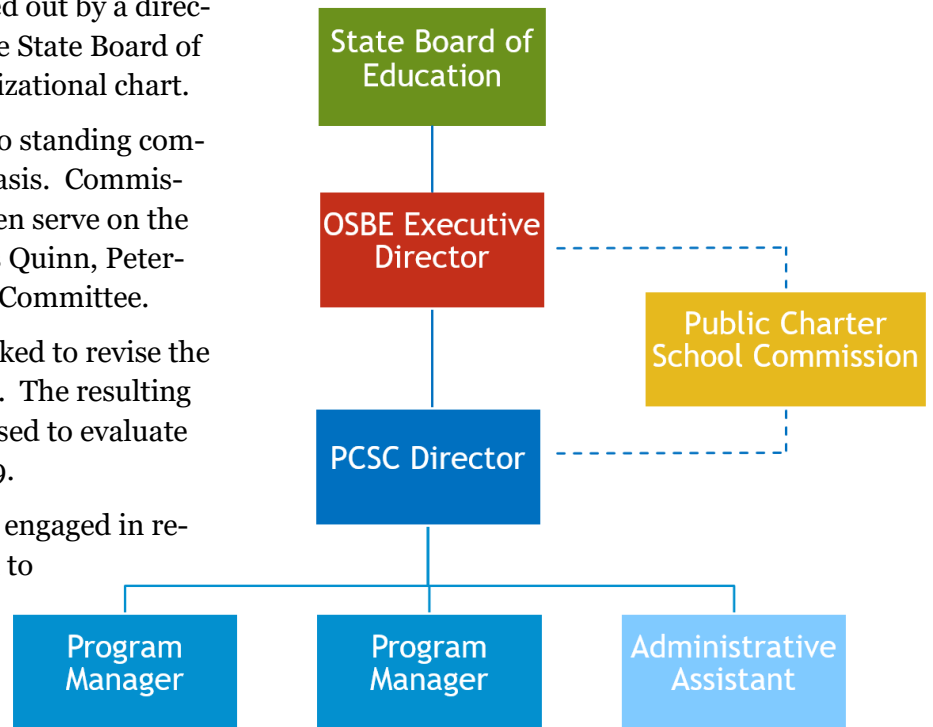
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The work of the commission is carried out by a director and a small team employed by the State Board of Education as illustrated in the organizational chart.

Additionally, the PCSC maintains two standing committees that meet on an as-needed basis. Commissioners Scigliano, Bair, and Van Orden serve on the Petition Committee. Commissioners Quinn, Peterson, and Kunz serve on the Renewal Committee.

In 2018, the Petition Committee worked to revise the PCSC's new petition evaluation tools. The resulting Standard of Quality document was used to evaluate 10 new and transfer petitions in 2019.

The Renewal Committee is currently engaged in reviewing the academic measures used to evaluate schools for the purpose of renewal decisions. The committee intends to hold feedback sessions and continue researching through March and will make specific revision recommendations to the PCSC in the spring.



KEY DOCUMENTS

Performance Certificate

Within 75 days of approving a new charter school petition, the authorizer and the charter school's board must execute an agreement for operations. In Idaho, this document is called a Performance Certificate. The certificate establishes the terms and conditions under which the school can operate, including how many students and what grade levels the school may serve, as well as the key design elements the school's model will deliver. All certificates provide a 5-year term of operation.

Performance Framework

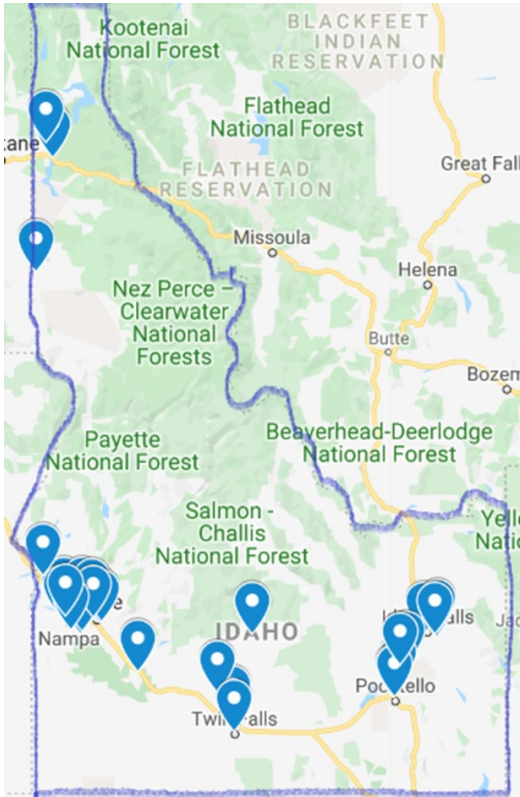
All performance certificates must include a performance framework that establishes the minimum acceptable standards a school must meet in order to earn a subsequent 5-year term of operation. Author-

izers have some flexibility in how measures and metrics are defined. However, all frameworks must consider proficiency, growth, college and career readiness, and board stewardship. The PCSC's framework considers 34 measures across the categories of academic, operational, and financial performance.

Annual Report

Each year, authorizers are required to publish a report that communicates each school's outcomes in relationship to the framework measures adopted in the school's operational certificate.

This report provides continuous improvement data for the school and serves as the primary data source for the commission when considering whether to issue a subsequent operational term to any given charter school.



SCHOOLS SERVED

The Idaho Public Charter School Commission currently serves as authorizer for 52 schools. 45 of these schools were operational during the 2018-19 school year. 7 are pre-operational and plan to open fall of 2020 or 2021.

While the PCSC serves schools across the state, 70% of PCSC portfolio schools are located in either Eastern Idaho or the Treasure Valley.

Approximately 19,200 students attended PCSC portfolio schools last year. This represents 7% of the students who attended Idaho public schools during the 2018-19 school year.

22% of PCSC portfolio schools serve grades K-8. 15% serve only secondary grades, and 18% provide their unique instructional model for students from Kindergarten through graduation.

“Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children.”

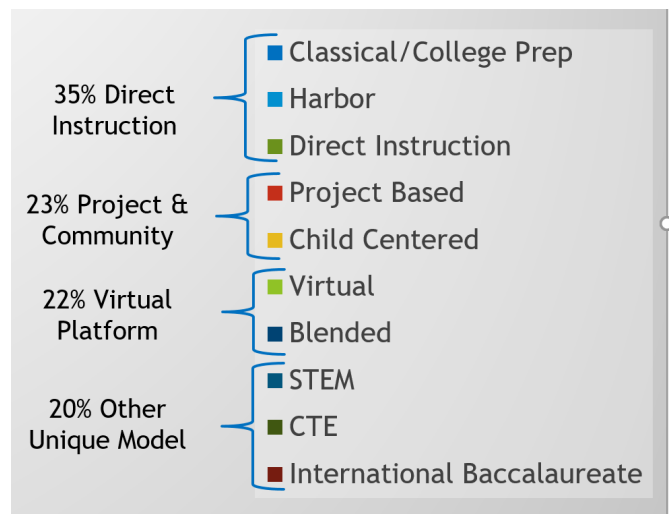
— *Sitting Bull*

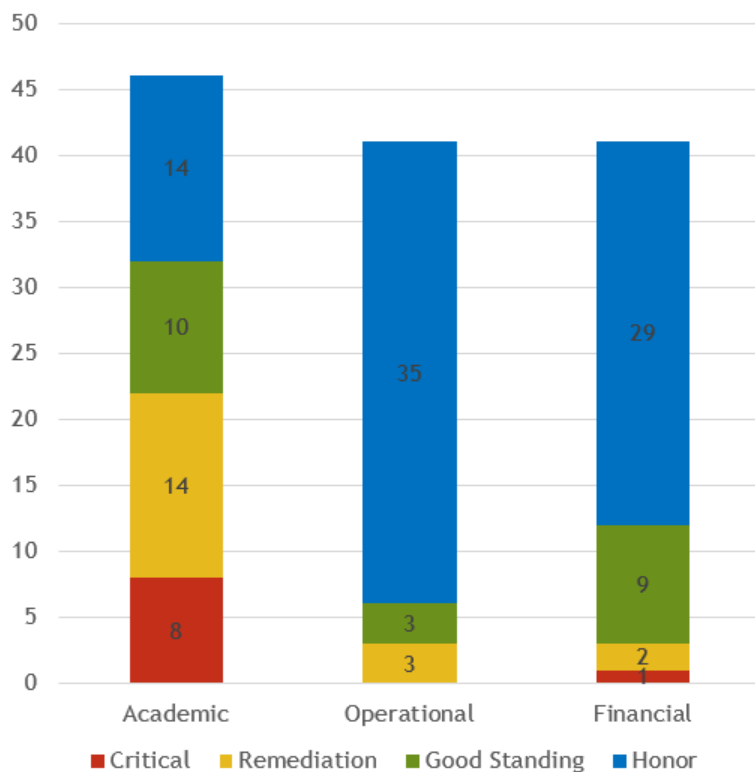
PORTFOLIO DIVERSITY

The PCSC values choice in education and has developed a portfolio that offers a wide variety of instructional models to Idaho families. PCSC schools include models that celebrate the importance of early childhood discovery, such as Montessori and Waldorf, as well as models that deliver a classical education that includes Latin instruction and accelerated learning plans. Instructional models at PCSC schools also include STEM, Project Based Learning, International Baccalaureate, and an Idaho specific model called Harbor.

In addition to diverse instructional models, the PCSC portfolio also offers a variety of delivery methods. These include face-to-face, blended learning, and virtual models, as well as 4-day weeks, 5-day weeks, and traditional, modified, and year-round calendars.

All charter schools in Idaho enroll students based on the equitable selection process established in Idaho Code. This process provides all students equitable access to Idaho’s charter schools.





“Public charter schools are unique public schools that are allowed the freedom to be innovative while being held accountable for advancing student achievement...”

— National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

SCHOOL OUTCOMES FY19

Annually each PCSC school’s performance outcomes are evaluated against the standards established in the PCSC’s framework. School’s receive an accountability designation of honor, good standing, remediation, or critical in three categories (academic, operational, and financial). Accountability designations are determined based on the percentage of points earned across multiple measures in each category. The chart above represents the distribution of accountability designations across PCSC schools during the 2018-19 school year.

Schools that earn an academic accountability designation of Good Standing or Honor in the academic section are guaranteed to receive another 5-year operational term when the school is considered for renewal. 61% of the schools that earned a Critical or Remediation accountability designation

in the academic section are also identified as CSI UP, CSI Grad, TSI or ATSI by the SDE. Through this identification, schools receive additional support and funding targeting improvement in academic outcomes. Because of the scope and quality of services and resources provided by the SDE, the PCSC does not currently offer additional supports in this area.

However, as the operational and financial issues encountered by charter schools are often unique to charter schools, the PCSC does provide additional support in these areas. Schools that earn a Critical or Remediation accountability designation in the operational or financial section receive additional evaluation, direction, and progress monitoring from the PCSC. The ultimate goal of this work is to help schools strengthen their outcomes.



PRIMARY POINTS OF ACTION—COMMISSION

Idaho statute provides three opportunities for authorizers to make operational decisions about any given charter school. These include: the school’s initial petition hearing, the school’s renewal hearing (every 5 years), and on any deadlines established by an operational condition adopted during the renewal process.

At a petition hearing the Commission must approve, deny, or conditionally approve a petition. At the time of renewal the Commission must renew, non-renew, or conditionally renew a school’s performance certificate. If a renewal condition is not met by the established deadline, the PCSC must decide whether to allow the school to continue operating for the remainder of its existing term.

In many ways, the PCSC functions as a risk management team, assessing the initial risk to taxpayer dollars and student achievement, and then revisiting that assessment regularly to determine whether the risk remains below the threshold established by the Performance Framework.

*“There are no shortcuts to true excellence.”
— Angela Duckworth*

PRIMARY POINTS OF ACTION—STAFF

In between a school’s initial petition approval and each 5-year renewal decision, the PCSC staff performs the work of ongoing oversight. This team prepares annual reports for each school aligned to the performance framework. They monitor financial reports and issue notifications of fiscal concern when there is reason to believe that a school may not remain financial viable for the remainder of their operational term. They also manage interventions and investigations when necessary— issuing courtesy letters detailing the concerns a school needs to address for minor issues and reporting more significant issues to the appropriate investigative bodies.

In addition to oversight work, PCSC staff visit schools on a rotational schedule, provide quality resources in areas not addressed by other entities, and deliver proactive communications in an effort to build strong relationships between the authorizer and its schools.

FINDING BALANCE

The PCSC strives to find balance in its dual roles of “Educate and Inform” and “Oversee and Enforce”.

Communicating policy and procedure, providing annual reports, and discussing concerns with honesty and kindness in a timely manner sit on one side of the scale.

On the other side of the scale is the responsibility to protect taxpayer dollars and student achievement through responsible authorizing decisions.

PHASES OF AUTHORIZER DEVELOPMENT

In addition to making decisions about new school approvals and renewing existing schools' operational terms, authorizers serve an important role in facilitating choice, quality, and growth of the sector.

Initially, an authorizer's focus is on providing diverse options for families. The goal during this phase is to respond to community demand for choice while remaining sensitive to data such as population growth and district yield rate to prevent oversaturation. The PCSC's Petition Evaluation Reports help ensure that petition decisions are well-informed.

As an authorizer begins to work with more schools, the work of authorizing evolves to include quality as well as choice. During this phase, evaluating academic, financial, and operational performance are primary actions of all authorizers. This work helps school boards and school leaders identify areas of

potential growth. It informs taxpayers and lawmakers about the return on their investment in charter schools, and it ultimately informs the authorizer's renewal decisions.

Once its schools are performing well, an authorizer can begin to focus on replicating its strongest models. At this mature stage of school development, new school openings are less frequent and more stable.

While charters have existed in Idaho for twenty years, only a few school models have found themselves in a position to effectively replicate, this includes the Gem Innovation blended learning schools as well as the Harbor schools located in Nampa.

Although choice and growth are always in motion, the PCSC is also concerned with supporting its schools as they strengthen and grow.



LOOKING FORWARD

2019 has been a record year of growth in Idaho's charter sector. The PCSC saw 10 charter petitions, the largest annual number in its history. Six new schools are currently preparing to open their doors for the first time. This year has also been one of reflection and lessons learned.

Several improvement projects are in progress. First, the PCSC is evaluating the structure of the academic measures used in its framework to ensure accuracy and credibility of annual reports. Second, the PCSC intends to clarify and document standard intervention procedures to ensure consistency in implementation. Third, the PCSC is working to revise its site visit rubric to better align it with its framework to ensure that site visits are more meaningful for schools and that the contextual information gathered can be used to supplement annual report data during renewal.

Much work lies ahead. The PCSC is committed to its continued service as a quality authorizer in Idaho.

