


# **Maryland Charter School Network**

## **Evaluation Plan**

### **Module VI A**

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Using documents originally published by:

- Foundation Center
- Illinois Charter School Resource Guide
- Maryland Public Charter Schools Model  
Policy and Resource Guide 8/2003
- The Massachusetts Charter School  
Handbook
- New Jersey Charter School Application
- Northwest Regional Educational  
Laboratories



# **Module VI A.**

## **Evaluation Plan**

### **Topics**

- A. Defining and Measuring Student Performance
- B. Mandatory Testing & NCLB
- C. Performance Measures and Outcomes
- D. Reporting
- E. Annual report

# **A. Defining and Measuring Student Performance**






## **The Accountability Plan answers these questions:**

- **How will students be assessed?**
- **Is the assessment system clear and valid?**
- **Does accountability correspond to applicable state standards and requirements?**



**The accountability plan is the mechanism through which the school indicates:**

- **The goals/objectives/outcomes the school plans to achieve**
- **Performance levels the school will be held accountable for attaining**



**A charter school accountability plan is designed to provide:**

- a) Information needed to measure and track the school's progress toward its goals**
- b) Program adjustments, when needed**
- c) Reports to parents, the community, and the chartering authority on performance and progress**




## **The six key questions are:**

- 1) What is our school's mission?**
- 2) What do we want our students to know and be able to do?**
- 3) How will we know whether our students are achieving or attaining the goals and standards we specified in our charter?**
- 4) How will we gather and monitor the necessary student performance information?**
- 5) How will we set and measure progress toward school performance goals?**
- 6) How will we use the student and school performance information we have gathered?**




## **Four main categories of a school's accountability are:**

- 1) Academic**
- 2) Fiscal**
- 3) Rule Compliance**
- 4) Public/Parental**

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**The Massachusetts Charter School Resource Center offers the following process to assist charter school founders, planners, and community groups as they create an assessment system.**

- **Create realistic, measurable, and publicly known student standards for the school.**
- **Develop a sequenced curriculum that is aligned to the school's standards.**
- **Select and align appropriate measurement tools—external and internal—and benchmarks for the standards.**
- **Develop an internal data management system to provide staff with information for curricular and instructional decision-making.**
- **Develop a communication system for informing and educating the entire school community about the school standards, curriculum, and performance measurement.**



**High-quality charters and charter contracts also clearly specify how the school will assess student progress toward the school's goals and standards. Measurements directly linked to the standards are critical. Assessments come in many forms:**

- **Multiple-choice exams**
- **Open-ended questions**
- **Essay tests**
- **“Authentic assessments” such as portfolios of student work**

**To be effective, though, assessments must yield reliable information about student, teacher, and school performance vis-à-vis the academic standards.**

# Consequences of Student Evaluation:

- **Students should be promoted to the next grade only when they have met the academic standards required**
- **Schools that consistently fail to meet standards should face interventions (such as reconstitution) and penalties (including the possibility of being closed down)**
- **Teachers whose students consistently fail to meet standards should also face retraining and eventual termination**
- **Students, teachers, and schools should enjoy rewards for high performance**



**In *Writing the Charter School's Accountability Plan*, respond to these broad questions:**

- Describe the self-evaluation process that will be utilized to track the school's progress.
- Describe the role of each of the following in the evaluation process:
  - board of trustees;
  - administrative and teaching staff;
  - parents;
  - students; and
  - consultants.
- Include a description of the specific measures and/or documentation processes that will be used to assess the achievement of each of the school's academic and non-academic goals and their respective objectives.



***In Writing the Charter School's Accountability Plan, respond to these broad questions:***

- Describe how the charter school self-evaluation process will facilitate the production of the charter school's annual report.
- Describe how the charter school will evaluate:
  - lead person/administrators;
  - teachers; and
  - support staff.
- Provide the standards/criteria for staff performance evaluations.



## Reviewers may look for evidence of:

- A plan that contains goals for organizational viability and the instruments and data that will be used to measure these goals
- A plan with a reasonable, thorough and sound design for measuring and reporting the performance and progress of the charter school
- A professional development plan and staff evaluation criteria that are based on high professional standards and are consistent with the school's mission and goals
- A commitment to accountability for results and the capacity to achieve those results

# **B. Mandatory Testing & NCLB**





## **All charter schools are required to follow:**

- **Maryland State Assessment (MSA)**
- **Other state assessments per statute**
- **District wide assessments (will vary by district)**
- **NCLB (No Child Left Behind)**



# The Impact of the New Title I Requirements and NCLB on Charter Schools

- Charter schools, like all public schools within a State, are subject to the State's Title I accountability requirements.
- The charter authorizer is responsible for holding charter schools accountable for Title I, Part A provisions.
- NCLB requires that authorizers monitor their charter schools to ensure they are meeting the State's AYP definition. If authorizers wish, they may choose to incorporate the AYP definition into charter contracts, but NCLB does not explicitly require this step.
- The LEA (District) should allocate Federal funds to the school on the same basis that it provides funds to its other schools.
- If a charter school fails to meet AYP requirements, then the charter school authorizer must take actions as required by NCLB.



# The Impact of the New Title I Requirements and NCLB on Charter Schools

- LEAs should list charter schools that have not been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring as choice options for parents who wish to transfer their child to a higher-performing school.
- Charter schools that admit students using a lottery do not have to give priority to eligible students transferring under the public school choice provisions of NCLB.
- Parents of enrolled students must be notified by the LEA if a charter school is identified as in need of improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.
- Charter schools that are parts of LEAs are required to provide choice options and offer transportation for students to other higher-performing schools in the LEA if the charter school is identified by the State as in need of improvement, corrective action, restructuring.



# The Impact of the New Title I Requirements and NCLB on Charter Schools

- Charter schools that are not identified for improvement are eligible to become supplemental educational service providers pursuant to the Title I requirements.
- As with other public schools, if a charter school is identified as in need of improvement for two or more years, then Title I students in the school are eligible to receive supplemental educational services. The LEA must pay for such services on the same basis as it would pay for supplemental services for eligible students in any other school.



# The Impact of the New Title I Requirements and NCLB on Charter Schools

- As with other public schools, charter schools that are unable to make AYP by the end of the second full school year after identification are placed under corrective action according to Section 1116(b)(7)(C) of ESEA. NCLB gives the appropriate entity under state law the responsibility to reorganize a charter school's management and enforce other corrective actions, consistent with State charter law and the State's accountability plan for its charter schools. State charter law shall determine if this requires the charter school to modify its charter contract.



# The Impact of the New Title I Requirements and NCLB on Charter Schools

- If a State's charter school law allows public schools to convert to charter status, a State's Title I accountability plan may explain how the process of converting schools identified for corrective action to charter schools would work. The accountability plan might also identify the entities that will be expected to authorize such charters and explain whether these entities have discretion in extending the contracts for these charter schools.
- Teachers of core academic subjects in charter schools must meet the other requirements that apply to public school teachers, including holding a four-year college degree and demonstrating competence in the subject area in which they teach. According to Section 9101(11) of NCLB, the term "core academic subjects" includes English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.



# The Impact of the New Title I Requirements and NCLB on Charter Schools

- Paraprofessionals with instructional support duties in charter schools receiving Title I funds need to meet the same requirements as paraprofessionals in traditional Title I public schools. This requirement applies only to paid paraprofessionals and not parents or other volunteers. According to Section 1119(c) and (d) of ESEA, paraprofessionals hired after enactment of NCLB (January 8, 2002) and working in Title I programs must complete at least two years of study at an institution of higher education, possess at least an associate's degree, or demonstrate subject matter competence through a formal State or local assessment. If a charter school does not accept Title I funds, it does NOT have to comply with these requirements for paraprofessionals.

# The Impact of the New Title I Requirements and NCLB on Charter Schools

- For more information please consult the US Department of Education's Title I regulations at:  
<http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/finrule/2002-4/120202a.html>.
- You may also wish to consult the non-regulatory guidance on public school choice at:  
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SASA/schoolchoiceguid.doc>

## **C. Performance Measures and Outcomes**



## Explanation of Measurement Tools

- Measurement tools are the means used to evaluate progress toward performance objectives.
- Most schools use multiple tools for measuring student and school performance, both for planning within the school and for demonstrating success to others. The key elements of any measurement tool are objectivity and credibility.



## **Tips:**


- Subject all measurement tools to the questions:
  - *Is this credible?*
  - *Is this objective?*
- Any of following are acceptable measurement tools:
  - *standardized tests;*
  - *district tests;*
  - *exhibitions of proficiency and/or portfolios, as long as they are accompanied by credible rubrics; outside juries or judges;*
  - *changes in discipline referrals, school attendance, or dropout rates;*
  - *rate of students attending two- or four-year colleges.*
- Standardized tests are not the only measurement tool for judging student achievement, but the results are extremely credible to outsiders and may be required.



## Choosing Assessment Tools

Broadly speaking,  
there are two types of measurement  
indicators—


*external and internal assessments.*



**External assessments** are standardized tests that have been developed outside of the school to measure the performance of students. Often schools use the same test at each grade level in order to track growth, or improvement, in students' performance over time. Standardized tests are useful in evaluating mastery of core skills.

They are administered to large groups of students across the country under the same conditions, so results for one student or school can be compared with others at the same grade level in another school, district, or state.

External assessments are not specifically designed to match any one school's curriculum. Schools should select those standardized tests that measure progress in areas in which the school is interested.

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**Internal assessments** (also known as “alternative assessments” and “performance- based assessments”) are developed within the school and require students to demonstrate mastery of the skills in the school’s own curriculum. In contrast to most external tests, internal assessments typically require extended activity and engagement with the content area. They usually focus on problem solving and critical thinking, frequently posing problems to which there are many possible solutions and approaches for reaching them. Since most are “homegrown,” it is important to seek some measure of external validity for them.



## Value of Using External Assessments

- Evaluating mastery of core basic skills that are deemed important by a wide audience.
- Assessing change in student performance over time. If the tests are repeated annually, the scores can be used to show, for example, growth from one year to the next. This can be particularly helpful if you have scores on a test at the very beginning of a student's tenure at your school, as well as data from each year the student studies with you.
- Comparing the performance of students to neighboring schools and other districts that administer the same standardized tests. When considered along with demographic data that you collect on the student body, these tests can help you and the public understand the performance of the students in the appropriate context.
- Informing the development of internal tests, particularly if the school's internal and external tests are intended to measure the same skills or content areas. This can give teachers more confidence in their internal assessments.




There are two types of standardized tests that charter schools typically use to examine student performance—

***norm-referenced***

and

***standards-referenced tests.***

The former compares the performance of students to a “***norm group,***” and the latter looks at a ***student’s performance against a set of externally defined standards.***



**Norm-Referenced Tests** Norm-referenced tests assess performance at each grade level. They look at a student's performance on a set of skills relative to that of other students from a particular norm group.

Examples of commonly used norm-referenced tests include: the *Stanford Achievement Test*, *California Achievement Test*, the *Metropolitan Achievement Test*, the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*, the *Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills*, and *Terra Nova*.

**Most charter schools use at least one norm-referenced test.**



## **Norm-Referenced Tests**

Generally norm-referenced tests provide the most valuable information to teachers when administered in the spring. Spring scores allow the teacher to examine student success based on seven to eight months of instruction.

For new schools (and for new students at existing schools) using a norm-referenced test, consider giving the test twice, once in the fall to get baseline information and again in the spring.

Baseline information will provide important information about strengths and deficiencies around which teachers can start to plan.



## **Standards-Referenced Tests**

Rather than comparing students to a norm group, standards-referenced tests (SRTs) measure students' performance against standards for achievement set by teams assembled by the testing companies and typically comprised of teachers and other experts.

Student scores indicate where they fall in relation to the standards set for a particular grade level. SRTs are often used by states to measure whether students have sufficiently mastered the state's standards.

Performance of an individual student on a standards-referenced test is measured independent of the performance of other students. Performance is measured against a "benchmark" established prior to anyone actually taking the test



## **Standards-Referenced Tests**

**Unlike norm-referenced tests,  
all students in a class can succeed at high levels  
or all students in a class can fail.**

**Some schools find these results appealing  
because interpretation is so straightforward.**

**Standards-referenced tests differ slightly from  
criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) in that in the  
latter students pass or fail.**



## **Building a Portfolio System**

Internal assessment tools are tied directly to the school's standards and curriculum. These assessments, including tests, quizzes, projects, and written reports, are typically used to give a student a letter grade.

Many schools develop portfolio systems designed to bring together all or selected internal assessments to document a student's academic performance over time and to gain a deeper look into what a student knows and is able to do.

Simply stated, portfolios are purposeful collections of student work. Because they are homegrown assessment systems that teachers create and implement, portfolio systems look different in each school setting.




## **Building a Portfolio System**

Building a portfolio assessment system is hard work. They must be supported by the school structure, adequate teacher/student time and resources, and targeted professional development programs.

School structure must permit sufficient teacher dialogue, and also foster a culture of teacher openness, honesty, and receptivity to having other teachers look at their students' work.

For the portfolio process to succeed, teachers must become "critical friends," reviewing each other's work so that they come to agree on what constitutes exemplary student work.



## **Portfolio assessment systems generally share several important characteristics:**

1. The philosophy that portfolios measure student performance in the integrated context of school standards, curriculum, and assessment.
2. Over the course of the year teachers work with students to collect, select, and reflect on examples of their work that demonstrate knowledge and skills in accordance with the goals of the portfolio. The samples of work are then stored in the classroom, in folders, binders, file cabinets, or electronically.
3. Criteria for judging student performance are public. Students know exactly what standards are being applied to their work.
4. While the classroom teacher scores the individual pieces of work in the portfolio and perhaps scores the portfolio as a whole, a team of teachers, often across grades and content areas, also reviews and judges student portfolios as a means of ensuring validity, reliability, and consistency. Sometimes community members or experts in the field are invited to review student portfolios as well.
5. The portfolio typically follows the student to the next grade level.

## D. Reporting



# Data Management Issues

- What baseline information is needed on all students in order to begin an assessment system?
- How will the school manage the assessment process?
- Will a staff person be hired to coordinate the assessment process?
- What will be this person's qualifications?
- Should all the test information be housed in one database management system?
- In what format should performance data be examined?
- How will external test data be linked to other forms of student performance data?
- What questions do teachers and administrators have about the relative performance of particular groups of students, for example, girls versus boys, those whose first language is English and those whose first language is not, students on free or reduced lunch and those who are not?
- If subgroup information is desired, how would demographic information about the student population be gathered and housed?

# E. Annual Report



## **The following are some of the main financial reporting requirements of charter schools:**

- Annual report
- Pupil and financial end-of-year report
- Year-end audit



# **An Annual Report may describe in detail the following:**

- **Achievement of the Schools Mission, Goals and Objectives.**
- **Efficiency in the Governance and Management of the School**
  - Summary of Board Accomplishments
  - Board Policies
  - Board Meetings
  - Board Committees
  - Open Public Meetings Act Compliance
  - Board Training

# **An Annual Report may describe in detail the following:**

- **Attainment of the Maryland Curriculum Content Standards and the Delivery of an Educational Program Leading to High Student Achievement**
  - Incorporation of Content Standards
  - Summary of Progress
  - Planned Activities
  - Innovative Programs and Practices
  - Family Activities
  - Academic Programs: Math Program; Reading Program; Writing Program; Science Program; Spanish Language Program
  - Technology Education
  - Professional Development/Support Provided for Teachers and Staff



# **An Annual Report may describe in detail the following:**

- **Maryland State Assessment (MSA) Results and Local Assessment of Students**
  - Summary of Assessment Plan
  - Results from Standardized Assessment
  - Reporting System
  - Accountability
- **Degree of Parental and Community Involvement in the School**
  - Parental Involvement: Outreach Procedures; Organizations and
  - Committees; Parent Satisfaction; Training and Support
  - Community Involvement: Outreach Procedures; School Community, Activities; Plans.



# **An Annual Report may describe in detail the following:**

- **Public Relations and Outreach Efforts**
- **Student Admission Policies and Staff Recruitment Plan**
  - Admission Policies: Timelines and Activities; Admission Results; Student Withdrawals and Exit Interviews
  - Staff Recruitment: Timelines; Application Review and Interview Procedures; Recruitment Results; Exit Interview Procedure and Results



# **An Annual Report may describe in detail the following:**

- **Contextual Factors Regarding Student Success Achievement**
  - Diverse Learners: Students with Educational Disabilities; Bilingual/ESL
  - Students; At-Risk Students.
  - Non-Academic Programs
  - School Culture
- **Annual Financial Report**
- **Report from outside Evaluator.**

# End Module VI A

