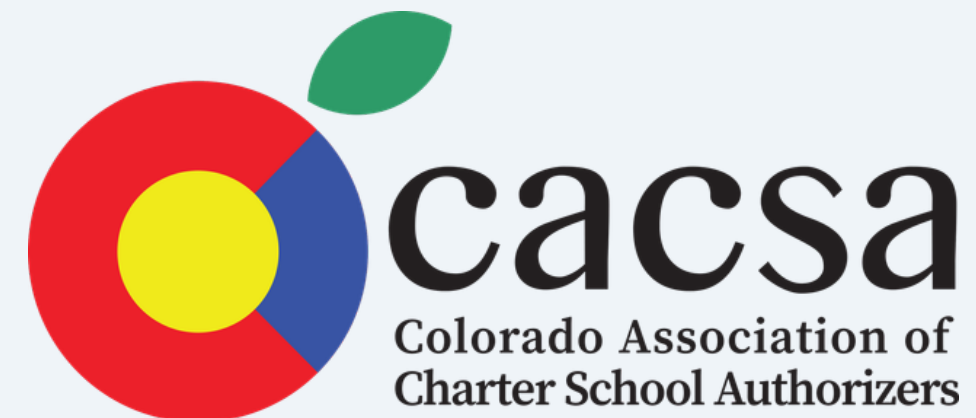

Charter School Authorizing District School Board Training

MARCH 31, 2026
PRESENTED TO: WOODLAND PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT



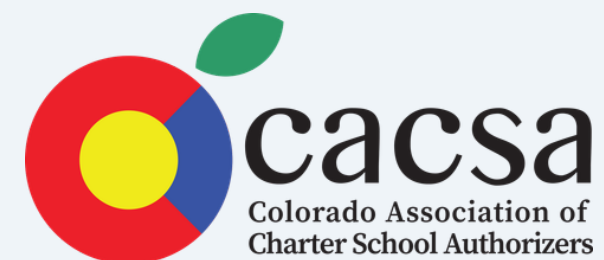
MEET YOUR FACILITATORS

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Executive Director, Colorado Association of Charter School
Authorizers

Alex Medler, Ph.D.

Executive Director, National Network for District
Authorizing



THE COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

CACSA (The Colorado Association of Charter School Authorizers) exists to support and advance best practices in charter school authorizing across Colorado through training, tools, and technical assistance.

CACSA's Mission

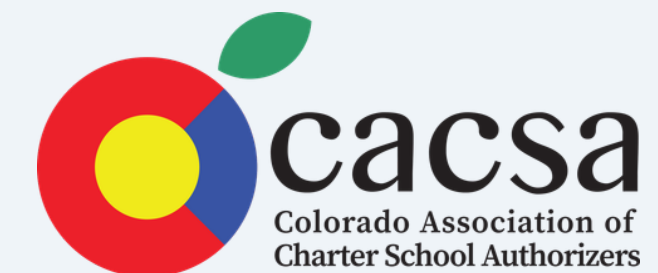
This mission of the Colorado Association of Charter School Authorizers (CACSA) is to promote and support best practices in charter school authorizing and to help all Colorado charter school authorizers develop, adopt, and implement practices that improve results for all students.

CACSA's Vision

The vision of CACSA is that all charter school authorizers will have the tools needed to implement best practices to ensure the charter schools they oversee are of high-quality; effectively serve all students; operate with appropriate autonomy, governance and oversight; and are accountable for academic results, finances, and operations.

What We Do

- Authorizer Training & PD
- Professional Networking
- State Authorizer Network
- Model Tools & Resources
- Technical Assistance
- Contracted Services



TODAY'S SESSION

Charter authorizing involves complex responsibilities.

This training is designed to help board members:

- Understand the authorizing process
- Clarify governance roles and responsibilities
- Build confidence in making authorizing decisions
- Align local practices with Colorado law and national standards

The initiative responds to a statewide need for structured, role-specific training for district boards tailored to Colorado authorizing law and practice.



OBJECTIVES & AGENDA

Objectives

By the end of this session, board members will be able to:

- Understand the charter school authorizing process in Colorado
- Clarify the board's role vs. staff responsibilities
- Identify key decision points across the charter lifecycle
- Recognize legal requirements and implications of board actions
- Make informed, defensible authorizing decisions

Agenda

- Welcome & Objectives
- Foundations of Authorizing
- Colorado Context & Board Role
- Charter School Lifecycle
- Applications & Appeals
- Case Study #1
- Contracting & Pre-Opening
- Oversight & Monitoring
- Renewal & Case Study #2
- Closure
- Key Takeaways & Discussion

SECTION 1: FRAMING & FOUNDATIONS

WHAT IS AUTHORIZING?

Charter school authorizing is the process by which a public entity:

- Reviews and approves charter school applications
- Establishes performance expectations through a charter contract
- Monitors school performance over time
- Makes renewal or closure decisions based on results

Authorizing ensures that charter schools operate with both autonomy and accountability.

Authorizers are responsible for maintaining high standards while protecting:

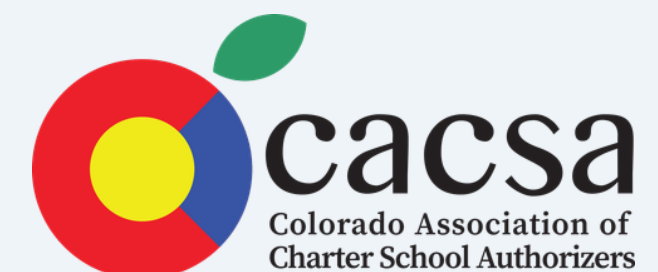
- Students
- Public Funds
- Public Interests



WHY AUTHORIZING MATTERS

Effective charter authorizing protects students, families, and taxpayers.

- Ensures schools operate with clear expectations and accountability
- Promotes high-quality schools and responsible use of public funds
- Provides families with meaningful, quality educational options
- Establishes fair, transparent standards for school performance
- Supports informed, evidence-based decisions on renewal or closure
- When done well:
 - consistent oversight
 - stronger outcomes
 - public trust
 - better charter/district relationships
- When done poorly
 - uneven quality
 - increased inequity
 - eroded trust



WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF CHARTER SCHOOLS?

- To improve pupil learning by creating schools with rigorous standards for pupil performance
- To increase learning opportunities for all pupils, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for pupils who are identified as academically low achieving
- To encourage diverse approaches to education and the use of innovative, research-based, or proven teaching method
- To create new employment options and professional development for teachers and principals
- To provide parents and students with expanded choice and promote community involvement and an avenue for participation in education process

(Plus eight more purposes codified in statute)

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

SECTION 2: AUTHORIZING IN COLORADO

COLORADO'S CHARTER SCHOOL LANDSCAPE

- The first charter school in Colorado opened in 1993.
- Over 260 charter schools across the state that serve more than 130,000 students.
- Charter schools enroll roughly 15% of Colorado's total public school enrollment.
- Charter schools in Colorado can be authorized by either local school districts or the Colorado Charter School Institute, a state-level authorizer.
- The majority of charter schools are authorized by local districts.
- Governed by the Colorado Charter Schools Act.

WHO CAN AUTHORIZE IN COLORADO?

1. **A school district with Exclusive Chartering Authority (ECA)**

a. An applicant cannot apply to a district unless a majority of the proposed students reside in the chartering district or contiguous districts.

2. **Charter School Institute – the statewide charter school authorizer**

a. CSI may authorize and oversee charters if the local district has not retained ECA or if the district gives permission (i.e., relinquishes the applicant or school to CSI).

Why would a school district release to CSI?

- Lack of capacity at district level for support & monitoring
- Operational challenges (facilities, transportation, unique schools, etc.)
- Financial incentives
- Local priorities and complex situations

CHARTER SCHOOL INSTITUTE & EXCLUSIVE CHARTERING AUTHORITY

- Districts have Exclusive Chartering Authority (ECA) by default -- losing ECA is exceedingly rare
- CSI cannot act w/out district approval in districts with ECA
- Districts may “relinquish” applicants or charters to CSI
- Relinquishing one charter does not affect ECA for others
- Charters also leave CSI and transfer to districts

HOW ARE CHARTER SCHOOLS GOVERNED?

Charter schools are public schools governed by independent nonprofit boards.

Charter school boards are responsible for:

- School Leadership and Management, primarily by hiring the school's leader
- Programming
- Budget and Financial Management
- Student Enrollment and Policies
- Community Engagement
- Compliance with Charter Agreement
- Complaint management
- Strategic Planning

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

SECTION 3: A SCHOOL BOARD'S ROLE IN AUTHORIZING

WHY BOARD CAPACITY IN AUTHORIZING MATTERS

School board decisions determine whether charter schools open, continue, or close. These are high-stakes governance decisions affecting students, communities, and public resources.

Strong board authorizing ensures:

- Charter schools meet academic, financial, and organizational standards
- Decisions withstand appeals and legal scrutiny
- Students and taxpayers are protected through accountability
- Innovation and choice are supported responsibly
- District-charter relationships remain stable and transparent

Boards ultimately carry the legal authority for approval, contracting, renewal, and closure decisions. Staff conduct analysis and oversight, but boards determine outcomes.

THE BOARD'S ROLE IN AUTHORIZING

Boards hold the legal authority for:

- Approval of charter policies
- Approval of new schools
- Charter contracting
- Renewal decisions
- Closure decisions

Staff conduct analysis and oversight, but boards make final decisions.

CORE PRINCIPLE: AUTHORIZING IS A BOARD GOVERNANCE FUNCTION

Charter authorizing is not simply a programmatic or operational task. It is a governance responsibility exercised through board authority.

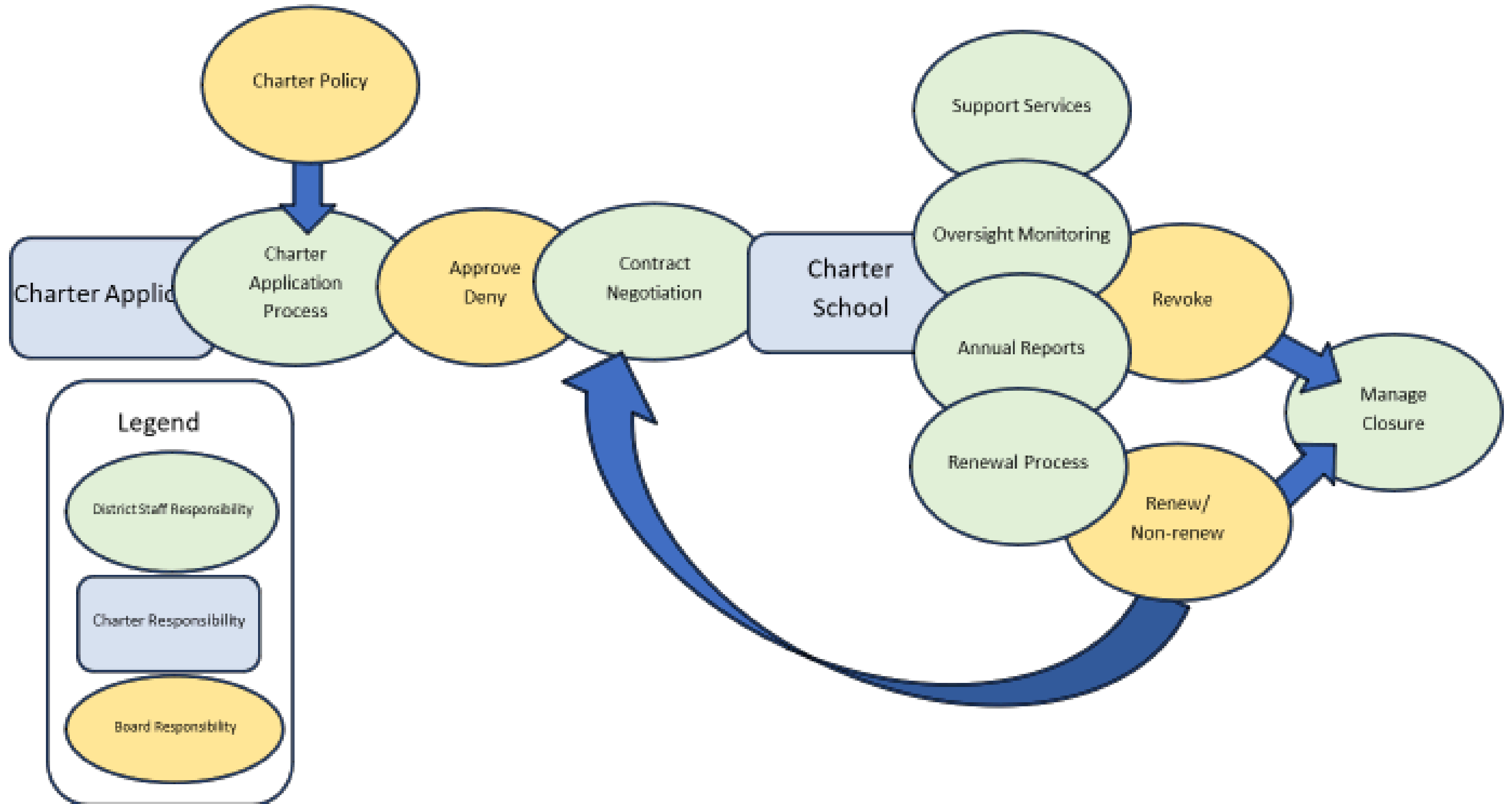
District School Board

- Develop and approve charter policies
- Convene meetings for charter applicants
- Vote on charter proposals
- Approve charter contracts
- Receive and review annual reports
- Follow renewal process
- Vote on required interventions
- Vote on renewals
- Vote on renewed contracts
- Vote on revocations
- Vote to defend against appeals

District Staff

- Develop proposals for charter policies
- Develop and implement application review
- Negotiate charter contracts
- Oversee school opening
- Conduct oversight and monitoring
- Provide services per contract and agreements
- Create annual reports for each school
- Develop and implement renewal process
- Take actions supported by contract and law (may require board vote)
- Recommend non-renewal or revocation when necessary
- Oversee school closure and follow-up

Charter School Authorizing Responsibilities



AUTHORIZING STANDARDS

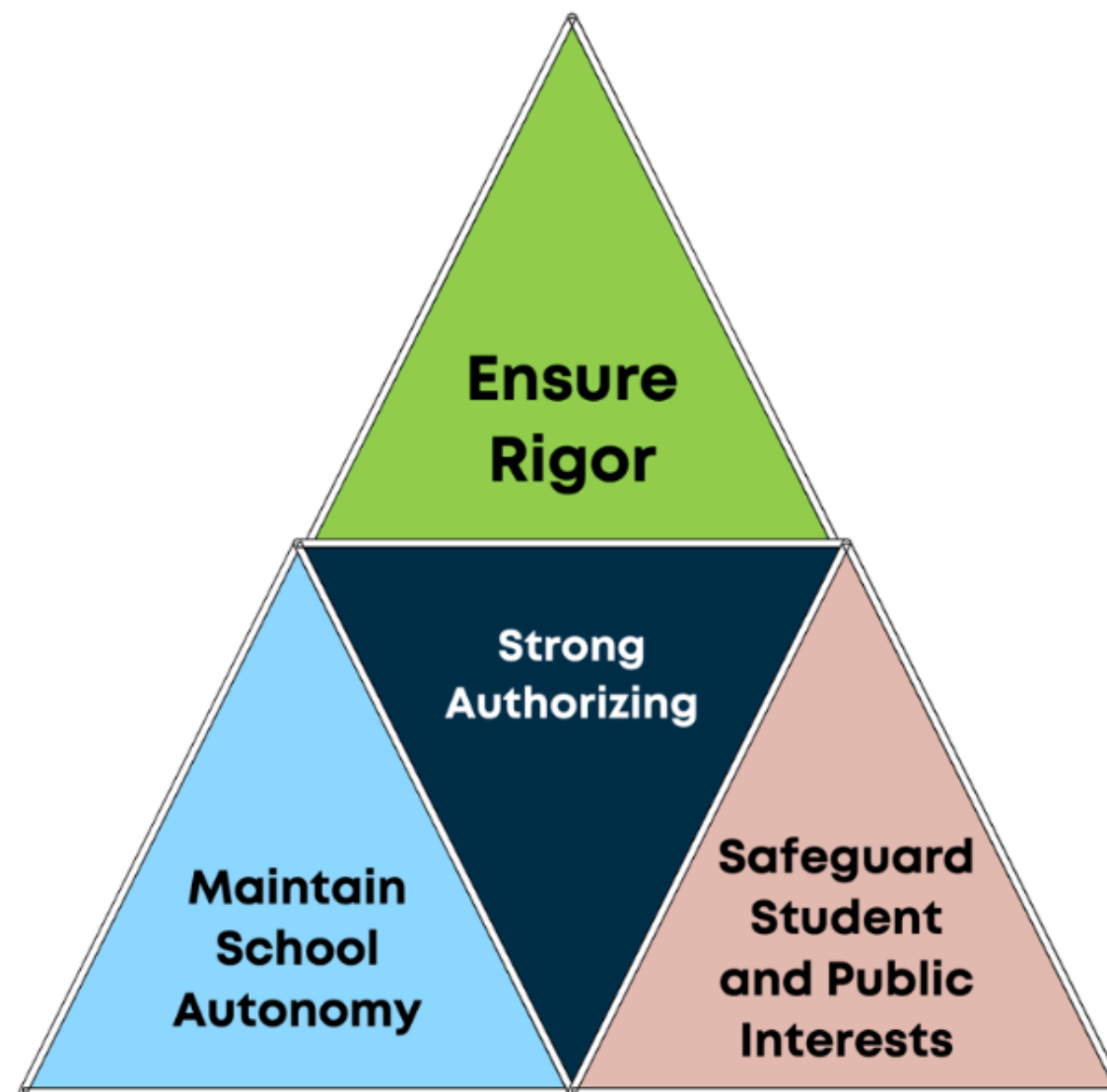
NACSA Authorizing Standards

- Blueprint for effective authorizing that helps charter authorizers balance diverse and competing interests, regardless of the policies and laws of a given state.

Colorado Authorizing Standards

- State Board passed a permanent rule in 2012 to establish standards for charter schools and charter school authorizers.
- Reflects best practices similar to NACSA authorizing standards and meets CO requirements and needs.
- Based on the recommendation of the state-wide stakeholder task force.

PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY AUTHORIZING



PRINCIPLE 1: MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS

A quality authorizer will:

- Set high standards for approving charter applicants
- Maintain high standards for the schools it oversees
- Effectively cultivate quality schools that meet identified educational needs
- Oversee charter schools that meet the performance standards and targets set forth in the charter contracts
- Close schools that fail to meet standards and targets set in law and by contract

PRINCIPLE 2: UPHOLD SCHOOL AUTONOMY

A quality authorizer will:

- Honor and preserve innovations and core autonomies crucial to school success, including governing board independence, personnel, school vision and culture, instructional programming, design, and use of time, and budgeting.
- Assume responsibility not for the success or failure of individual schools, but for holding schools accountable for their performance.
- Minimize administrative and compliance burdens on schools.
- Focus on holding schools accountable for measurable outcomes rather than processes.

PRINCIPLE 3: PROTECT STUDENT AND PUBLIC INTERESTS

A quality authorizer will:

- Make the well-being and interests of students the fundamental value informing all actions and decisions.
- Hold schools accountable for fulfilling fundamental public education obligations to all students and the public.
- Focus on the mission of chartering high-quality schools, transparency in authorizing policies, practices, and decisions, effective public stewardship and ethical conduct, and compliance with all laws and regulations.
- Support parents and students in being well-informed about the quality of education provided by charter schools.

CO CHARTER LAW

- C.R.S § 22-30.5-106
 - Applications
- C.R.S § 22-30.5-107
 - Application Reviews: Approval & Denial
- C.R.S § 22-30.5-108
 - Appeals
- C.R.S § 22-30.5-105
 - Charter Contracting
- C.R.S § 22-30.5-110
 - Ongoing Oversight & Evaluation
- Charter Renewal
 - Nonrenewal & Termination

COLORADO SCHOOL BOARD
ACTIONS RELATED TO CHARTER
SCHOOLS

REFUSAL TO REVIEW = DENIAL

CRS 22-30.5-108

- A board's refusal to review a charter application is legally considered a denial
- This action triggers the applicant's right to appeal
- Appeals are processed under the same standards as formal denials

Key Implication for Boards:

- Inaction or refusal carries the same legal consequences as an explicit denial

○

WHO MAY APPEAL

CRS 22-30.5-108. Appeal - standard of review – procedures

- A charter applicant or any other person who wishes to appeal a decision must provide the state board and the local board of education with a notice of appeal or of facilitation within thirty days after the local board's decision.

Key Implication for Boards:

- Your decisions can be challenged by multiple parties—not just the applicant
- Timelines begin immediately after your decision is made

APPEAL LIMITED TO GROUNDS FOR DENIAL SPECIFIED BY BOARD

CRS 22-30.5-108. Appeal - standard of review - procedures

- The person bringing the appeal shall limit the grounds of the appeal to the grounds for the denial specified by the local board of education.

Key Implication for Boards:

- Your written rationale defines the scope of the appeal
- Weak or unclear reasoning limits your ability to defend the decision

STANDARD OF APPEAL: THE TEST OF APPEAL DECISIONS

CRS 22-30.5-108. Appeal - standard of review - procedures

- ...the state board, at a public hearing, shall determine whether the final decision of the local board of education was contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district, or community.

Key Implication for Boards:

- Your decision must clearly demonstrate alignment with the best interests of students, the district, and the community
- Decisions that are not well-supported in the record are more vulnerable on appeal

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PROCEDURE FOR APPEALS RECORD OF APPEAL: WHAT THE STATE BOARD CONSIDERS

The record on appeal shall presumptively include:

1. Charter application (if applicable), including all proposed written amendments
2. Resolution or other written grounds for the authorizer's determination (the absence of which may be deemed a waiver of any such grounds);
3. Any report, findings, or other recommendations of the DAC
4. Any written record of the authorizer board meetings at which the application or other action concerning the charter school was considered;
5. All written correspondence between the authorizer and the charter applicants/charter school concerning the authorizer's determination; and
6. All other documents, reports, correspondence and other written or electronic materials considered by the authorizer relating to the matters at issue...

APPEAL TAKEAWAYS

1. You must act on applications
2. Anyone can appeal (not just the applicant)
3. The appeal is limited to exploring the specified grounds for the decision listed in a board resolution
4. The entire record of your decision can be included, including all board communication and discussion
5. The ultimate standard is whether the board's decision was contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district, or community.

CHARTER SCHOOL ACCESS TO DISTRICT FACILITIES

- Local politics tend to be more influential than law or policy
- Colorado law discusses charter school use of district facilities but does not oblige districts to give charters available facilities
- Facilities costs are a major challenge to charter schools, and a district facility can allow the charter to direct more resources to students
- Districts may not charge for use of facilities but may charge for maintenance and operations costs
- Districts have been expected to disclose vacant property that charters may request to use
- Most conflict over facilities has been in the form of contract disputes
- Districts have conditioned use of facilities to other priorities (like serving students with moderate to severe disabilities)

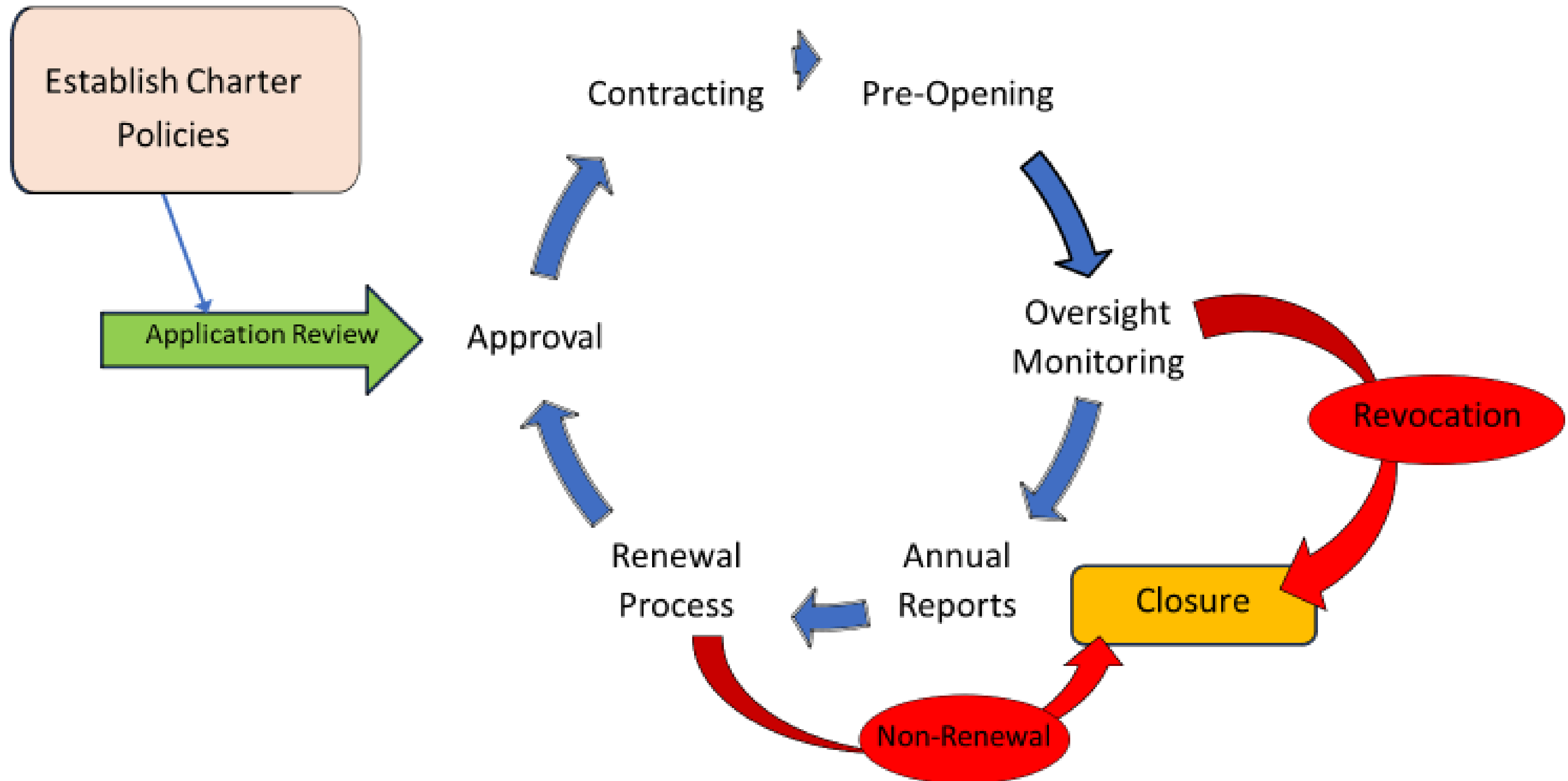
REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

SECTION 4: THE CHARTER SCHOOL LIFECYCLE

CHARTER SCHOOL LIFECYCLE



CHARTER SCHOOL LIFECYCLE



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACROSS THE LIFECYCLE

- Authorizing is a lifecycle responsibility: application, approval, contracting, oversight, renewal, and closure
- The board holds legal authority at key decision points: approval, contract execution, renewal, and closure
- Staff conduct analysis, evaluation, and ongoing monitoring to inform board decisions
- Each phase requires different actions but consistent adherence to standards, law, and the charter contract
- Strong authorizing depends on clear role alignment between board governance and staff implementation

Key Implications for Boards

- Your role is to make high-stakes decisions at critical points—not manage day-to-day oversight
- Decisions must be grounded in evidence, standards, and the official record
- Consistency across the lifecycle is essential to ensure fairness and legal defensibility
- Misalignment between board and staff roles can weaken authorizing quality and increase risk

ROLES ACROSS THE CHARTER SCHOOL LIFECYCLE

APPLICATION & REVIEW	CONTRACTING & PRE-OPENING	OVERSIGHT & MONITORING	RENEWAL	CLOSURE
<p>Staff: Conduct application review, analysis, interviews, and due diligence</p> <p>Board: Reviews recommendations and votes to approve or deny</p>	<p>Staff: Negotiate contract terms, set performance frameworks, monitor readiness</p> <p>Board: Approves charter contract and key conditions for opening</p>	<p>Staff: Conduct ongoing monitoring, site visits, data analysis, compliance checks</p> <p>Board: Receives reports and ensures accountability expectations are upheld</p>	<p>Staff: Compile performance record, evaluate against contract, make recommendation</p> <p>Board: Votes to renew, renew with conditions, or not renew</p>	<p>Staff: Manage closure process, ensure student transition, oversee compliance</p> <p>Board: Votes on revocation or non-renewal and ensures responsible closure</p>

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

NEW CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS



NEW CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

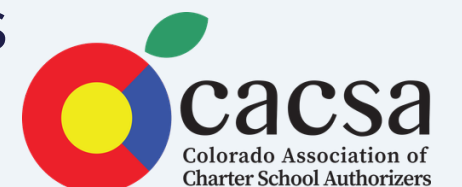
Charter applications follow a structured, multi-step review process.

Typical steps include:

- Letter of intent and application submission
- Checking for “Completeness”
- Staff and expert review of academic, financial, and operational plans
- District Accountability Committee (DAC) review (if applicable)
- Capacity interviews and clarification with the applicant
- Public hearing
- Board decision (approve or deny)

Key Implications for Boards

- Your decision is the final step in a structured process—not the process itself
- You should rely on summarized findings, not independently re-review applications
- The integrity and consistency of the process directly impact defensibility of your decision



WHO REVIEWS THE APPLICATION?

Multiple parties contribute to the review process:

- District staff coordinate the process and evaluate application components
- External experts may review academic and financial plans
- DAC provides community input
- School board reviews findings and makes the final decision

Key Implications for Boards

- Your role is not to conduct the review—it is to evaluate the results of the review
- Effective decisions depend on trusting a strong, structured review process
- Blurring roles between board and staff can compromise objectivity and consistency

BOARD ROLE IN APPLICATION DECISIONS

The board is responsible for:

- Reviewing staff summaries and recommendations
- Ensuring the review process was fair, rigorous, and aligned to standards
- Making a decision based on evidence in the record
- Voting to approve or deny the application

Key Implications for Boards

- Decisions must be grounded in documented evidence—not opinion or advocacy
- Your rationale must be clearly articulated and recorded
- Weak or unclear decisions increase the likelihood of appeal and reversal

CASE STUDY #1

CONTRACTING

THE CHARTER CONTRACT

If approved, the next step is negotiating the charter contract

The contract is a legally binding agreement between:

- The authorizer (board)
- The charter school governing board

The contract defines:

- Performance expectations
- Operational requirements
- Reporting obligations

Key Implications for Boards

- The contract—not the application—governs the school’s accountability
- Decisions made during contracting directly impact future oversight and renewal
- Lack of clarity in the contract creates long-term risk for the authorizer

FROM APPLICATION TO CONTRACT

- The approved application informs—but does not replace—the contract
- During contracting, staff:
 - Translate proposal elements into enforceable terms
 - Clarify vague or incomplete components
 - Align commitments to authorizer standards and policies
- Not all elements of the application automatically carry into the contract

Key Implications for Boards

- Approval does not mean every detail in the application is locked in
- The contract must reflect what is enforceable—not just what was proposed
- Misalignment between the application and contract creates confusion and risk later

WHAT MAKES A STRONG CONTRACT

A strong charter contract includes:

- Clear, measurable performance expectations
- Defined metrics and timelines
- Specific reporting requirements
- Codifies the “material aspects” of the school and its program
- Alignment to authorizer policy and state law

Expectations should be:

- Objective
- Transparent
- Consistently applied across schools

Key Implications for Boards

- If expectations are not measurable, they cannot be enforced
- Inconsistent contract terms across schools create equity and legal issues
- Strong contracts reduce ambiguity during oversight and renewal

CONTRACTING PITFALLS

Common challenges during contracting include:

- Vague or non-measurable performance expectations
- Carrying forward unclear application language
- Inconsistent terms across schools
- Failure to align contract with district policies

These issues often emerge later during:

- Monitoring
- Renewal
- Closure

Key Implications for Boards

- Most renewal and closure challenges start in contracting
- Weak contracts limit your ability to hold schools accountable
- Investing in strong contracts upfront prevents major issues later
- Contracts should anticipate future events that may become necessary

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

PRE-OPENING



PRE-OPENING (YEAR ZERO)

After contract execution, schools enter the pre-opening phase (“Year Zero”). This phase focuses on preparing the school to open in alignment with the contract.

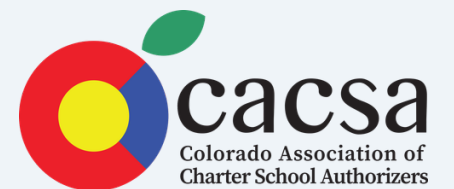
Key areas of work include:

- Hiring leadership and staff
- Securing and preparing facilities
- Establishing operational and financial systems
- Finalizing policies and procedures

Schools must meet all pre-opening requirements before serving students

Key Implications for Boards

- Approval does not guarantee readiness to open
- Pre-opening is where the promises in the application become reality
- Weak execution in this phase often leads to early performance and compliance issues



PRE-OPENING CONDITIONS & READINESS

- Conditions from approval are carried into the pre-opening phase
- Common pre-opening conditions include:
 - Facility secured and compliant
 - Qualified school leader and staff hired
 - Financial systems and budgets finalized
 - Enrollment and operational plans confirmed
- Staff verify completion of conditions through documentation and check-ins
- Failure to meet conditions on time can lead to a school not opening as planned

Key Implications for Boards

- Conditions must be clear, measurable, and verified—not assumed complete
- Opening a school without meeting conditions creates significant risk
- Boards are ultimately responsible for ensuring readiness before students are served

COMMON PRE-OPENING PITFALLS

- Common challenges during pre-opening include:
 - Delays in securing a facility
 - Leadership or staffing gaps
 - Weak operational systems
 - Enrollment shortfalls
- These risks can impact:
 - Opening timelines
 - Financial viability
 - Early academic performance
 - Failure to implement the school's proposed model or program with fidelity

Key Implications for Boards

- Most school failures can be traced back to pre-opening weaknesses
- Early warning signs should be taken seriously—not minimized
- It is better to delay opening than to open unprepared

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

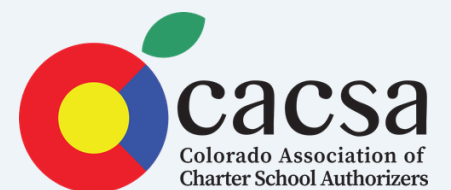
OVERSIGHT & MONITORING

OVERSIGHT & MONITORING OVERVIEW

- Once a school opens, the authorizer enters the ongoing oversight phase
- Oversight is aligned to the charter contract and focuses on three core areas:
 - Academic performance
 - Financial health
 - Organizational and legal compliance
- Monitoring activities typically include:
 - Performance data review
 - Financial analysis
 - Compliance tracking (federal and state law and district policy still apply)
 - Site visits and reporting

Key Implications for Boards

- Oversight is how you ensure the contract is being upheld—not optional
- Monitoring must align directly to the expectations set in the contract and law
- Without consistent oversight, future decisions (renewal or closure) become weak/uninformed



WHAT EFFECTIVE MONITORING LOOKS LIKE

- Effective monitoring systems are:
 - Aligned to clear performance frameworks
 - Consistent across all schools
 - Based on objective data and documented evidence
 - Not overburdensome
- Monitoring should:
 - Track performance over time
 - Identify trends—not isolated incidents
 - Include regular, structured reporting to the board

Key Implications for Boards

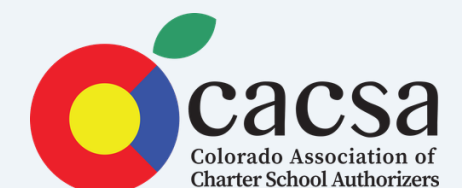
- If monitoring is inconsistent, decisions will also be inconsistent
- Data trends matter more than single events or anecdotes
- Strong systems reduce subjectivity and increase defensibility
- Authorizer-specific technology can help

ANNUAL REPORTING

- Under C.R.S. § 22-30.5-110, authorizers are required to annually review each charter school's performance
- At a minimum, the review must include:
 - Progress toward goals in the school's improvement plan (C.R.S. § 22-11-210)
 - Results of the school's most recent annual financial audit
- The authorizer must:
 - Provide written feedback to the school
 - Include results of the annual review in the body of evidence for renewal decisions
- Annual reports are a primary tool used to document and communicate this review

Key Implications for Boards

- Annual review is a statutory responsibility
- Written feedback becomes part of the official performance record
- Annual reports directly inform renewal and closure decisions
- Consistent, documented reviews strengthen the defensibility of board actions

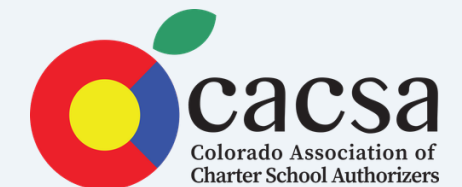


WHEN CONCERNS ARISE

- When a school shows signs of underperformance, authorizers may:
 - Increase monitoring
 - Issue formal notices or corrective actions
 - Implement intervention strategies aligned to policy
- Actions should be:
 - Progressive
 - Documented
 - Aligned to the contract and performance framework

Key Implications for Boards

- Early action is critical—waiting limits your options later
- All actions must be documented to support future decisions
- Consistency in responding to performance issues protects the authorizer legally

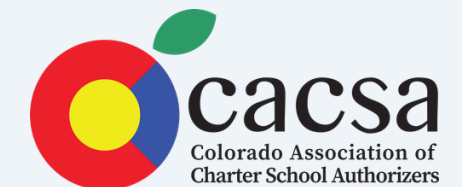


WHY OVERSIGHT MATTERS

- Oversight ensures:
 - Accountability for student outcomes
 - Responsible use of public funds
 - Compliance with law and contract
- It creates the performance record used for:
 - Renewal decisions
 - Closure decisions

Key Implications for Boards

- If it's not documented, it doesn't exist in an appeal
- Oversight is the foundation of every high-stakes decision
- Weak oversight leads to weak, indefensible outcomes



REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

RENEWALS

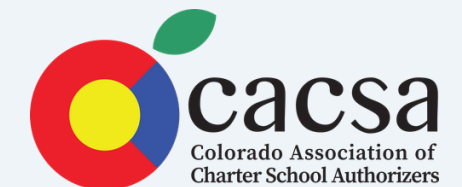


RENEWAL OVERVIEW

- Charter schools operate under a defined contract term (typically 4–5 years)
- At the end of the term, the authorizer evaluates the school’s performance
- Renewal decisions are based on:
 - Academic outcomes
 - Financial performance
 - Organizational and legal compliance
- The evaluation is grounded in the full performance record over the contract term
- Annual reports inform oversight and build a strong body of evidence (and are required in Colorado law)

Key Implications for Boards

- Renewal is based on evidence over time—not future promises
- The contract defines the standard for renewal—not new or shifting expectations
- A strong performance record is essential for a defensible decision

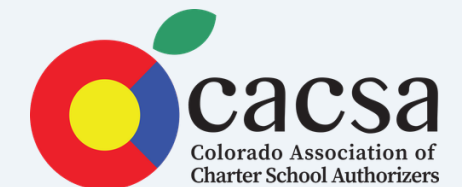


WHAT A STRONG RENEWAL PROCESS LOOKS LIKE

- A rigorous renewal process includes:
 - Comprehensive performance analysis across all domains
 - Clear alignment to contract expectations and performance frameworks
 - A documented record of oversight and prior actions
 - A formal staff recommendation
 - Evidence aggregated from annual performance reports from the district
- The process should be:
 - Transparent
 - Consistent across schools
 - Grounded in objective evidence

Key Implications for Boards

- Inconsistent processes create inconsistent decisions
- If expectations were not clearly monitored, renewal becomes difficult to defend
- Strong renewal processes protect both students and the authorizer

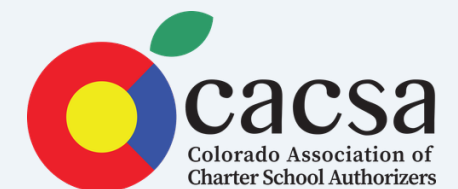


ROLES IN RENEWAL

- Staff:
 - Compile and analyze the full performance record
 - Evaluate performance against contract expectations
 - Provide a clear recommendation
- Board:
 - Reviews the evidence and recommendation
 - Considers public input (if applicable)
- Votes to:
 - Renew
 - Renew with conditions
 - Not renew

Key Implications for Boards

- Your decision must be tied directly to documented evidence
- The renewal record is your primary defense in an appeal
- Avoid introducing new criteria that were not part of the contract



RENEWAL DECISION-MAKING

- Renewal decisions should reflect:
 - Consistency with prior oversight and monitoring
 - Alignment to contract-defined expectations
 - Clear reasoning supported by evidence
- Decisions must be formally documented, including rationale

Key Implications for Boards

- Your rationale matters as much as your vote
- Weak or unclear justification increases risk of appeal
- Decisions should reflect a consistent standard across all schools

RENEWAL WITH TERMS & CONDITIONS

- In some cases, authorizers may renew a charter with terms and conditions
- These are additional requirements the school must meet as part of the renewed contract
- Common examples include:
 - Academic improvement targets
 - Financial corrective actions
 - Governance or leadership changes
 - Increased monitoring or reporting requirements
- Terms and conditions are typically used when:
 - Performance is mixed or below expectations in one or more areas
 - The authorizer determines the school warrants continued operation with intervention

Key Implications for Boards

- Terms and conditions must be:
 - Clearly defined
 - Measurable
 - Time-bound
 - Directly tied to documented performance concerns
- Vague or overly broad conditions are highly vulnerable to appeal
- Conditions cannot introduce new expectations that were not part of the original contract or performance framework
- Renewal with conditions should not be used to avoid making a clear renewal or non-renewal decision

RISKS OF RENEWAL WITH CONDITIONS

- Common pitfalls include:
 - Using conditions instead of addressing clear failure
 - Adding requirements not grounded in prior monitoring
 - Lack of clarity on how conditions will be evaluated
 - Inconsistent use of conditions across schools
 - Imposing conditions unilaterally, rather than negotiating them with the school at the direction of the district board

◦ **Key Implications for Boards**

- Renewal with conditions is one of the most appealable decisions if not well-supported
- Weak conditions can undermine future enforcement or closure decisions
- Conditions must strengthen accountability—not dilute it

CASE STUDY #2

CLOSURE

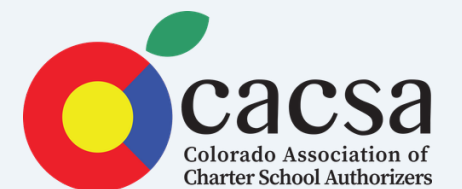


CLOSURE & REVOCATION OVERVIEW

- Closure occurs when a school fails to meet performance expectations
- It may happen through:
 - **Failure to launch** (pre-opening / Year Zero)
 - **Non-renewal** at the end of the contract term
 - **Revocation** during the contract term
- Closure decisions must be based on:
 - Academic performance
 - Financial viability
 - Organizational and legal compliance
- Requires a structured, legally compliant process aligned to law and contract

Key Implications for Boards

- Closure is a core accountability function—not a failure of authorizing
- Decisions must be grounded in documented performance, not external pressure
- Delaying closure can increase harm to students and public trust



CLOSURE DECISION-MAKING

- A defensible closure decision includes:
 - A clear record of performance concerns over time (or severe events requiring immediate action)
 - Documented monitoring and prior interventions
 - Alignment to contract expectations and authorizer policy
 - A formal board action with written rationale
- The full record may include:
 - Performance reports
 - Board materials and meeting records
 - Correspondence and notices to the school

Key Implications for Boards

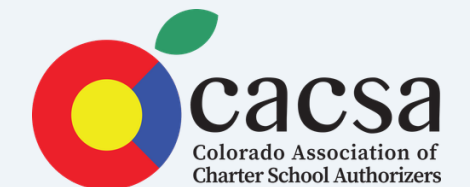
- If it's not documented, it cannot be defended
- Closure decisions are highly scrutinized and often appealed
- Consistency between oversight and final decision is critical

THE PROCESS OF CLOSURE

- Closure requires a structured, legally compliant process aligned to law, policy, and contract
- Key steps typically include:
 - Identification and documentation of performance concerns
 - Formal notice to the school of deficiencies or recommended action
 - Opportunity for the school to respond or remedy concerns
 - Staff analysis and formal recommendation
 - Public hearing (if required)
 - Board decision (non-renewal or revocation)
- Following the decision, staff manage:
 - Student transition planning
 - Records transfer and compliance requirements
 - Final financial and operational closeout

Key Implications for Boards

- Due process is essential—skipping steps increases legal risk
- Your decision must be based on the documented record built over time
- Closure is not a single moment—it is a sequence of actions that must be followed carefully
- A well-executed process protects students, the district, and the board



UNEXPECTED OR SCHOOL-INITIATED CLOSURE

A small number of charters decide to close themselves (i.e., they “surrender” their charters).

- This can be the result of strong oversight and done in partnership with the district
- In some cases this includes schools acting unexpectedly or during the middle of a school year
- Any closure that is a surprise to the district and families is to be avoided
- Strong oversight, monitoring and accountability reduces this risk significantly
- Charter contracts and district policies should anticipate this possibility
- District obligations are similar to those when the district acts to close a charter school

Key Implications for Boards

- Oversight, monitoring, contracts, and accountability procedures should be designed to reduce the likelihood of unexpected closures.
- Districts should have the capacity to ensure students’ and the public’s interests are protected during any closure, expected or unexpected.

STRONG AUTHORIZING IS NOT
ABOUT ANY ONE DECISION.

IT'S ABOUT BUILDING A
CONSISTENT, DEFENSIBLE
SYSTEM ACROSS THE ENTIRE
CHARTER SCHOOL LIFECYCLE.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Charter authorizing is a **governance responsibility across the full school lifecycle**
- The **charter contract establishes the standard** for performance and accountability
- **Oversight and monitoring create the record** used for renewal and closure decisions
- Board decisions must be **grounded in documented evidence and aligned to law, policy, and contract**
- **Consistency across schools and over time** is essential for fairness and legal defensibility
- Weakness in earlier phases (contracting, oversight) **creates risk in high-stakes decisions**

Strong authorizing ensures students have access to high-quality schools, protects public resources, and supports meaningful school choice.

FEEDBACK?



“Our school district is now in an excellent position thanks to the guidance, service, and support of CACSA.”

-Boulder Valley School District

What CACSA Offers School Districts

Tools - Training - Networks - Support

“I highly recommend CACSA to any district or organization seeking a knowledgeable, principled, and professional partner in charter school authorizing. They are an exceptional resource in a complex and high-stakes space.”

-Mesa County Valley School District 51

Authorizer Support Services



Application & Approval

Expert external reviewers for charter applications, capacity interviews, and quality evaluations that support clear, evidence-based board decisions.



Contracting & Performance Frameworks

Clear, compliant contracts and performance metrics that define academic, financial, and operational expectations from the start.



Monitoring & Oversight

Site visit tools, annual performance reviews, and actionable data analysis to support schools throughout the charter term.



Renewal, Intervention & Closure

Structured processes for renewal decisions, intervention planning, and orderly, student-centered closure when necessary.

How to Engage with CACSA



Become a CACSA Member



Request district-specific support



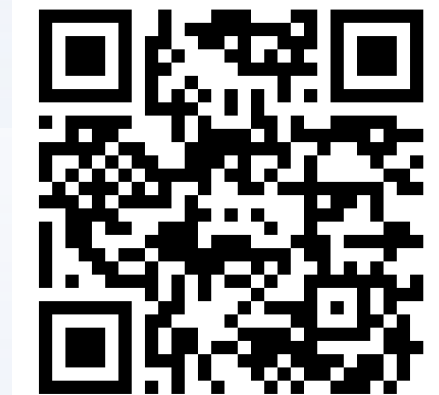
Join monthly meetings



Invite CACSA to train your board



Access statewide tools + templates



Scan to connect with CACSA or request district support.

Contact

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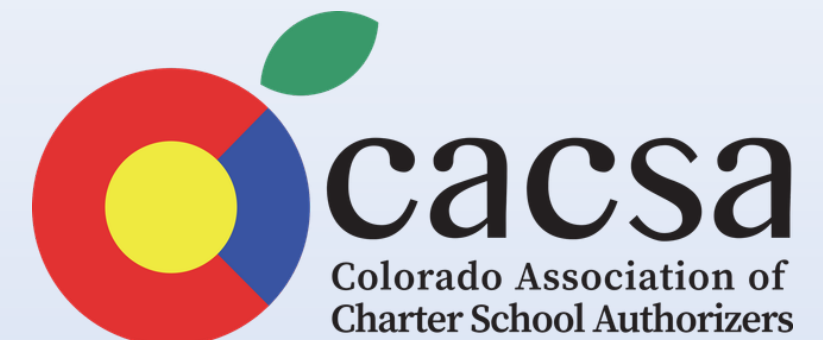
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