

Issues for School Districts Accrediting Charter Schools

1. Public charter schools should be accredited by their authorizing school district in the same manner as their noncharter public school counterparts.
2. The accreditation process may be used to either streamline or eliminate the formal charter renewal process that was in existence prior to Accreditation. The annual School Improvement Plan (a.k.a. School Accreditation Plan) may replace the “renewal application” or simply be expanded to include additional elements in order to replace the renewal application.
3. It is a best practice to include accreditation in charter contracts. Some districts have been stipulating a minimum accreditation status in order to remain a charter school in good standing with the authorizer. Failing to maintain satisfactory accreditation status may result in the charter school being placed on probation or the charter eventually being revoked.
4. Charter schools should undergo an annual financial audit. These audits may be conducted by a firm different than one that the district uses. The charter school may, as a district-authorized charter school, participate in the district’s audit in the same manner as any other public school in the district. Participating in the district’s audit does not replace the charter school’s requirement for an independent financial audit.
5. It is important to maintain open lines of communication between the charter school and the authorizing school district. Charter school principals should be on the district’s principal listserv and be invited to principal meetings.