

Charter Renewal Case Study



Colorado Charter School Institute



Agenda

- Introduction
- Renewal as a Quality Authorizer Practice
- Critical Practices
 - Communication
 - Transparency
 - Data-Informed Decisions
- CSI Renewal Process Overview
 - Renewal Phases
 - Site Visits
 - Board Engagement
 - Renewal Report and Recommendation
- Resources



Introduction



Ryan Marks

Director of Evaluation
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Colorado Charter
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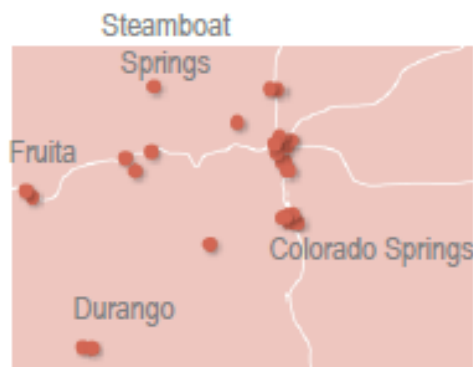




What is CSI?

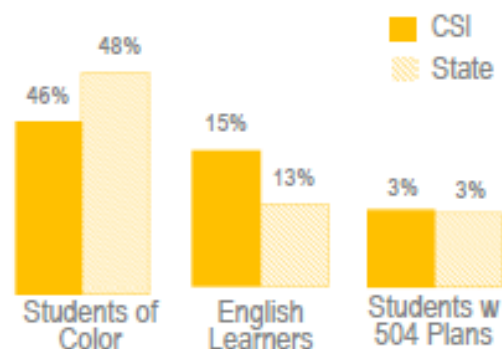
Our Schools

CSI oversees 42 charter schools that serve 20,000+ students and offer 16 unique educational models, including AEC, Early College, and Montessori.



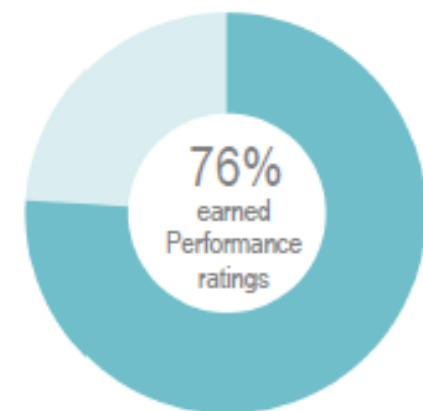
Our Students

CSI continues to increase service to students with special needs and remains comparable to the state for enrollment of students of color, English Learners, and students with 504 plans.



Our Outcomes

CSI holds schools accountable for their performance. Three out of four CSI schools earned the state's highest academic rating this past year.





Why Charter Renewal?

The authority to operate a charter school is granted through a limited-term, renewable contract.

Renewal is not automatic – it must be earned through strong academic results, financial viability, and operational effectiveness.

Charter schools are built around the promise of greater autonomy in exchange for greater accountability, and the renewal process provides an opportunity to review the charter school's prior performance.



A strong renewal process is critical to protect charter school autonomy, student rights, and the public interest, and ensures that schools are held to high standards.





Quality Authorizer Practice

A quality authorizer designs and implements a transparent and rigorous process that uses comprehensive academic, financial, and operational performance data to make merit-based renewal decisions



NACSA Practices and Standards

- Charter renewal is a NACSA Essential Practice
- The NACSA Quality Standards include several that focus on charter renewal



Quality Authorizer Practice

1

Communication

Quality renewal practices are essential for effective oversight, communication with charter schools, and public accountability and transparency.

2

Transparency

Quality renewal practices help establish expectations, guide practice, assess progress, and inform decision making.

3

Data-informed Decisions

Quality renewal practices build a comprehensive body of evidence that support the authorizer's decision.

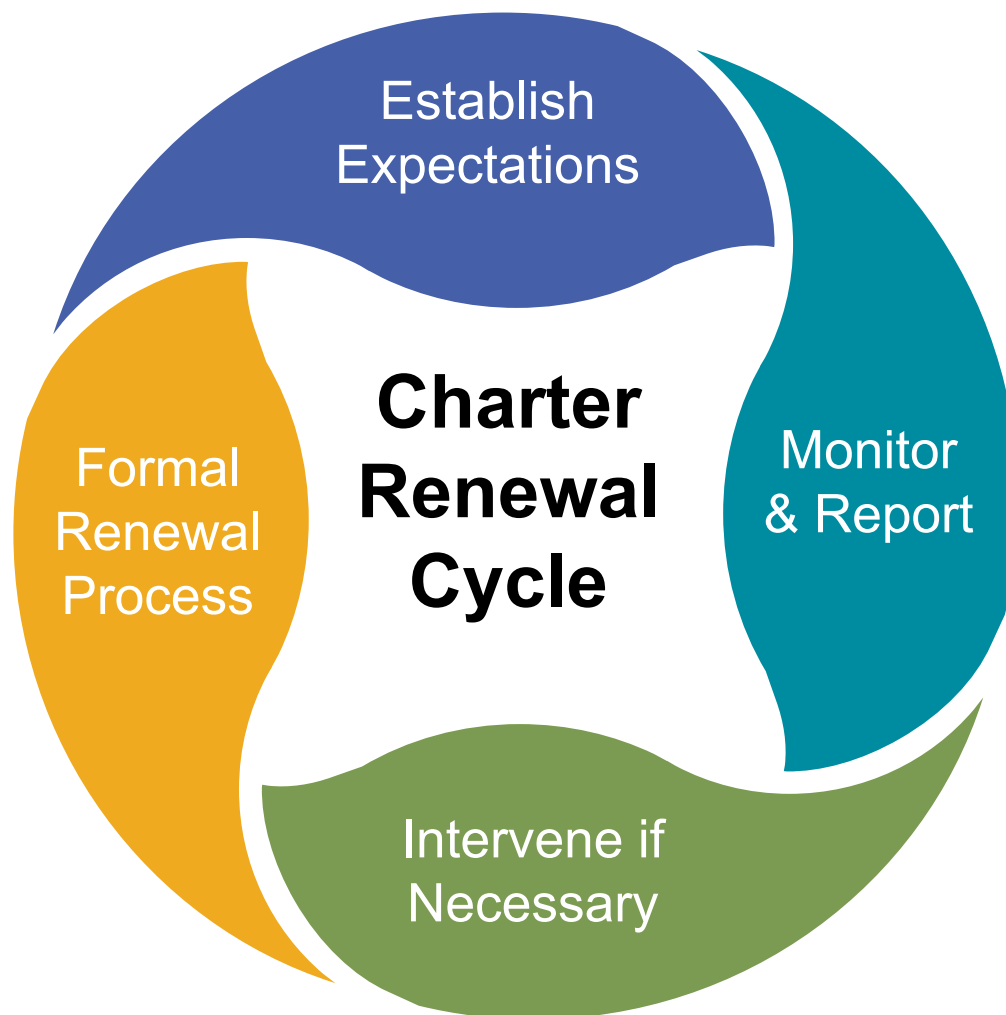


NACSA Quality Practice Project Finding

Authorizer provides applicants and the public detailed information about the application process including timelines, evaluation criteria, previously submitted and reviewed applications, feedback and correspondence with prior applicants, and recordings of board meetings and application hearings.



Renewal Cycle



Establish Expectations

- Academic, Financial and Operational Performance Frameworks
- Statutory Expectations
- Charter Contract

Monitor & Report

- Site visits
- Compliance monitoring
- Annual Reports

Intervene if Necessary

- Written Notice/Breach of Contract
- Interim Review
- Remedy Plan

Formal Renewal Process

- Body of Evidence
- Renew/Length of Term
- Non-Renew/Close Low Performers





Critical Practice - Communication

Materials

Renewal materials are updated annually and include a handbook as well as one-page summaries and overviews that provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the charter renewal process. Additionally, any required submission includes CSI-developed samples or guides (e.g., strategic planning resources).

- **Comprehensive handbook**
- **Single page resources**
- **Website**
- **Supplemental resources**

Process

The renewal process kicks off at the start of the calendar year and concludes six months prior to the expiration of the contract. It is a streamlined process that aligns various components of the charter renewal process with ongoing school processes and focus the conversation on the data and information that matters most.

- **Year-long, aligned process**
- **Multiple board meetings**
- **Monthly phone calls**



NACSA Quality Standard

Regularly updates and publishes the process for renewal decision making, including guidance regarding required content and format for renewal applications.



Critical Practice – Transparency

Expectations

The expectations for schools (submission requirements, meetings, etc.) throughout the renewal process are clearly articulated in the handbook and supporting resources. Similarly, expectations for school performance are also clearly communicated upfront and throughout the contract term.

- **Renewal requirements/timelines**
- **Coaching support**
- **Alignment with annual reports**
- **Report, then recommendation**

Feedback

The renewal process includes several opportunities for schools to receive feedback. In addition to the feedback provided through the annual reports, feedback is provided on draft renewal narrative requirements prior to the finalization of the submission. Schools also present to the authorizer board prior to finalizing the submission and can therefore adjust their submission as needed.

- **Aligned with annual reports**
- **Draft submission**
- **Authorizer board engagement**



NACSA Quality Standard

Requires any school seeking renewal to apply for it through a renewal application, which provides the school a meaningful opportunity and reasonable time to respond to the cumulative report; to correct the record, if needed; and to present additional evidence regarding its performance.

Critical Practice – Data-Informed Decisions



Evaluation

The majority of the renewal evaluation is based on the evidence of school performance over the charter term; however, schools can present new or supplemental evidence around school performance in the areas of academics, finances, and organization/ governance.

- Annual report
- Continuous improvement plan
- Multiple opportunities for engagement
- Streamlined application

Judgement

Well-developed protocols and tools are used in decision-making. These tools assist, but do not dictate, decision-making. Renewal decisions are grounded in facts, data, and expertise from a robust body of evidence.

- Protocols and tools
- Collaborative review
- Time



NACSA Quality Practice Project Finding

Create and use protocols and processes that allow for nuanced discussions, and collect numerous qualitative and quantitative data to inform and justify decisions with evidence.



CSI Renewal Process Overview





The diagram consists of three rounded rectangular boxes arranged horizontally, each containing text. The first box is blue, the second is green, and the third is orange. They are all set against a light gray background that has a large arrow shape pointing to the right, suggesting a sequential process.

Phase 1:
Preparing and
Aligning for
Renewal

Phase 2:
Working
Towards
Renewal

Phase 3:
Submitting and
Finalizing
Renewal



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Phase 1: Preparing and Aligning for Renewal

This phase of renewal begins in the spring prior to the renewal year. During this phase, CSI staff will engage with the school leader and school board to outline the renewal process and support the school in aligning existing processes for renewal.

Timeline

- ☐ February-April 2021: CSI staff attend school board meeting to provide an overview of the renewal process
- ☐ March 2021: Kick-off phone call with applicant
- ☐ March 2021: CSI releases CSI Renewal Handbook
- ☐ April 2021: Monthly phone call with applicant (as needed)
- ☐ April 2021: Review Unified Improvement Plan and begin updating
- ☐ April/May 2021: Review school board calendar and plan for board actions required as a part of renewal (strategic plan, board self-evaluation/needs assessment, etc.)

School Submission Requirements*

| Item | Due Date | Notes |
|--|----------|---|
| Interim assessment login credentials | 5/3/2021 | Submit to Aislinn Walsh (aislinnwalsh@csi.state.co.us) |
| Intent to renew form and signed board resolution | 6/1/2021 | Items to submit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Complete, sign, and submit the intent to renew form attached to this letter which includes verifying/updating school profile <u>information</u><input type="checkbox"/> School board resolution requesting charter renewal |

**Unless otherwise noted, all submissions should be sent to Ryan Marks (ryanmarks@csi.state.co.us).*

Phase 1:
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Phase 2: Working towards Renewal

The second phase of the renewal process takes place during the summer and early fall prior to the renewal year. During this phase, the school leader and school board work towards completing the required renewal submissions and plan for the CSI Renewal Site Visit. CSI staff will continue to engage with both school leader and school board to provide support and guidance in this work. In addition, CSI staff will attend a school board meeting to learn about the school's strategic plan and the results of the school board's self-evaluation.

Timeline

- ☐ Beginning April 2021: Prepare for and schedule the CSI Renewal Site Visit (site visits will occur in May, August, September, or October)
- ☐ May 2021: Monthly phone call with applicant (as needed)
- ☐ May/August/September/October 2021: CSI Renewal Site Visit
- ☐ May/June/August/September/October 2021: CSI staff will attend either one or two school board meetings (one may overlap with the CSI Renewal Site Visit)
- ☐ May/June/July 2021: School works on submission requirements (Academic Submission, Financial Submission, Organizational/Governance Submission) and optional review of existing documents,
- ☐ June 2021: Monthly phone call with applicant (as needed)

School Submission Requirements

| Item | Due Date | Notes |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|--|
| Financial Submission | 6/30/2021 | Items to submit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3-year financial forecast (the current year fiscal forecast plus three additional years) <i>Note: 3-year financial forecast will include the budget for the next fiscal year and this should be identical to the budget submitted to CSI as a part of the annual budget submission process.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Financial policies and procedures |
| Academic Submission | 7/12/2021 | Items to submit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Current Performance and Data Analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Areas of Priority Improvement and Root Cause Analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Major Improvement Strategies <i>Note: Schools may submit their UIP draft to fulfill this requirement if the UIP sufficiently addresses the required areas needed as a part of the academic submission for renewal.</i> |
| Organizational/Governance Submission | 8/16/2021 | Items to submit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational chart <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic plan <input type="checkbox"/> Board self-evaluation/needs <u>assessment</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher/leader evaluation template and confirmation of completion <input type="checkbox"/> School bylaws <input type="checkbox"/> EMO/ESP Management Agreement (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> New Waiver Requests (if applicable) |

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Phase 3: Submitting and Finalizing Renewal

The third phase of charter renewal takes place from early fall through CSI Board action on renewal applications in December. During this phase, CSI staff will provide feedback on initial submission drafts, request any additional information based on the release of the State School Performance Framework and/or the CARS Report, conduct the CSI Renewal Site Visit if it hasn't occurred already, and support the school in preparing for their visit with the CSI board.

Timeline

- ☐ August 2021: Monthly phone call with applicant (as needed)
- ☐ August/September/October 2021: School leader and board members attend a CSI Regional Board of Director Meeting (August - Denver, September - Western Slope, October - Colorado Springs)
- ☐ September 2021: Release of the SPF and CARS Report
- ☐ September 2021: Monthly phone call with applicant (as needed)
- ☐ October 2021: Renewal submissions revised and resubmitted (as needed based on feedback from CSI staff and board, and the results of the SPF and CARS Report)
- ☐ November 9, 2021: Q&A with CSI board Performance Management Committee**
- ☐ November 25, 2021: Renewal Report released to school
- ☐ December 7, 2021: CSI board Performance Management Committee discussion of Renewal Report and Recommendation**
- ☐ December 14, 2021: CSI board action**

School Submission Requirements

| Item | Due Date | Notes |
|---|------------|--|
| Final Renewal Packet Submission | 10/18/2021 | In addition to submitting any required revisions to documents submitted in June/July/August, schools should submit reviewed bylaws (if applicable), policies, and waivers as outlined below ("Required Review"). |
| Response to CSI Renewal Report (optional) | 11/29/2021 | Schools have the option to add supplemental evidence to the report, if vetted and approved by CSI staff. |

***Dates subject to annual approval of the 2021-22 CSI Board of Directors Meeting schedule.*

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➤ Work on Academic, Financial & Organizational/Governance Submissions

Description: Schools should begin working on completing the required academic, financial, and organizational/governance submissions during the late spring and over the summer. Many of the submissions and documents that are required should already exist but will need to be reviewed and updated as needed prior to submission to CSI as a part of the renewal application.

Academic Submission Requirements:

- ☐ Current performance and data analysis
- ☐ Areas of priority improvement and root cause analysis
- ☐ Major improvement strategies

Note: Schools may submit their UIP draft to fulfill this requirement if the UIP sufficiently addresses the required areas need as a part of the academic Submission for renewal.

Financial Submission Requirements:

- ☐ 3- year financial forecast (the current fiscal year forecast plus a forecast for each of the next three years)
Note: 3-year financial forecast should include the budget for the next fiscal year, and this should be identical to the budget submitted to CSI as a part of the annual budget submission process.
- ☐ Financial policies and procedures


Organizational/Governance Submission Requirements:

- ☐ Organizational chart
- ☐ Strategic plan
- ☐ Board self-evaluation/needs assessment
- ☐ Teacher/school leader evaluation template and confirmation of completion
- ☐ School bylaws
- ☐ EMO/ESP management agreement (if applicable)
- ☐ New waiver requests (if applicable)


Deadline: June 30, 2021 – Financial submission
July 12, 2021 – Academic submission
August 16, 2021 – Organizational/Governance submission

Contact: Please reach out to Ryan Marks (ryanmarks@csi.state.co.us) with any questions about this action.

Resources: [Academic, Financial, and Organizational/Governance Requirements for Renewal](#)
[CSI Finance Forecast Template](#)
[Board Strategic Plan Overview and Example](#)
[CSI Strategic Planning Guide for Charter School Boards](#)
[Financial Policies and Procedures Rubric](#)

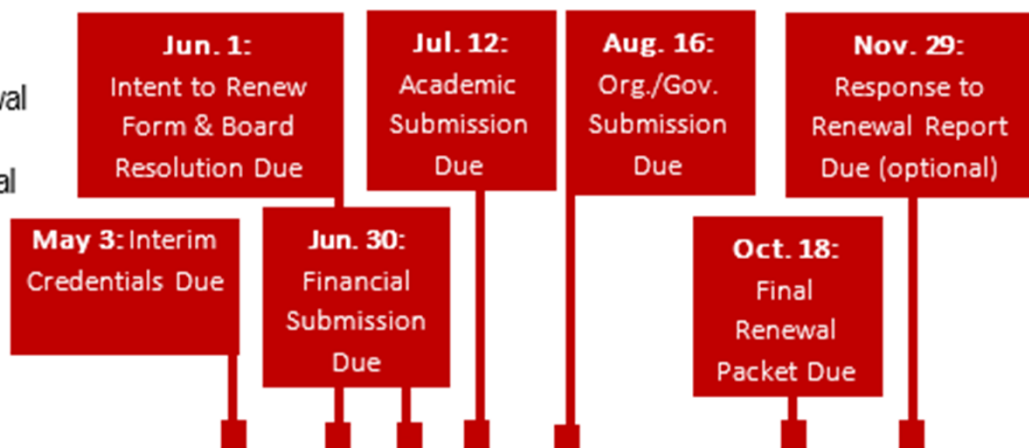
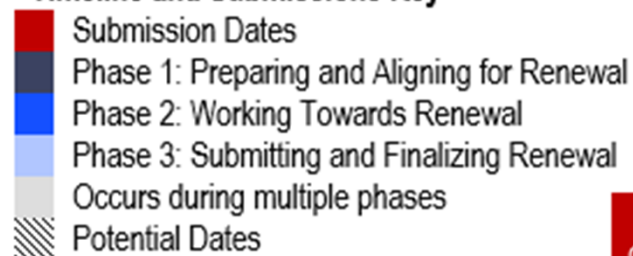


Each phase includes an overview and more detailed information related to the specific renewal submission, process, or action.



A detailed description, deadlines, contact information and linked resources are provided.

Timeline and Submissions Key



Renewal Events

| | Feb. | Mar. | Apr. | May | Jun. | Jul. | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |
|---|------|------|------|-----|------|------|--------|---------------|------------------|------|------|
| CSI Attends School Board Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kick-Off Phone Call with CSI | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CSI Releases CSI Renewal Handbook | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Monthly Phone Call with CSI (as needed) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prepare for and Schedule the Site Visit | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CSI Renewal Site Visit Takes Place | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CSI Attends School Board Meeting | | | | | | | | | | | |
| School Works on Submissions | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CSI Regional Board of Director Meeting | | | | | | | Denver | Western Slope | Colorado Springs | | |
| SPF and CARS Report is Released | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Renewal Submission Revised | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Q&A with CSI Board PM Committee | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Renewal Report Released to School | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Renewal Report Discussed by CSI Board | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CSI Board Action – Final Renewal Decision | | | | | | | | | | | |

Critical Practice – Site Visit



Implementation

The site visit draws on the major improvement strategies identified in the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) and improvement strategies identified by the school leader and verifies that the school is implementing those strategies with fidelity.

- **Alignment with continuous improvement plan**
- **Fidelity of implementation**

Mission

The site visit also offers a unique opportunity for schools to showcase aspects of their school community that are not captured through data and document review. This often includes evidence that the school is meeting their mission.

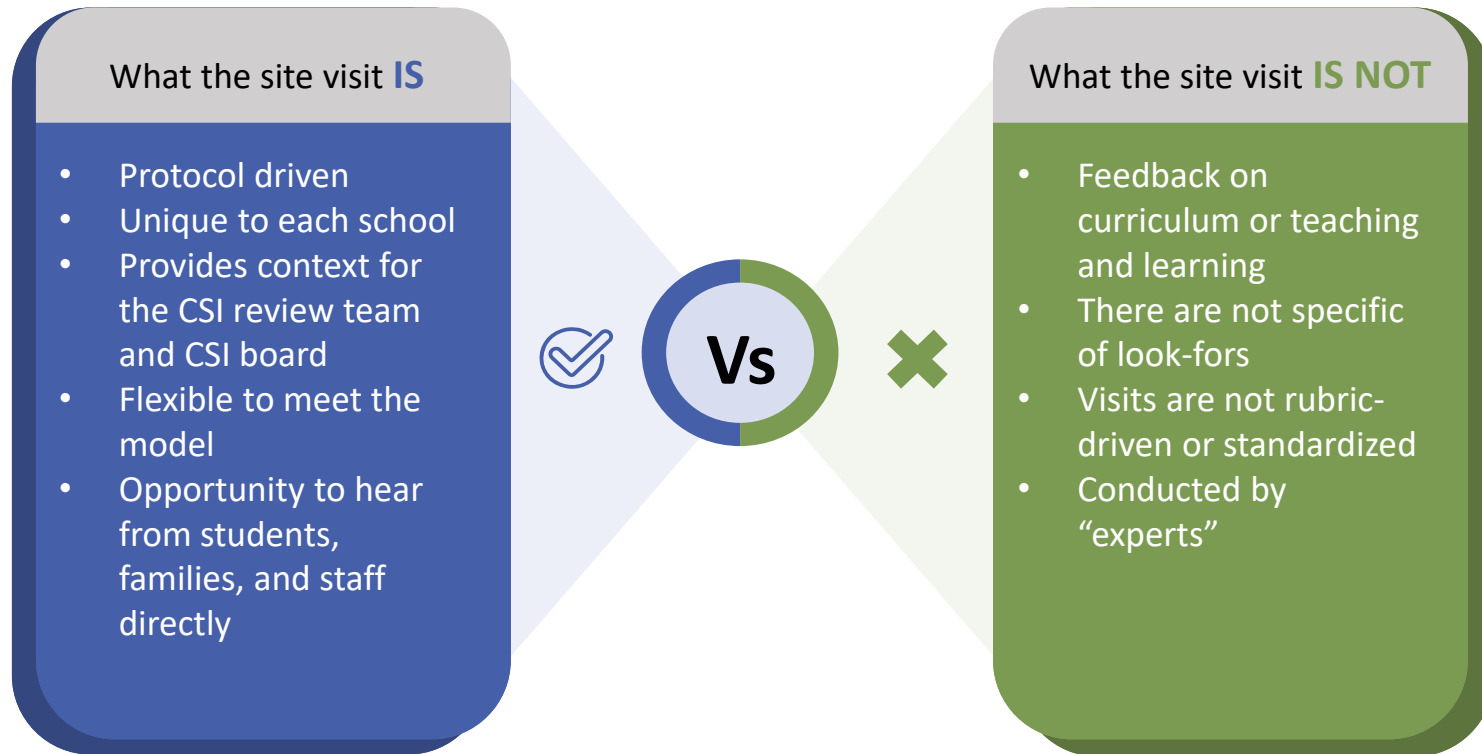
- **Highlight strengths**
- **Additional qualitative, observational and anecdotal information**



NACSA Quality Practice Project Finding

Use formal site visits to collect information about schools, and use the site visit process to facilitate difficult conversations with schools when needed. Information from site visits are used to provide a more robust assessment of school performance, and often augment and amplify other quantitative performance information.

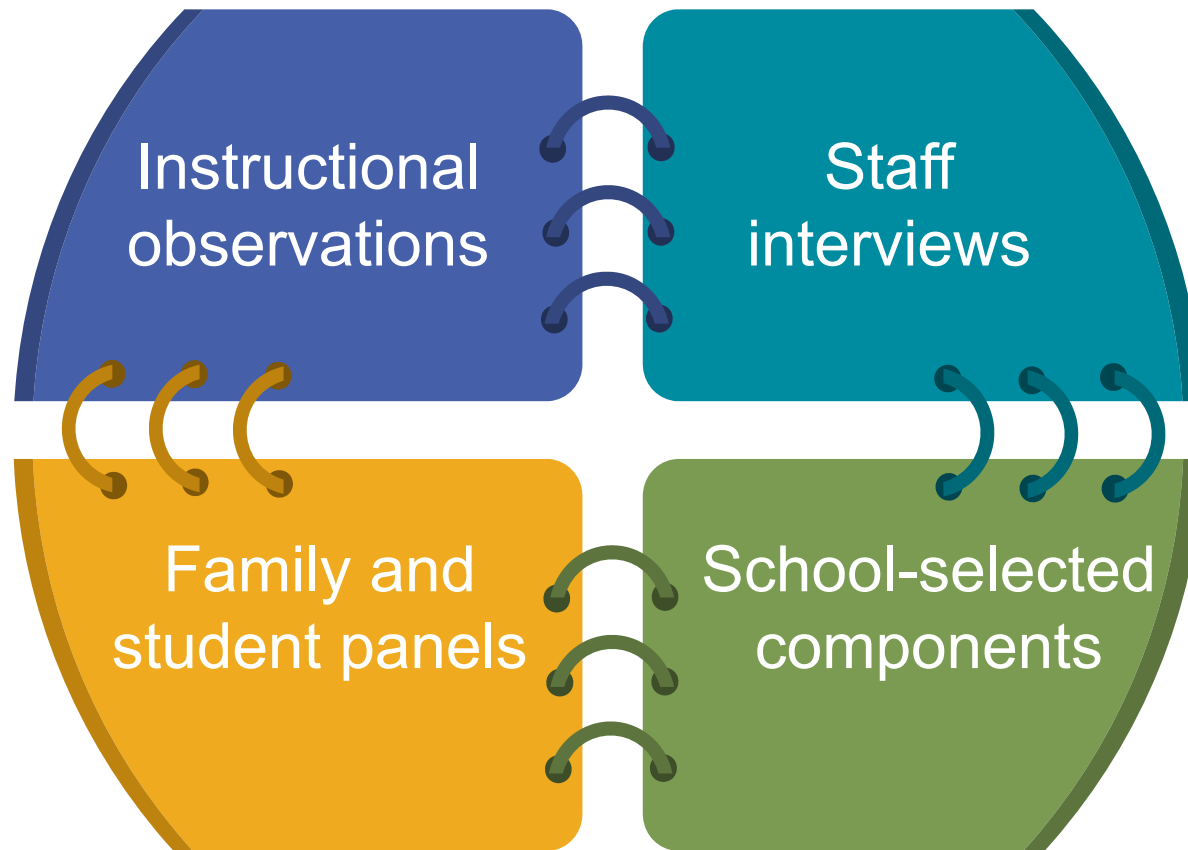
Critical Practice – Site Visit



NACSA Quality Practice Project Finding

Data collected during site visits are intentionally and specifically planned, and site visits are not organized as a “gotcha” exercise.

Critical Practice – Site Visit




Past site visits have included sharing videos of student performances, student-led tours, and document review (for example, curricula guides).

Critical Practice – Site Visit



School Mission Component

| Question | Response |
|--|----------|
| Description of school mission/vision | |
| How might the site visit team observe the school's mission/vision? | |



The site visit questionnaire is used to collaboratively develop the agenda and expectations for the visit.

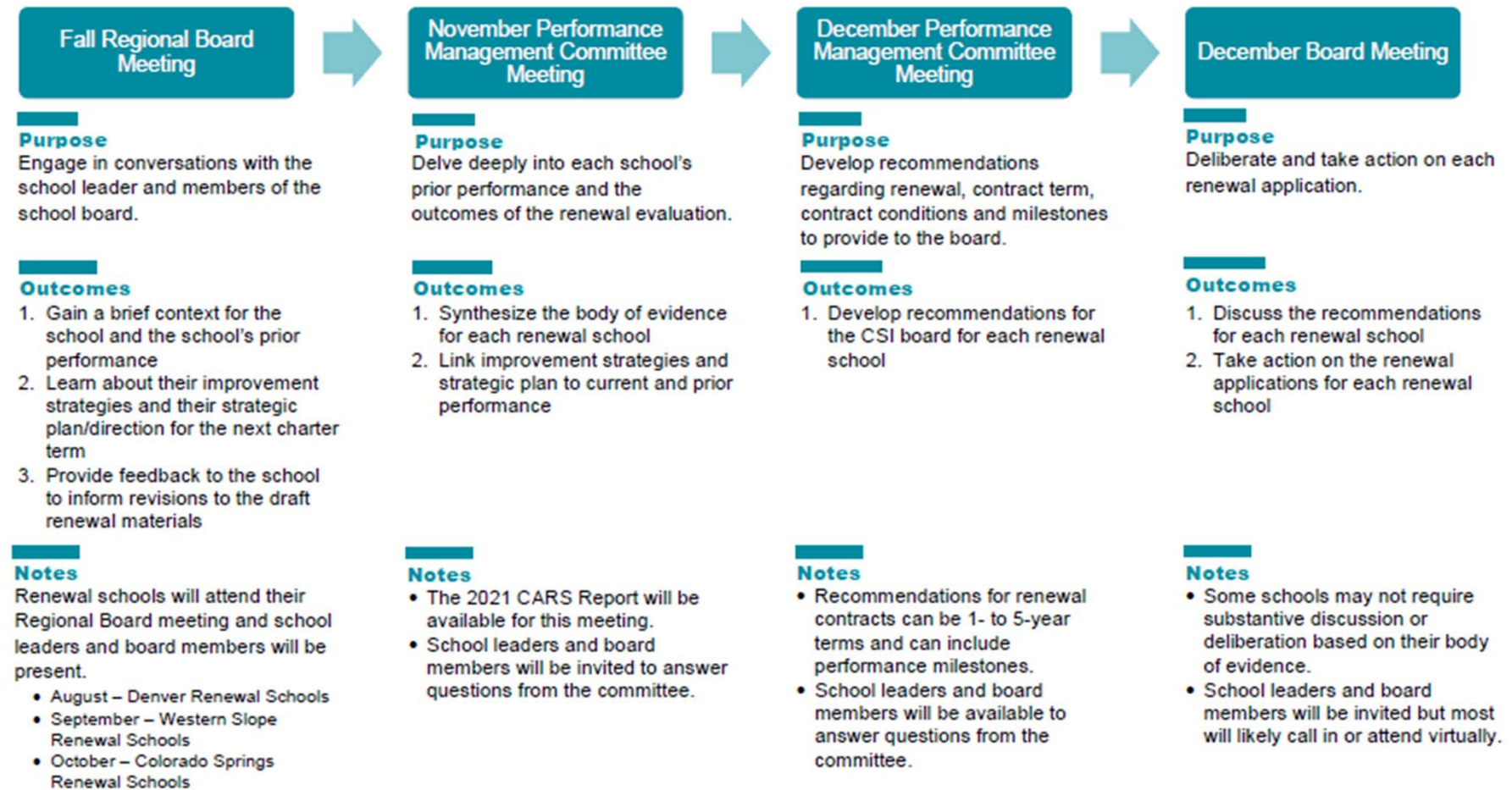
| Question | Response |
|--|----------|
| Major Improvement Strategy #1 | |
| Observable Action Step(s)/Implementation Benchmark | |
| How might the site visit team observe this action step/implementation benchmark? | |



Board Engagement



The CSI renewal evaluation is focused on the evidence gathered through the CSI Annual Review of Schools regarding school performance over the charter term. The renewal process also provides schools with the opportunity to present additional information regarding the school's improvement strategies and the board's strategic plan.





Renewal Report & Recommendations

Report

The Renewal Report is released first and examines the existing body of evidence and considers indicators of charter viability and sustainability as well as the material gathered through the renewal application and process. The report is released in advance to the school leader and board.

- Paired with annual reports
- Focus on the data and evidence

Recommendation

The Renewal Recommendation is released following the Renewal Report and includes the CSI Review Team recommendation for renewal. The recommendation includes renewal/no-renewal, renewal term length, and any contract conditions or milestones.

- Board committee
- Aligned to Renewal Action by School Performance guide



NACSA Quality Practice Project Finding

To ensure renewal decisions are unambiguous, authorizers have clear alignment of renewal documents, renewal criteria, renewal rubrics, renewal application ratings, performance frameworks, charter contract clarity on renewals, and recommendations.





Resources

- ▷ [CSI Renewal Website](#) (includes all renewal materials, site visit materials, and supplemental resources)
- ▷ BoardDocs link to Renewal Report and Recommendation from [pre-COVID](#) and [during COVID](#)
- ▷ CSI Board [Guide to Renewal Action by School Performance](#)
- ▷ [Annual accountability reports](#) and [resources](#)
- ▷ [NACSA Quality Practice Project](#)
- ▷ NACSA [Essential Practices](#) and [Principles and Standards](#)