



End-of-Clock Pathway Guidance Conversion to a Charter School

The pathway guidance documents are intended to help districts and schools understand the Accountability Clock pathways outlined in the Education Accountability Act of 2009. Please send any comments or questions to Nate Goss at Goss_N@cde.state.co.us.

	District Pathway ☒	School Pathway ☒
Overview of Strategy	Pathway Definition	The Education Accountability Act outlines a pathway for districts to convert one or more of their public schools to a charter school. A charter school is a semi-autonomous public school operating under a “charter” contract between the members of the charter school community and the authorizer.
	Colorado statutory reference	<p>If a district fails to make substantial progress under its turnaround plan or has been in the accredited with priority improvement plan category or lower for five consecutive years, the State Review Panel may evaluate the school district and recommend: <i>“That one or more of the district public schools be converted to a charter school”</i> C.R.S. § 22-11-209(2)(a)(I)(C)</p> <p>If a school fails to make adequate progress under its turnaround plan or continues to operate under a priority improvement or turnaround plan for five consecutive years, the State Review Panel may evaluate the school and recommend: <i>“With regard to a district public school, that the district public school be converted to a charter school if it is not already authorized as a charter school”</i> C.R.S. §22-11-210(5)(a)(III)</p>
	What is non-negotiable?	<p>Non-negotiable requirements are specified in the Charter Schools Act: <i>C.R.S. §22-30.5-101 et al.</i></p> <p>As with all public schools, charter schools are accountable to federal and state laws and are required to implement the Colorado Academic Standards.</p>



	What is flexible?	Charter schools have the ability to negotiate different aspects of the school through their charter contract, such as educational program, curriculum, governance, personnel and finance.
Rationale for Selecting this Pathway	For which causes of underperformance might this pathway be selected?	Instructional infrastructure, leadership, human capital, academic performance and school governance are all causes of underperformance for which the charter school pathway may be selected.
Governance Implications	What governance and oversight structures are associated with this pathway?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A charter board, independent of the district, is created as part of charter application process. ● The charter school planning board engages the community during the planning process. ● The charter board establishes their own policies and procedures including curriculum, schedule, staffing structure, calendar, etc.
	What is the role of the Board in implementing this strategy? For charters, what are the roles of the charter school governing board and the authorizing board in effectively implementing this strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The district/LEA serves as the authorizer, which reviews financial and other reports ongoing as dictated in the charter contract. A local district also has the authority to release the charter school to the Charter School Institute if they so choose. ● The authorizer performs annual evaluations of the school and provides them to the charter school governing board. ● The authorizer performs renewal processes as dictated in the charter contract. ● As charter schools are developed independent of the district, how a Request for Proposals process help identify those interested in developing a charter in that specific area?
Conditions Necessary for Success with this Strategy	What kind of leadership does the district/authorizer need to be able to provide?	The district may be unfamiliar with charter statutes and authorizing requirements, and may not have the capacity to easily develop this knowledge/capability. The district should consider utilizing the Charter School Institute (CSI) to assist in the review process or release the school to be authorized directly by CSI if they do not have the capacity.
	What kind of school-level leadership must be in place?	Strong school leadership is also essential to launching a charter school. The school leader should be familiar with the charter context in Colorado and understand the roles and responsibilities of a school leader vs. that of the governing board to be able to navigate that relationship.



	<p>What kind of leadership must the local board be prepared to provide? For charter schools, what kind of leadership must the governing board be prepared to provide?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The authorizing board must be prepared to perform annual evaluations on the school and hold them accountable to the terms in their charter contract. ● Strong, knowledgeable and diverse skill-set is needed amongst governing board members in order to ensure a quality start/restart for the school. Consider if there are prospective community member willing and capable to serve in this capacity that are independent of district board members/staff.
<p>Funding Considerations</p>	<p>What are the financial considerations associated with this strategy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New charter schools require initial one-off investment in materials and equipment that are aligned to its unique educational program. ● If a district facility is not available, a new charter school would need to consider how to cover capital expenditures. ● The charter school shall receive 100% of the PPR for each pupil enrolled in the charter school. However, the authorizing district or CSI can retain up to 5% of the charter school’s PPR for central administrative overhead costs per§22-30.5-112(2)(a)(III)(A). ● New charter schools, or public schools converted to a charter school as a turnaround strategy, can be eligible for federal start-up support through the Colorado Charter Schools Program (CCSP) grant. Up to \$215,000 per year for three years. ● If a district facility is available, the charter school must be given the option of first refusal per §22-30.5-104(7)(c-d). ● Charter schools have their own operating budget, independent of their authorizing district.
<p>Risks/Special Considerations</p>	<p>What risks associated with this pathway might a district want to consider?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In a district of declining enrollment, there may be cost implication to the district when adding a charter school. ● The authorizing district or CSI remains accountable for the performance of a charter school. ● If the district is pursuing an online charter, additional considerations and processes will need to be addressed (i.e. the Multi-district certification process or single district recognition). <p>http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/events</p>



	What other information is important to be aware of?	The Charter School Institute and the Colorado League of Charter Schools are organizations that can offer resources to support authorizers and charter schools. The Schools of Choice Office runs a Charter School Boot Camp each year to support charter school planning teams and connect them with resources.
Examples	Where has this pathway been implemented with success? What other resources would be helpful to look at if considering this pathway?	Denver Schools of Science and Technology: http://dsstpublicschools.org/ STRIVE Preparatory Schools: http://www.striveprep.org/ KIPP Colorado: http://www.kippcolorado.org/
CDE Contact Information	Which unit should a district contact for more information about this pathway?	For further information, please visit: Choice & Innovation Unit http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart