BALTIMORE CITY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Renewal Report
Empowerment Academy (262)

REPORT INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Report

The renewal report is a summary of findings and a resulting recommendation regarding renewal of the charter or contract for an operator-run school. To inform this recommendation Baltimore City Public Schools collects and analyzes documentation, including the School Effectiveness Review (SER) performed on site at each school and the school's renewal application, along with an evaluation of the school's performance based on the renewal rubric and consideration of all other relevant information.

City Schools' renewal criteria are based on state law (§ 9-101, *et seq.*, MD. CODE ANN., EDUC.) and Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners' policy IHB and associated administrative regulations (IHB-RA and JFA-RA). The Board's policy requires that schools up for renewal be evaluated on multiple measures including, but not limited to, the following:

- **Student achievement**, constituting at least 50 percent of the renewal score and including measures such as schoolwide performance on state assessments, College and Career Readiness (for schools with high school grades), highly effective instruction (from the SER), academic programming for special student populations, and a school's fidelity to its charter
- **School climate** (chronic absence, suspensions, enrollment trends, school choice data, and school survey results from parents, teachers, and students)
- **Financial management and governance** (annual audits, school budget submissions, grants management, and relevant documentation provided by the school's board)
- **Effective management** (school compliance with laws, rules, policies, and regulations)

The renewal process is a component of City Schools' annual review of its school portfolio, designed to ensure that students and families across the district have access to school options that meet their interests and needs. In 2011, City Schools formed the Renewal Stakeholders Working Group (composed of school operators from a range of school types, Supporting Public Schools of Choice, and the Maryland Charter School Network) to develop a methodology for evaluating the performance of operator-run schools. The result: a fair, transparent, and rigorous renewal framework that reflects schools' unique nature and innovative contributions to student achievement, used for the first time in the 2012-13 school year.

At the conclusion of each year's renewal cycle, staff engages key stakeholders in a review of the process to identify areas for improvement that could be addressed while still maintaining a level of predictability for schools up for renewal in the following year. The most recent round of review considered implications for the renewal process of including results from statewide PARCC assessments for the first time, given that, to date, a significant portion of the weight in the student achievement portion of the renewal decision has been based on assessment data. Changes made to the framework as a result of this most recent review include the following:

- Used PARCC mean scale scores from the 2014-15 to 2016-17 school years for trend measure

- Recognizing the correlation between relative wealth and PARCC absolute results, compared schools against other schools with similar levels of economic disadvantage (in previous years, comparison groups were based only on tested grade band)
- Aligned College and Career Readiness measure to Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) standards.

The Process

The review process has the following components:

- Renewal rubric (includes data from standardized assessments and school surveys)
- Application for renewal
- Data tables prepared by City Schools
- School Effectiveness Review

The Charter and Operator-led Advisory Board (also known as the New and Charter School Advisory Board), a cross-representational group made up of members representing foundations, nonprofit organizations, school choice advocates, school operators, and district representatives, reviews each of these components and makes recommendations to City Schools' CEO on whether charters or contracts should be renewed. The CEO considers the recommendation, and then makes her own recommendation to the Board for vote. According to Board policy, City Schools may determine that a public charter school is eligible for a five-year contract term, three-year contract term, or nonrenewal.

Actions	Timeline
Schools submit renewal applications	September 7, 2017
Charter and Operator-led Advisory Board reviews renewal applications and makes recommendations to the CEO	September to October 2017
District presents recommendations to Board at public meeting	November 14, 2017
Board conducts public work session for operators	November 28, 2017
Board votes on renewal recommendations	December 19, 2017

Empowerment Academy (#262)

Operator: The Empowerment Center, Inc.
Configuration: Elementary/middle
Type: Charter
Enrollment: 230[1]

Recommendation

Five-year renewal (July 2018 through June 2023)

Renewal summary

Category	Finding
Is the school an academic success? (min. 50% weight)	Effective
Does the school have a strong school climate?	Effective
Has the school followed sufficient governance management and governance practices?	Effective
Has the school followed sufficient financial management practices?[2]	Meets expectations

Discussion

Having considered the recommendation of the Charter and Operator-led School Advisory Board, Baltimore City Public Schools' CEO recommends that the contract with the Empowerment Center, Inc., to operate Empowerment Academy be renewed for five years, with a term beginning July 1, 2018, and ending June 30, 2023.

The school was rated effective in Academics, Climate, and Governance and Financial Management.

The school was rated highly effective for absolute PARCC performance for all four tests; in math 6-8, the school was in the 100th percentile of its economic disadvantage comparison group, which compares schools based on similar levels of wealth, with a mean scale score of 727. The school was rated highly effective in PARCC achievement growth, which assesses changes in individual student achievement over time, in English language arts (ELA) 6-8 (93rd percentile overall), effective for math 6-8 (70th percentile) and ELA 3-5 (74th percentile), and developing in math 3-5 (62nd

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[1] Total enrollment counts reflect the MSDE official enrollment file for grades k-12, which includes students enrolled on September 30 each year. This file is verified by MSDE prior to becoming the official enrollment count for the year.
[2] Financial management considers a review of the operator's audits over the contract term. "Meets expectations" is the highest rating available.

percentile). The school was rated highly effective in talented people based on the SER, which considers how the school creates and implements systems to select, develop, and retain effective teachers, and creates and implements systems to evaluate teachers and staff against individual and schoolwide goals. The school was rated effective in student, parent, and staff satisfaction as evidenced by City Schools' school survey. Finally, the school was rated highly effective in cohort retention, which measures the number of students who remain at a school two years after entry over time.

Findings (elementary/middle school rubric)

Category 1, Academics: Is the school an academic success?

Subcategory	Renewal Metric	City Schools Rating
1.1 Absolute Student Achievement	Mean scale score PARCC math (grades 3-5)	Highly effective
	Mean scale score PARCC ELA (grades 3-5)	Highly effective
	Mean scale score PARCC math (grades 6-8)	Highly effective
	Mean scale score PARCC ELA (grades 6-8)	Highly effective
1.2 Student Achievement Trend	Trend in mean scale score PARCC math (grades 3-5)	Highly effective
	Trend in mean scale score PARCC ELA (grades 3-5)	Highly effective
	Trend in mean scale score PARCC math (grades 6-8)	Highly effective
	Trend in mean scale score PARCC ELA (grades 6-8)	Developing
1.3 Student Achievement Growth	Median student growth percentile PARCC math (grades 3-5)	Developing
	Median student growth percentile PARCC ELA (grades 3-5)	Effective
	Median student growth percentile PARCC math (grades 6-8)	Effective
	Median student growth percentile PARCC ELA (grades 6-8)	Highly effective
1.4 SER, Highly Effective Instruction	Extent to which school leadership supports highly effective instruction and teachers plan and deliver highly effective instruction and establish a classroom environment where teaching and learning can occur	Effective

1.5 Fidelity to Charter/Application Overall	Extent to which • The school has fully implemented the mission expressed in its charter application and this mission is clear to all stakeholders • Has delivered high-quality programming for all student subgroups • Is gathering data to assess its efficacy and has effectively addressed any challenges evident in the data, particularly in the areas of subgroup performance, enrollment, student attendance, dropout rates, attrition, and student choice data/school demand	Effective
Overall rating for Category 1, Academics		**Effective**

Category 2, Climate: Does the school have a strong climate?

Subcategory	Renewal Metric	City Schools Rating
2.1 SER, Talented People	Extent to which the school implements systems to select, develop, evaluate, and retain skilled teachers and staff	Highly effective
2.2 SER, Vision and Engagement	Extent to which the school provides a safe and supportive learning environment, cultivates open communication and decision-making with the school community, and establishes a school culture that embraces community diversity	Effective
2.3 Staff, Student, and Parent Satisfaction	School survey, staff: 5-year average	Effective
	School survey, students: 5-year average	Effective
	School survey, parents: 5-year average	Effective
2.4 Cohort Retention	Percentage of students who remain at the school at least two years after initial enrollment, over time	Highly effective
2.5 Student Attendance, Chronic Absence	Extent to which the school has implemented effective strategies that have kept student attendance high and chronic absences low over the course of the contract	Highly effective
2.6 Suspensions	Extent to which the school has implemented effective strategies that have kept suspensions low over the course of the contract	Effective
2.7 Effective Programming for Students with Disabilities	Extent to which the school has demonstrated a strong trajectory of growth, is aware of its data and responsibilities to students with disabilities, does not have any gaps or has decreased gaps in the data as they relate to performance and climate metrics for students with disabilities over time, and has effectively and consistently implemented processes, interventions, and strategies to support student outcomes over the course of the contract	Developing

Overall rating for Category 2, Climate	Effective

Category 3, Finance and Governance: Has the school followed sufficient financial management and governance practices?

Subcategory	Renewal Metric	City Schools Rating
3.1 Audit Content, Internal Controls	Extent to which • The school's Independent Auditor's Reports offer unqualified opinions and no management points in each of the years of the charter term • Statements of cash flow and ratio of assets to liabilities indicate that the operator has strong performance on its short-term liquidity measure	Meets expectations[3]
3.2 Operator Capacity	Extent to which the school has operated effectively and the operator has consistently met all state and federal reporting requirements and critical district or federal obligations and has not received any Notices of Concern or Notices of Reprimand during the contract period (evidence that may be considered includes compliance with state or federal reporting requirements; budget submissions and monitoring reports; quarterly reports; and the relative number, frequency, and severity of Notices of Concern or Notices of Reprimand)	Developing
3.3 SER, Strategic Leadership/ Governance	Extent to which the school establishes goals that guide practices to meet student needs, allocates resources to address student achievement, and has an operator that provides stewardship and oversight of the school	Effective
Overall rating for Category 3, Governance/Financial Management		**Effective**

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[3] Financial management considers a review of the operator's audits over the contract term. "Meets expectations" is the highest rating available.