

NORTH CAROLINA

RANK 36, SCORE 9/33



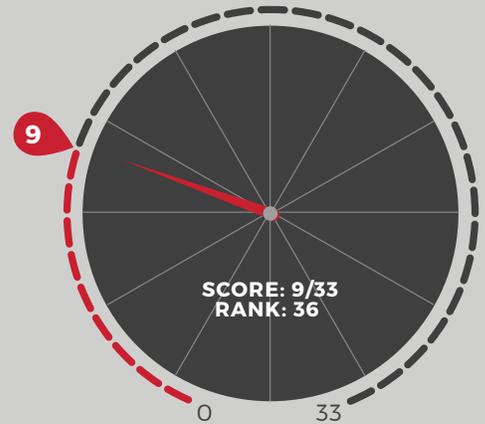
STATE WITH MANY CHARTERS (100+)
161 CHARTER SCHOOLS
 BELOW AVERAGE % OF PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT (**0-4%**)



STATE WITH FEW AUTHORIZERS
1 AUTHORIZER
100% OF SCHOOLS AUTHORIZED BY
 THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



YEAR LAW ESTABLISHED: **1996**



YEARLY COMPARISON

	1. Who Authorizes (6 points)	2. Standards (3 points)	3. Evaluations (3 points)	4. Sanctions (3 points)	5. Reports (3 points)	6. PMR (3 points)	7. Renewals (6 points)	8. Default Closure (6 points)	Total (33 points)
2016	4	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	9/33
2015	4	0	0	0	3	2	6	0	15/33

AUTHORIZER NEEDS TOOLS TO DO AUTHORIZING RIGHT

The Office of Charter Schools of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has worked to implement practices largely consistent with nationally recognized best practices in authorizing. Unfortunately, harmful legislation passed in 2015 and 2016 removed key levers of enforceable accountability, making it harder for the sole authorizer to successfully carry out its work.

Noteworthy in 2016

Score Decrease: -6

- **Renewal Standard (-6).** In 2015, the Legislature amended North Carolina’s charter law to make renewal the default renewal outcome and to make “substantial progress” sufficient for charter renewal. The State Board of Education later defined “substantial progress” without reference to meeting academic performance expectations in a charter contract.

NACSA RECOMMENDS

- **Institute a strong renewal standard.** Current North Carolina law sets a very low bar for renewal, granting schools a 10-year renewal unless they demonstrate a substantial, egregious failing. Renewal should be earned by demonstrated success, not granted by default. NACSA supports policy that empowers authorizers to close schools that fail to achieve the performance goals set out in their charter contract.
- **Establish a default closure provision** that makes closure the expected outcome for persistently failing charter schools. North Carolina should reverse recently enacted laws that weakened its closure rules by preventing the authorizer from closing persistently failing schools in most circumstances. The state now identifies “continually low-performing charter schools” pursuant to its state accountability criteria. Revocation should be reinstated as the expected accountability consequence for charter schools with this classification.
- **Endorse professional standards for charter school authorizing.**
- **Codify the expectation that the authorizer will use performance frameworks.** The Department does this in practice; however, nothing in state policy ensures the Department will continue to do so in perpetuity.

THE SCORE

POLICY	POINTS	DETAILS & CONTEXT
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AUTHORIZER QUALITY

Who Authorizes	4/6	SEA only. Only the State Board of Education (SBE) may authorize charter schools. Charter applications and renewal requests are first reviewed by the North Carolina Charter Schools Advisory Board, which then makes recommendations to the SBE. The SBE and the Advisory Board are both staffed by the North Carolina Office of Charter Schools, which is administratively located in the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and subject to supervision, direction, and control by the SBE. The Executive Director of the Office of Charter Schools is appointed by the SBE.
Authorizer Standards	0/3	State law does not adopt, provide, or endorse quality standards for authorizers. In practice, the Office of Charter Schools employs practices that are largely consistent with nationally recognized best practices in authorizing.
Authorizer Evaluations	0/3	State law does not require or provide for the evaluation of authorizers based on standards for quality authorizing.
Authorizer Sanctions	0/3	State law does not provide for authorizer sanctions that restrict the granting of new charters by the authorizer, remove schools from the authorizer's portfolio, or remove authorizing authority.

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

Reports on Performance	3/3	By law, the State Board of Education must report on the student academic progress of charter schools measured against the previous year.
Performance Management and Replication	2/3	State law requires a charter contract but not performance frameworks. The law offers an expedited application process for replication of high-quality charter schools.
Renewal Standard	0/6	New in 2016: By law, the authorizer shall renew a school unless it is, among other criteria, not in "substantial compliance" with the terms of its charter. The terms of its charter include student performance goals. The law directs the SBE to define "substantial compliance" in rules. In January 2016, the SBE adopted a definition of "substantial compliance." The definition fails to require an examination of whether a school is meeting the academic standards in its charter contract. Instead, substantial compliance is defined as "improve[ing] or sustain[ing] student learning." This is equivalent to a renewal standard based on "reasonable progress" towards charter goals, giving North Carolina a weak renewal policy.
Default Closure	0/6	State law does not provide for default closure for failure to meet minimum academic standards. New in 2016: Charter schools that receive a school performance grade of D or F on the state accountability system and do not exceed expected growth in at least two of three consecutive school years must be identified by the SBE as "continually low performing" (a classification already used for traditional public schools under the state accountability system). However, the consequence of that identification is not closure. Instead, the SBE is explicitly prohibited from terminating or not renewing the charter of a continually low-performing charter school solely for its continually low-performing status if the charter school has either (1) met growth in each of the immediately preceding three school years or (2) if the charter school has implemented a strategic improvement plan approved by the SBE and is making "measurable progress" toward student performance goals. The new standard creates a loophole for continually low-performing charter schools to escape default closure.

TOTAL POINTS: 9/33, RANK 36