
NEWSLETTER



Public charter schools are free and open to everyone.
Learn more at charterschool.wa.gov

A Message from our Executive Director, Marcus Harden

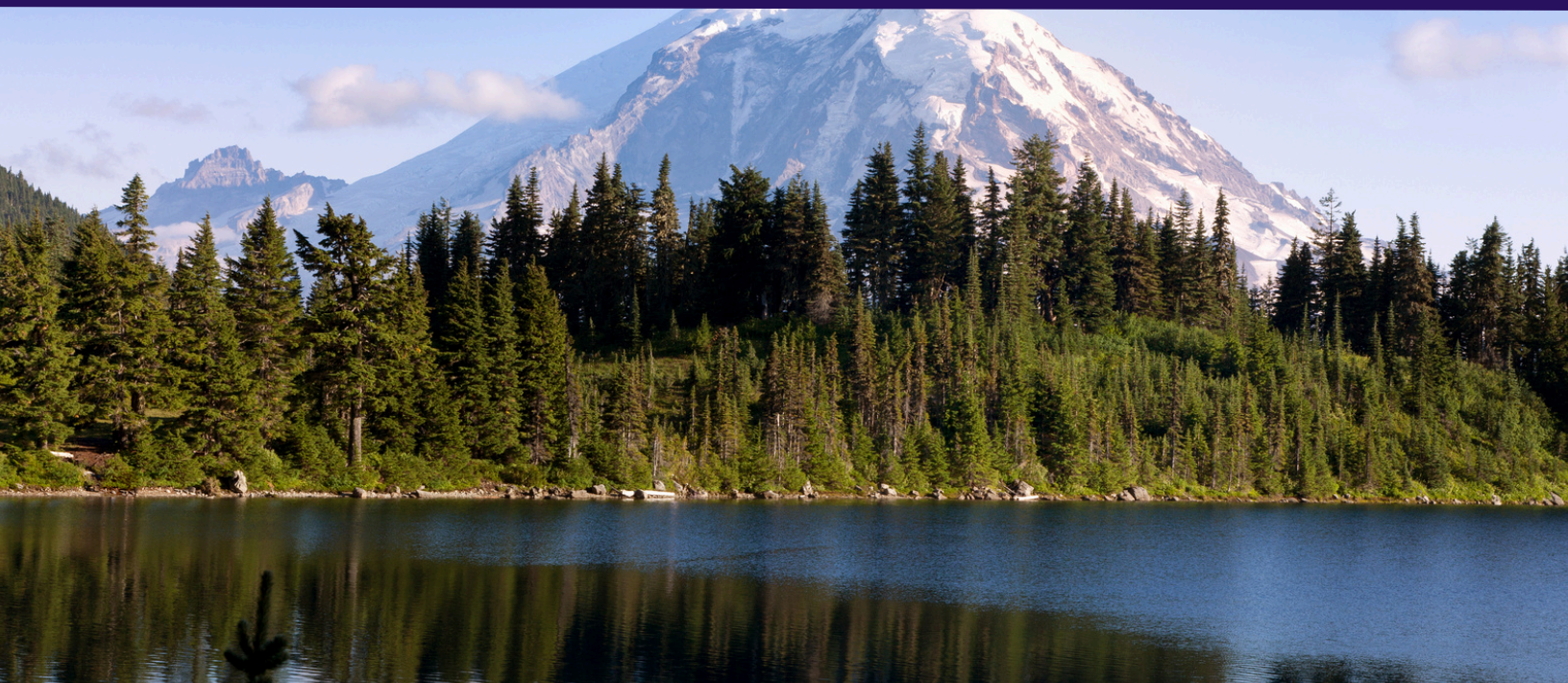
Partners in Public Service,

A new school year always brings a particular kind of energy. Students are walking into new classrooms. Educators are welcoming new faces. School leaders and boards are setting the tone for the year ahead. Families are placing their trust in all of us to make sure their children have a place to learn, belong, and thrive.

Alongside my collaborators here at the Washington State Charter School Commission, we take this very seriously. In our modest Olympia headquarters, our role is not only to oversee public charter schools from a distance. Our responsibility is to help ensure that these public schools are strong, connected, accountable, and positioned to deliver on the promises they make to students and communities. We are committed to getting up close and on hand to identify solutions and remove obstacles to high quality learning. In our inaugural newsletter this school year, we've included a deeper dive on Dr. Sarah Lloyd's Technical Assistance approach – think: **students over systems**.

We may be in the closing months of 2026, but the Commission is still building. We are moving with purpose with the public schools in our portfolio with urgency, clarity, and care.

Students only get one chance at each school year. Let's make every one count.



What We Did on Summer Vacation

While many school communities were preparing classrooms and welcoming new staff, the Commission spent the summer continuing the work that supports strong, stable public schools.

We stayed connected to schools and communities.

Our team continued school visits, conversations with leaders and boards, and work with school communities across Washington. That work helps us understand what schools are experiencing in real time – not simply after a problem appears.

We continued our accountability work.

The Commission's responsibility includes monitoring academic performance, financial health, and organizational compliance. But accountability is not simply about identifying where something went wrong.

Good accountability should help us understand earlier, act sooner, and support better outcomes for students.

We recognized where rulemaking could use some updates.

One of the most important responsibilities of an authorizer is preparing for moments when schools face significant challenges or transitions.

This summer, we continued work connected to our Continuity of Operations process and related rulemaking. We have embarked upon a rulemaking process in alignment with state law, our policies, and in alignment with direction by the legislature's Joint Administrative Rules Review Committee (JARRC). Our goal is straightforward: when circumstances change around a school, students and families should not simply be left to absorb the disruption. As an authorizer of a public charter school, we have a responsibility to that school's community when its operator can no longer continue forward.

Regulatory rulemaking has distinct phases. Public participation is an integral part of the rulemaking process during rule development, formal proposal, and rule adoption. Commission staff will also benefit in the work ahead from the engagement of state lawmakers to help inform both the process and substance of the deliberations ahead.

We supported schools through growth and renewal.

The Commission also continued work related to school expansions, renewals, and other major decisions that help shape the future of public charter schools in Washington.

These processes are rigorous by design. We are accountable to each other and the state on several levels. What is at stake are the financial, academic and operational obligations we have to each school and the communities we serve. We're up for it. So are they.

This summer, Commissioners approved Impact | Commencement Bay Elementary for expansion from a K-5 to a K-8 program, beginning by offering 6th grade in Fall of 2027.



Commissioner's *Corner*

Public charter schools in Washington have oversight from three agencies – including us – and their own Board of Directors. Our staff team is honored to work with education pros that have been appointed by elected leaders including the governor and the state legislature, the State Board of Education and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Our Commissioners represent experience and expertise in public and nonprofit governance; management and finance; public school leadership, assessment, curriculum, and instruction; and public education law.

Earlier this year, Dr. Donald Felder, who has served on the Commission since 2019 established Dr. Felder's Literacy Library. We are so proud to host Dr. Felder's curated collection of tools and resources designed to support student success on our website.

**"Reading is knowledge.. and
knowledge is the achievement."
Dr. Donald Felder**

Legislative Connection

As the new school year commences, the Commission is moving along with the work at hand while simultaneously taking on any opportunity to do better by our community.

With that, the Commission has kicked off rulemaking for three different areas...

Washington State Rulemaking 101

Rulemaking is when we propose and adopt rules to protect the environment and public health. The Washington State Legislature guides all state rulemaking through a law known as the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), Chapter 34.05 RCW. All state agencies must follow the requirements of the APA.

WSR-26-03-063

Formalizing the Commission's ability to provide technical assistance to public charter schools to support compliance, accountability, and continuous improvement.

WSR-26-18-008

Establishing clear administrative rules for managing charter contracts, including school closures, relocations, contract amendments, renewals, and oversight, to improve transparency, consistency, and public accountability.

WSR-24-14-010

Updating the Washington State Charter School Commission's rules to modernize pronoun usage and clarify existing charter school renewal requirements.

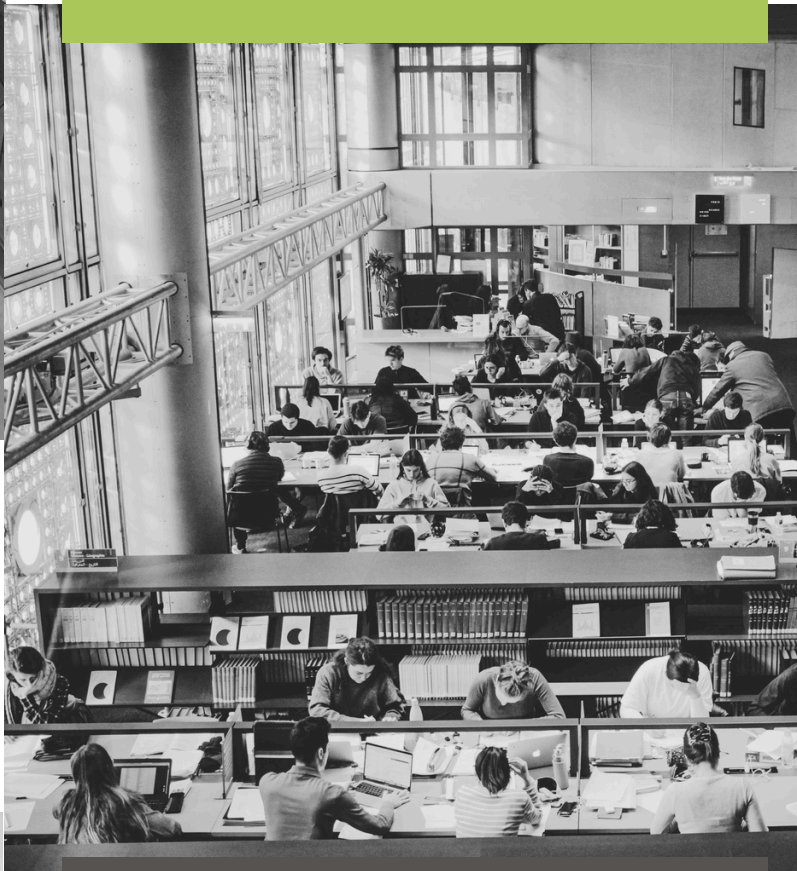
**Did you know you could follow along with
Commission rulemaking?**



Scan Me!



Check Out our
Upcoming Meetings!



Commission Meeting

October 8, 2026

Seattle Public Library

Seattle, WA



Commission Meeting

December 17, 2026

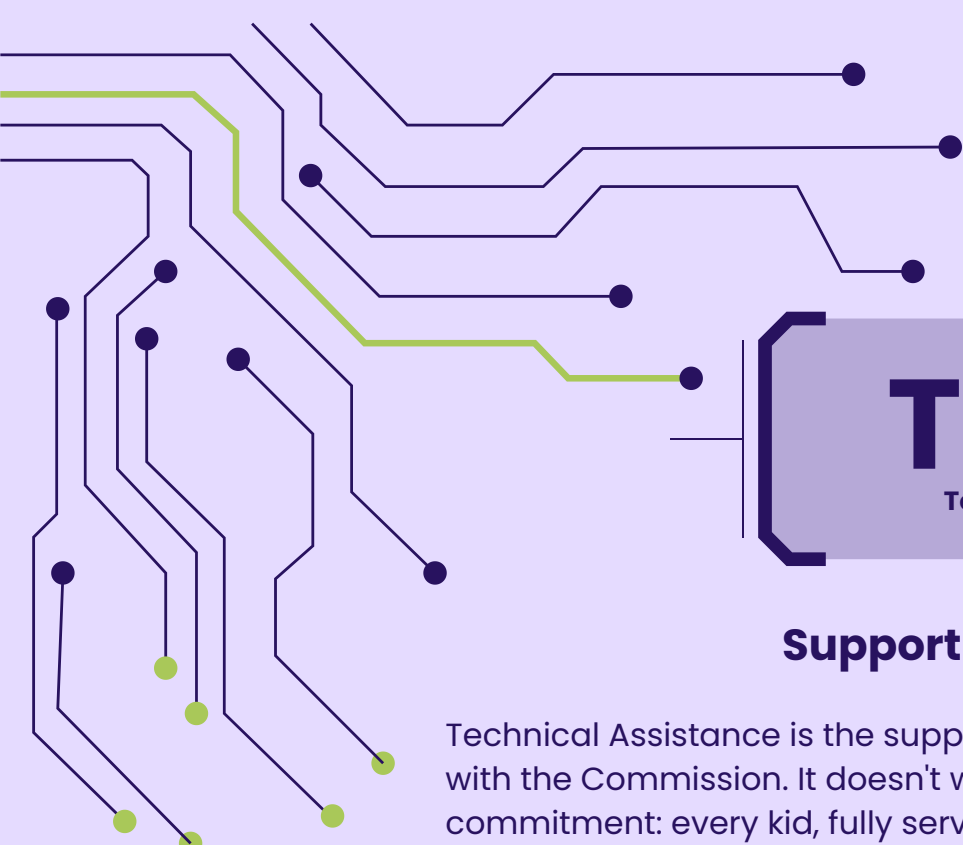
Fountainhead NW

Renton, WA

Want to come to a meeting?

Unless otherwise posted, all virtual meetings can be accessed by Zoom using the information below. Meeting agendas and materials can be found on the Commission website 3–5 days prior to the meeting.





T.A. Talk

Technical Assistance with WSCSC

Support Before Something Breaks

Technical Assistance is the support side of your school's relationship with the Commission. It doesn't wait for a crisis. It starts from a simple commitment: every kid, fully served for who they are. That means we build relationships that center people and students, not just systems and processes. It does not mean less rigor. It does not mean weaker performance expectations.

Our Technical Assistance model is disciplined, structured, and designed to help schools name challenges early, work through them before they become crises, and build the conditions for students and educators to thrive. The Commission holds performance expectations through a separate office. Our Community & Leadership Development team provides coaching, thought partnership, co-design, and relationship-centered support. We keep these two lanes structurally separate on purpose, so schools can build trusting relationships with the people whose job is to help them solve problems, without confusion about what a conversation might trigger.

Why does this matter? Public charter school leaders are rarely one thing. On any given day, they are running a school and also acting as business operator, nonprofit leader, culture builder, fundraiser, board partner, and community bridge. Many are doing this without a district central office behind them, sometimes as the only person carrying a function. Our Technical Assistance model recognizes that reality and is built to put support around school leaders so success is not a solo act.

This year, the ways we can show up alongside school leaders, boards, and communities include:

- **Thought partnership.** Thinking through a hard call with someone who already knows your school.
- **Capacity building.** Building the muscle in your team, not a one-time fix that leaves when we do.
- **Resource development.** Finding or building what you need to close a real gap.
- **Data-driven insight.** Making sense of your data, and seeing who is and is not being served.
- **Governance and board support.** Growing the health and development of your board.

Our work together is shaped by what school leaders have told us they need: sustained leadership development, meaningful partnership with the Commission, learning from peers, practical support in areas like governance and community engagement, and help turning research and information into action.

What Every School Can Expect

Every school in the Commission's portfolio has access to a consistent foundation of support: regular contact with a Director of Technical Assistance, in-person presence at least four times a year (two site visits, graduation, and a showcase), a co-designed Technical Assistance plan, honest check-ins on progress, and support when a challenge shows up.

Our goal is to be useful. That means we answer questions before they become stressors and we address challenges before they become emergencies.

How to Get Support

1. Reach out to your DTA. No form, no waiting. Tell them what you need.

2. Build your Technical Assistance plan together.

Name no more than three things your school is working toward this year.

3. Return to the plan across the year.

Name what moved, what is stuck, and what you are adjusting.

4. Reach out again whenever something new comes up.

Reaching Out

Technical Assistance runs through your Director of Technical Assistance. School leaders, families, community members, and board members are all welcome to reach out directly.

Schools	Director of Technical Assistance	Contact
Impact (all campuses), Whatcom Intergenerational High School	Halma Abubakar	halma.abubakar@k12.wa.us
Spokane International Academy, Pinnacles Prep, Summit (all campuses)	Jonathan Houston	jonathan.houston@k12.wa.us
Rooted Vancouver, Rainier Valley Leadership Academy, Catalyst Public Schools, Rainier Prep	Italiana Hughes	italiana.hughes@k12.wa.us

For questions not tied to a specific school, reach the Community & Leadership Development team through Sarah Lloyd, PhD, Chief of Community & Leadership Development, at sarah.lloyd@k12.wa.us.

Want to learn more about the model? Read the [August Commission Meeting presentation](#).

In Community,

The Community & Leadership Development team
Washington State Charter School Commission



Our Why

Public charter schools are public schools. As the main authorizer of public charter schools in our state, my collaborators and I are all in service to the public.

So behind every policy, framework, site visit, meeting, report, and Commission vote, there are students and families who are trusting us to get this right.

Our work extends beyond compliance, beyond process, beyond checking boxes and signing off. Our privilege to serve is focused on students, communities, opportunity and accountability.
I am grateful to begin another school year alongside all of you.

Welcome Back.

Marcus Harden

Executive Director

Washington State Charter School Commission



(360) 725-5511 | charterschoolinfo@k12.wa.us

Follow the Commission for updates, resources, public meetings, and news from Public Charter Schools across Washington.

If you are a student or family member with concerns about a charter public school that is authorized by the Commission, you can access information on how to [file a complaint here](#).