

Colorado Charter School Institute
Pre-Opening Annual Review of Schools (PCARS) Report
2023

Wildflower Montessori – Aurora



Wildflower Montessori
Public Schools of Colorado

CSI HISTORY

In response to the growing desire for charter schools, the lack of school options for at-risk students, and the interest in an alternate mode of authorizing charter schools that could assist districts in implementing authorizing best practices, the State Legislature created the Charter School Institute (CSI).

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Charter School Institute is to foster high-quality public school choices offered through Institute charter schools, including particularly schools that are focused on closing the achievement gap for at-risk students.

OUR VISION

Our vision is to be a national leader as a highly effective charter school authorizer by building a portfolio of high performing public charter schools through authorizing practices that promote a variety of successful and innovative educational designs, including an emphasis on schools that serve at-risk youth.

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Pre-Opening CSI Review of Schools (PCARS) Summary

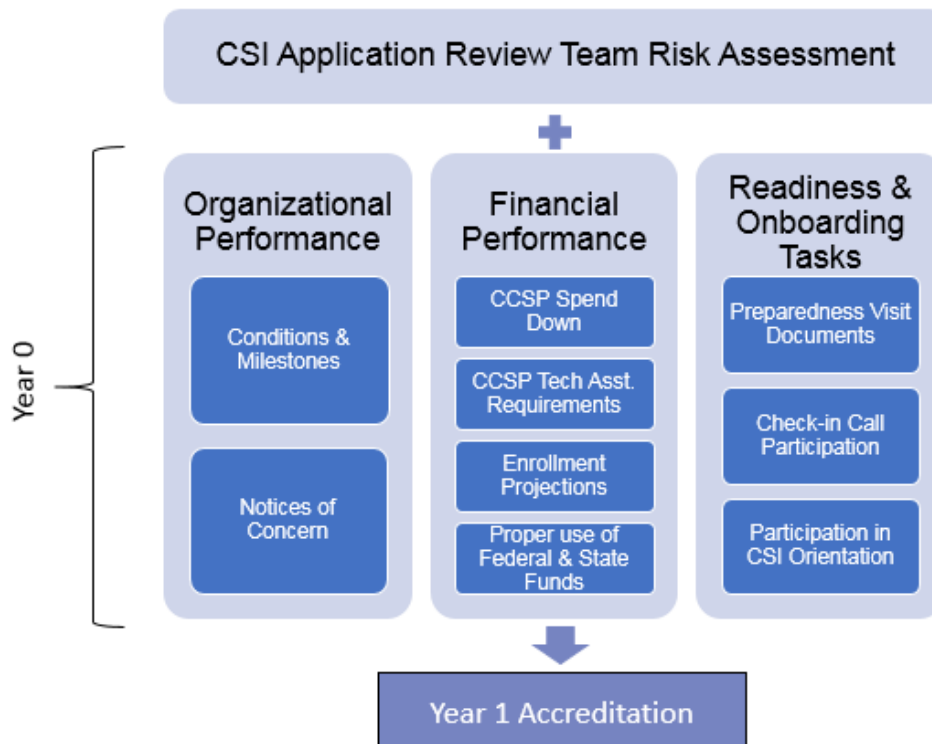
The Pre-Opening CSI Review of Schools (PCARS) is a system to evaluate a school's performance in Year 0 (the year between application approval and school opening) and ultimately leads to the determination of a school's Year 1 accreditation rating. The PCARS evaluation system provides evaluative information about a school's performance prior to the availability of academic assessment data. PCARS evaluates a school's risk assessment as determined by the CSI Application Review Team, as well as a body of evidence from Year 0 including Organizational Performance, Financial Performance, and Readiness and Onboarding task Performance.

PCARS Report

The PCARS Report takes both the school's Risk Assessment Rating from the new school application and its Year 0 performance data into consideration as a body of evidence that determines a school's accreditation rating. These quantitative and qualitative analyses provide guidance and direction for the school throughout its lifespan by highlighting areas of performance and areas of needed improvement. Further, the report process includes a feedback loop, which allows schools to request clarifying information where necessary, as well as provide additional, school-specific information to CSI for consideration in its evaluation process.

Accreditation Ratings

Each school's accreditation rating will be determined annually by the CSI Board. In Year 1, in the absence of academic data, the school's accreditation rating is determined by PCARS. CSI is committed to authorizing high-quality charter schools, therefore the default accreditation rating given to Year 1 schools is a Performance rating. This accreditation rating may be lowered to "Improvement" or "Priority Improvement" based on the indicators and metrics collected in the Pre-Opening CSI Review of Schools report. The severity and quantity of concerns identified in the PCARS report will determine the school's Year 1 accreditation rating. In subsequent years, ratings are determined through the CARS accreditation system, which builds upon the state's lens of evaluation and includes additional indicators within the CSI Performance Frameworks in Academics, Finance, and Organization.



How to Use the PCARS Report

This **PCARS Report** summarizes the school's Risk Assessment and Year 0 performance and compliance data, as collected by CSI prior to the school's opening year. The data collected and presented within this report reflect outcomes of Year 0 tasks in the areas of Organizational Performance, Financial Performance, and Readiness and Onboarding Task Performance.

In order to summarize each section, the Institute will include a brief narrative providing feedback on the school's progress within the indicators and/or metrics where applicable. Schools have the opportunity to provide a brief narrative for each section as well. Any additional claims within the school narrative must be substantiated with supplemental evidence that can be verified by CSI. The school narrative should focus on outputs and outcomes. Factors such as culture, curriculum, and PD, for example, are important in your internal evaluations and root cause analyses, but are not considered by CSI as part of your evaluation.

Schools should be looking at trends in performance and using the feedback provided within the report as evidence of success, as well as to identify areas that may need the allocation of additional resources and attention.

A majority of the metrics within this report are collected by CSI during the school's Year 0, spanning from approval of the charter contract to the opening day of school. The draft PCARS report will be shared with the school on November 28th. As this is the preliminary draft, please review all data collected for accuracy. Should you find any incorrect or inaccurate data (as opposed to findings or conclusions that you simply disagree with), please contact Michael McManus, CSI Authorization and Accountability Manager.

If you wish to supplement any area of your report with additional evidence, these proposed changes or additions must be returned to CSI **no later than December 4th**.

Once all data have been reviewed (and where applicable incorporated into the report), CSI will send each school a final report by **December 8th**.

PCARS Rating

The PCARS Framework serves to hold schools accountable for performance during their pre-opening year and determine an appropriate accreditation rating. These indicators were selected because of their role in predicting a charter school's viability.

Indicators	Rating
Risk Assessment	Moderate Risk
Organizational Performance	Meets
Financial Performance	Partially Meets
Readiness & Onboarding Task Performance	Meets
Overall Rating	Performance

Rating Narrative:

Based on the body of evidence, Wildflower - Aurora will be accredited with a Performance rating.

Risk Assessment

The Risk Assessment for a school is determined by the CSI Review Team based on comprehensive and rigorous analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. The Review Team focuses on the viability of the proposed school and the question of whether to authorize the proposal in accordance with Colorado law C.R.S § 22-30.5-509, et seq., as amended.

Based on these evaluations, the CSI Review Team determined that the new school application submitted by Wildflower - Aurora represented a Moderate Risk.

New School Risk Assessment

for Wildflower Montessori (Aurora)

The continuum below details the risk assessment along the key indicators, grouped by construct. In situations of recommended approval, this information is meant to guide potential contract conditions or milestones.



Construct	Indicator	Risk Level
Community Need & Support	Need, Support, Involv	Low Risk
	Mission and Vision	Low Risk
Academics	Education Program	Low Risk
	Student Services	Moderate Risk
	Goals, Obj, & Pupil Eval	Moderate Risk
Finance	Finance & Budget	Moderate Risk
Operations	Governance	Low Risk
	Leadership	Moderate Risk
	Operations	Low Risk
	Facilities	Moderate Risk

Organizational Performance

Conditions & Milestones Attainment

In order to mitigate the identified areas of risk, CSI staff incorporates conditions into the conditional application approval and/or milestones into the charter contract. The adequate and timely submission of these materials are critical to the success of the school prior to complete application approval and in Year 0 and demonstrate a founding team's capacity to meet Organizational requirements.

CSI Narrative:

The school demonstrated a pattern of timely and quality submissions of Contract Condition and Milestone items. School leadership consistently submitted Milestone items on or before their due dates and timely corrected and resubmitted on the rare occasions when the submission was deemed incomplete or required revisions. The school communicated with CSI staff in advance when additional time was needed on a milestone submission.

Notices of Concern

When CSI has reason to believe that a CSI school is out of compliance with any applicable law, rule, policy, or contract provision, CSI, in its sole discretion, will issue a Notice to the school in addition to implementing any remedial action deemed necessary in accordance with the remedies described in [CSI's School Compliance Policy](#).

CSI Narrative:

The school received zero Notices of Concern during Year 0.

Indicator	Rating
Contract Conditions	Meets
Milestones	Meets
Notice of Concern	Meets
Organizational Performance Rating	Meets

Organizational Performance Narrative (School observations):

**OPTIONAL* To be populated by the school and provided to CSI for review and possible inclusion prior to the distribution of the final PCARS Report in December.*

Financial Performance

A school's Financial Performance rating is based on several measures of financial viability in Year 0. The successful spend down of the Colorado Charter Schools Program (CCSP) start-up grant funds and ability to meet all technical assistance requirements for the grant, is considered, as well as the school's ability to accurately project enrollment and a school's overall ability to demonstrate proper use of Federal and State funds.

CCSP Spend Down & TA Requirements

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is the recipient of the Federal Charter Schools Program grant and uses the Colorado Charter Schools Program (CCSP) to provide sub-grants to qualified charter school developers for the planning phase and/or early years of implementation of new charter schools through the CCSP grant and assists new and existing charter schools within Colorado to support and improve their performance through coordinating and facilitating quality technical assistance. Given the nature of the grant, there are stringent requirements and processes that must be met to stay in compliance with the grant program. Schools that fail to spend down the amount awarded to them and meet requirements may have their award amount reduced and jeopardize their ability to apply for and access this funding source in the future for expansion or replication purposes. More information on CCSP requirements can be found in the [CCSP Guidebook](#).

Technical Assistance Requirements

Support Category	Completion Details
Sub-Grantee Support	N/A
Governing Board Support	N/A
Administrator Support	N/A
Business Operations Support	N/A

CSI Narrative:

Wildflower did not utilize a CCSP grant for Year 0. Rather, the National Wildflower Network obtained a CSP grant from the Federal government and CSI was not involved.

Enrollment Projections

Enrollment is the primary driver of a school's budget, therefore the ability to accurately forecast enrollment is a critical skill in the development and maintenance of a healthy school budget. Schools who fail to reasonably project their Year 1 enrollment may experience financial hardship that places the viability of the school at risk.

CSI Narrative:

The school did not meet expectations for accurate enrollment projections in Year 1. The projection for the application was 42 and as of Oct Count the school had 7 kindergarteners or 17% of application. There are some PreK students but that is outside of the CSI scope.

Use of Federal & State Funds

As public institutions, charter schools are recipients of both Federal and State funding sources which are subject to various regulations. CSI expects all its schools to be good stewards of public funds and take the misuse of Federal and State funds very seriously and considers this a key indicator when evaluating Financial Performance of schools in Year 0.

CSI Narrative:

It is unknown to what degree the school has an understanding of Federal and State fund compliance and management.

Indicator	Rating
CCSP	
Spend down	N/A
Technical Assistance Requirements	N/A
Enrollment Projections	Does Not Meet
Use of Federal & State Funds	N/A
Financial Performance Rating	Does Not Meet

Financial Performance Narrative (School observations):

**OPTIONAL* To be populated by the school and provided to CSI for review and possible inclusion prior to the distribution of the final PCARS Report in December.*

Readiness & Onboarding Tasks Performance

The primary goal of Year 0 is to establish and execute a plan for a successful school opening. This planning year focuses on taking the proposal for the school outlined in the application and transforming it into a school that is ready to serve students on day one. Throughout Year 0, the founding team will participate in Readiness and Onboarding Tasks to ensure the team is making progress towards a successful school opening.

Preparedness Visit

CSI Staff will conduct a formal Preparedness Visit at the end of Year 0, prior to the start of school. The Preparedness visit is an on-site review by CSI personnel that gauges overall readiness for school opening, with a focus on the school facility. Additional preparedness reviews may be completed informally through document reviews of and interviews with board and staff members of the proposed charter school to assess organizational readiness. The school may be required to submit material prior to the visit to support CSI staff in evaluating the preparedness of the school.

CSI Narrative:

The facility housing Wildflower Montessori – Aurora’s educational program is located in an office building. The Preparedness visit was conducted on 08/28/2023.

The Preparedness Visit included a tour of classroom and office spaces, as well as the school’s kitchen facility. An appropriate certificate of occupancy was provided ahead of the Preparedness Visit on 08/21/2023. During the Preparedness Visits the visit team observed appropriate furniture and equipment in classrooms. Safety plans were posted in all classrooms.

After the Preparedness Visit the school received notification from the Arapahoe County Health Department that their kitchen did not meet the requirements to serve food because of equipment and structures currently in place. As a result, they were not able to serve meals via the National School Breakfast and Lunch at this time. Students will supply their own meals for SY 23-24, and the school will revisit serving meals for SY 24-25.

Check-In Call Participation

Beginning the first July of Year 0 (one year out from opening), approved applicant teams will participate in monthly readiness check-ins with the Director of Student Services and applicable CSI staff to monitor progress towards opening readiness tasks and support the founding teams with resources and technical assistance.

CSI Narrative:

The school met expectations for consistent and transparent communication with CSI staff during Year 0, as evidenced by regular participation in Check-In Calls. The school kept CSI staff up to date on their progress throughout Year 0.

CSI Orientation Participation

Each summer, CSI hosts an Orientation for New Leaders that provides an opportunity for leaders to learn more about each department at CSI and how they will interact with staff throughout the course of the year. This orientation is an important aspect of Year 0 and a key to establishing a positive working relationship with CSI staff and having a clear understanding of the expectations of School Leaders. If leaders are not able to attend the event, individual orientation opportunities can be scheduled.

CSI Narrative:

The school participated in a CSI Orientation prior to the opening of school.

Indicator	Rating
Preparedness Visit Documents	Meets
Check-in Call Participation	Meets
CSI Orientation Participation	Meets
Readiness & Onboarding Tasks Performance	Meets

Readiness & Onboarding Tasks Narrative (School observations):

**OPTIONAL* To be populated by the school and provided to CSI for review and possible inclusion prior to the distribution of the final PCARS Report in December.*