Thomas B. FORDHAM FOUNDATION · CHARTER SCHOOL SPONSORSHIP

NON-RENEWAL TRACK

Application for Reconsideration

For schools whose three-year performance pattern places closure as the default outcome — and who seek to make the case for a fresh start.

RENEWAL CYCLE

Fall 2026

ISSUED BY

Office of Sponsorship
The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation

FOREWORD

From the Office of Sponsorship

This application is different from the Tier 1 and Tier 2 renewal applications. Schools on the Non-Renewal Track have been identified through three years of state report card evidence as schools whose performance pattern, taken as a whole, does not warrant renewal under Fordham's sponsorship standards. Placement on this track ordinarily means that the school should anticipate closureoat the end of the current renewal term.

Still, Fordham believes that schools should have the opportunity to make a candid and convincing case for reconsideration. Which means this is not a standard renewal application. It does not ask the school to demonstrate continued quality, because the three-year record does not support that demonstration. It asks the school to make a different and harder argument: that something is changing, or has changed, in ways concrete enough to justify a fresh start.

Submission of this application is voluntary. A school placed on the Non-Renewal Track may decline to submit, in which case the renewal term will conclude as scheduled and the school will close. A school that submits this application is asking Fordham's board to consider a different outcome — typically a one- or two-year provisional renewal contingent on demonstrated execution of the turnaround plan presented here.

Fordham's board will weigh this application against the seriousness of the deficiency pattern, the credibility of the changes presented, the strength of the evidence supporting them, and the school's capacity to execute.

ORIENTATION

How This Application Is Organized

The Application for Reconsideration has eight substantive sections plus a signature page. The order matters. The Board Chair Attestation in Section 1 is required at the front of the document because it establishes that the board, not school leadership alone, is the author of this application and the responsible party for what follows.

SECTIONS

1. Board Chair Attestation — required at the front of the document; cannot be drafted or signed by school leadership.
2. School Identification — basic data, leadership, board chair, term dates.
3. Acknowledgment of the Performance Record — the school's candid account of the deficiency pattern that led to Non-Renewal Track placement.
4. Theory of Recovery — what specifically has changed, or will change, that makes a different outcome plausible.
5. Evidence of Change — concrete, verifiable evidence supporting the theory of recovery.
6. Turnaround Plan — twelve-, twenty-four-, and thirty-six-month milestones the school is willing to be held to.
7. Organizational and Financial Viability — whether the school can actually execute the turnaround plan.
8. Required Attestations and Assurances — board-signed certifications.
9. Signature Page.

> WHAT A STRONG RESPONSE WILL INCLUDE

- Candor before persuasion. Fordham's board has the three-year data; defensive framing weakens the case rather than strengthening it.
- Specificity over scope. A focused, credible turnaround plan reads stronger than a comprehensive one.
- Evidence in Section 5 must be verifiable — things Fordham could see for itself if it visited the school.
- The board's voice should be present throughout, particularly in Sections 1, 4, and 7.
- Honest treatment of what the school cannot promise, alongside what it can.

SECTION 1 · REQUIRED FRONT MATTER

Board Chair Attestation

The following attestation is required at the front of every Application for Reconsideration. It must be drafted under the direct supervision of the board chair and must not be drafted by the head of school, the management organization, or any party other than the board itself. The board chair signs below; school leadership does not sign this section.

ATTESTATION

The board of [SCHOOL NAME] has reviewed the three-year performance record on which Fordham's Non-Renewal Track placement is based. The board accepts that this record, taken as a whole, does not meet Fordham's sponsorship standards for renewal, and that the default outcome of this placement is closure of the school at the end of the current renewal term.

The board has authorized the submission of this Application for Reconsideration with full awareness of the seriousness of the school's situation. The board accepts responsibility for the contents of this application, including the diagnosis of past performance in Section 3, the theory of recovery in Section 4, the evidence presented in Section 5, and the turnaround plan in Section 6.

The board understands that, if Fordham's board grants reconsideration, the school will operate under a provisional renewal term shorter than a standard renewal, with explicit conditions tied to the turnaround plan. The board commits to monitoring execution of

the plan directly, to engaging with Fordham at intervals to be established at contract execution, and to closing the school if execution does not match the commitments made in this application.

This attestation was drafted under the direct supervision of the board and was not prepared by school leadership.

BOARD CHAIR SIGNATURE

BOARD CHAIR NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

DATE OF BOARD ACTION AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION

SECTION 2

School Identification

Provide the following basic information.

LEGAL NAME OF SCHOOL	
OPERATING NAME (IF DIFFERENT)	
IRN	
STREET ADDRESS	
GRADES SERVED	
CURRENT ENROLLMENT	
CURRENT RENEWAL TERM — START DATE	
CURRENT RENEWAL TERM — END DATE	
HEAD OF SCHOOL / SUPERINTENDENT	
HEAD OF SCHOOL START DATE	
BOARD CHAIR	
BOARD CHAIR START DATE	
APPLICATION CONTACT NAME	
APPLICATION CONTACT EMAIL	

APPLICATION CONTACT PHONE

SECTION 3

Acknowledgment of the Performance Record

This section is the school's candid account of the performance record that led to Non-Renewal Track placement. The point of this section is not to defend the record but to demonstrate that the school understands it. A school that cannot account for its own performance with clarity is a school that is unlikely to be able to change it.

Fordham's board reads this section first after the Board Chair Attestation. A defensive or evasive Section 3 substantially weakens the rest of the application.

3.1 Identify the primary strategic goals the school has been pursuing over the life of the contract, and describe the school's own assessment of progress against those goals.

This question asks the school to surface what it was trying to do, before turning to what its outcomes show. Strong responses are direct about the strategy the school adopted, the work undertaken to execute it, and the school's honest read on whether the strategy was the right one or whether execution fell short. The diagnostic in 3.3 builds directly on this answer.

3.2 Provide a candid account of the school's performance over the past three years.

Name the deficiencies as Fordham named them. Identify the components of the state report card on which the school has fallen short, the years in which it has done so, and the student groups affected. Do not minimize, reframe, or dispute the record.

3.3 Identify what the school understands to be the underlying causes of the deficiency pattern.

This is a diagnostic question, not a contextual one. The point is to identify factors the school has the capacity to address. Strong responses identify specific, knowable causes — instructional design, leadership capacity, governance, staffing, organizational systems — not external factors that the school cannot influence. Where the strategy described in 3.1 was the right one but execution fell short, say so; where the strategy itself was wrong, say so.

3.4 Describe what the school has tried to do in response over the past three years, and why those efforts have not been sufficient.

Most schools on the Non-Renewal Track have made improvement efforts. Fordham's board does not assume otherwise. The honest question this section asks is: why have those efforts not been enough? The answer to that question is the foundation on which any theory of recovery rests.

3.5 Identify any aspects of the school's operation that are working and should be preserved through any turnaround.

Few schools on the Non-Renewal Track are failing in every dimension. Identifying what is working — specific staff, specific programs, specific student outcomes, specific community relationships — helps Fordham's board understand what would be lost in closure and what foundation a turnaround can build on.

> **WHAT A STRONG RESPONSE WILL INCLUDE**
>
> - Plain acknowledgment of the deficiency pattern as Fordham has named it.
> - Direct articulation of the strategy the school was pursuing and an honest assessment of whether it was the right one.
> - Diagnostic specificity about causes the school can actually address.
> - Honest treatment of past improvement efforts and why they fell short.
> - Identification of preserved capacity — things that are working and would be lost in closure.

SECTION 4

Theory of Recovery

This section is the load-bearing argument of the application. The Theory of Recovery is the school's explanation of why a different outcome is now plausible — what specifically has changed, or will change, that makes future performance materially different from the past three years.

Fordham's board will not grant reconsideration on the basis of effort, intention, or aspiration. The board will weigh whether the changes the school is presenting are concrete, verifiable, and sufficient to produce a different result.

4.1 State the school's theory of recovery in plain language.

In two to four sentences, state what is changing or has changed and why that change is sufficient to alter the school's trajectory. This is the central claim of the application; the rest of the application is the case for that claim.

4.2 Identify the specific changes that the theory of recovery rests on.

Strong responses identify a small number of substantive changes — typically two to four — rather than a long list of incremental adjustments. Examples of substantive changes include new instructional leadership, adoption of materially different curriculum, fundamental restructuring of intervention or instructional support systems, changes in board composition or capacity, partnership with a turnaround operator or external partner, and changes in school-level strategy or model.

4.3 Explain why the changes identified above are sufficient — not merely necessary — to meet the performance standards agreed upon in the charter.

Necessary changes are easier to identify than sufficient ones. This question asks the school to make the harder argument: that these specific changes, taken together, address the underlying causes identified in Section 3 in ways the school's prior efforts did not.

4.4 Identify the greatest risks to success of the theory of recovery.

Strong applications honestly name the conditions under which the theory of recovery would not hold. This is the inverse of the case for change — the candid identification of the assumptions on which the case rests, and the risks that those assumptions might not hold.

WHAT A STRONG RESPONSE WILL INCLUDE

- A central claim stated clearly enough that Fordham's board can hold the school to it.
- A small number of substantive changes — not a long list of incremental adjustments.
- An argument for sufficiency, not just necessity.
- Honest identification of the assumptions on which the theory rests.

SECTION 5

Evidence of Change

This section provides the concrete, verifiable evidence supporting the Theory of Recovery in Section 4. Evidence in this section should be specific enough that Fordham could verify it through document review, site visit, or direct observation.

Strong applications present evidence that is already in place or visibly underway, not evidence that depends on future events that have not yet occurred. 'We will hire' is weaker evidence than 'we have hired, with the new leader starting [date]'; 'we plan to adopt' is weaker than 'the board approved adoption on [date], with implementation underway as of [date].'

Complete one Evidence Entry for each substantive change identified in Section 4.2.

Evidence Entry — Standard Format

A. Identify the change.

Reference the change as it appears in Section 4.2.

B. Describe the current state of this change.

Where is this change in implementation today? Has it been authorized by the board? Has it been initiated? Is it fully in place? Be specific about dates and current status.

C. Provide verifiable evidence of the current state, and identify what additional evidence will be available, and when.

Identify what Fordham could review or observe today to verify the status described above — board resolutions with dates, employment agreements, curriculum adoption documents, partnership agreements, organizational charts, classroom schedules, professional development calendars, and similar. Reference appendices where applicable. For changes still in progress, also identify the next observable milestone and when it will be reached; this becomes part of the turnaround plan in Section 6 and the basis for early sponsor monitoring.

D. Identify any aspects of the change that are not yet evidenced and explain why.

Honesty about gaps strengthens the case. A school that overclaims evidence and is later contradicted by site visits has a weaker position than one that was candid about what was still in progress.

WHAT A STRONG RESPONSE WILL INCLUDE

- Evidence that already exists — not evidence that depends on future events.
- Specificity about current status, with dates.
- Documentation Fordham can verify directly.
- Honest identification of evidence gaps and the timeline by which they will be closed.

SECTION 6

Turnaround Plan

The Turnaround Plan translates the Theory of Recovery into specific milestones over the first thirty-six months of any provisional renewal term. The plan defines what the school is willing to be held to and what Fordham would monitor in deciding whether to continue the school's operation.

If Fordham's board grants reconsideration, the milestones in this section become contractual conditions of the provisional renewal. Upon review, Fordham may set different milestones or conditions as well. Failure to meet milestones at the levels and timelines specified here will trigger sponsor review and may result in mid-term closure, depending on the nature and pattern of the shortfall.

Twelve-Month Milestones

Milestones the school commits to reaching by the end of Year 1 of any provisional renewal term. These should be predominantly leading indicators — things observable before student outcome data become available — that establish that the changes presented in Sections 4 and 5 are taking root.

6.1 Identify three to five twelve-month milestones.

For each milestone, name the specific outcome, the measure, the target, and the verification method (how Fordham would confirm achievement).

Twenty-Four-Month Milestones

Milestones the school commits to reaching by the end of Year 2. These should include early evidence of impact on student outcomes — not full state report card improvement, but specific, measurable indicators that the trajectory is changing.

6.2 Identify three to five twenty-four-month milestones.

Where possible, include at least one milestone tied to interim assessment data or other student outcome indicators that would precede state report card change.

Thirty-Six-Month Milestones

Milestones the school commits to reaching by the end of Year 3. These should include state report card outcomes that would, if achieved, materially change the school's renewal posture.

6.3 Identify three to five thirty-six-month milestones.

Identify the specific state report card outcomes the school commits to achieving by the end of Year 3 and the threshold at which the school believes it should be considered for a standard renewal.

Monitoring and Accountability

6.4 Identify the cadence and structure of board monitoring of the turnaround plan.

Strong responses describe specific board meeting agendas, specific data the board will review, and specific decision points at which the board will assess progress.

6.5 Identify the conditions under which the school itself would conclude that the turnaround is not working and recommend closure.

Strong applications identify the school's own off-ramp — the conditions under which the board itself would acknowledge that continuation is not in the interest of students. This question is hard but important; an honest answer signals that the school understands the seriousness of the commitment it is making.

WHAT A STRONG RESPONSE WILL INCLUDE

- Milestones specific enough to be verified — named outcome, named measure, named target, named verification method.
- Year 1 dominated by leading indicators; Year 2 transitions to early outcome indicators; Year 3 includes state report card outcomes.
- A monitoring structure that puts the board in active contact with the data, not at arm's length.
- An honest off-ramp — the conditions under which the school itself would acknowledge that continuation is not warranted.

SECTION 7

Organizational and Financial Viability

This section addresses whether the school has the organizational and financial capacity to execute the turnaround plan in Section 6. A credible theory of recovery and a well-designed plan are insufficient if the school does not have the capacity to deliver them.

7.1 Describe the leadership team responsible for executing the turnaround plan. Identify the proposed changes and shifts to leadership and staffing that will impact the capacity to execute the plan.

Identify the head of school and any other instructional or operational leaders central to plan execution. Where leadership has changed in connection with the theory of recovery, describe the new leader's background, prior turnaround or improvement experience, and tenure expectation.

7.2 Describe the board's role in executing and monitoring the turnaround plan.

This is the most consequential question in this section. The board signing the Section 1 attestation is the same board that must execute the monitoring described in Section 6. Describe the board's composition, how the board has changed (if at all) in connection with the theory of recovery, the specific expertise board members bring, and the frequency at which the board will engage with academic data, financial data, and plan execution.

7.3 Describe the school's financial position and runway.

Identify the school's current financial position, projected enrollment for the next term, projected revenue and expenses, and any specific financial risks. A turnaround that depends on enrollment recovery should be transparent about the assumed enrollment trajectory.

7.4 Identify the resources required to execute the turnaround plan and confirm their availability.

Turnaround typically requires resource commitments above ordinary operating costs — leadership compensation, professional development, materials, partnerships, additional staff capacity. Identify these specifically and confirm that the resources are available within the school's budget or have been secured from other sources.

7.5 Provide a current-year update on any required corrective action from the most recent independent financial audit.

Identify each finding from the most recent audit, the school's corrective action commitment, and the current status of that work. If there are no outstanding findings, state so directly. For Non-Renewal Track schools, audit corrective action status is read closely — unresolved findings carry more weight here than they would in a Tier 1 or Tier 2 application.

WHAT A STRONG RESPONSE WILL INCLUDE

- Leadership described with specific experience relevant to turnaround.
- A board that is described as actively engaged with academic outcomes, not only fiduciary matters.
- Financial position presented honestly, including assumptions about enrollment.
- Resource requirements identified specifically, with availability confirmed.
- Risks named candidly, with mitigations where they exist.
- Honest, current status on every audit finding, not a restatement of the original finding language.

SECTION 8

Required Attestations and Assurances

The following attestations are in addition to the Board Chair Attestation in Section 1. Each must be acknowledged by the board chair through signature on the signature page (Section 9).

ATTESTATIONS

1. The information provided in this application is true and accurate to the best of the board's knowledge.
2. The school remains in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations governing community schools in Ohio, or, where compliance gaps exist, has disclosed those gaps in this application and committed to a remediation timeline.
3. The school remains in compliance with the financial and operational terms of its current sponsorship contract with the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, or, where compliance gaps exist, has disclosed those gaps and committed to a remediation timeline.
4. The school's most recent independent financial audit has been completed and submitted, with all material findings disclosed in Section 7 and accompanied by corrective action commitments, as detailed in Section 7.6.
5. The board has reviewed this application in full, including the Acknowledgment of the Performance Record (Section 3), the Theory of Recovery (Section 4), the Evidence of Change (Section 5), the Turnaround Plan (Section 6), and the Organizational and Financial Viability section (Section 7), and authorizes its submission to the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.
6. The board accepts that the milestones in Section 6, if reconsideration is granted, will become contractual conditions of any provisional renewal term

and that failure to meet those milestones may result in mid-term closure of the school.

7. The board accepts responsibility for monitoring execution of the turnaround plan directly and for closing the school if execution does not match the commitments made in this application.
8. The school has adopted board-approved special education policies and procedures — either ODEW's Model Policies and Procedures or an ODEW-approved alternative — and has submitted current-year verification through ODEW's Monitoring System. The submission documentation is provided as Appendix H.

Required Appendices

- Appendix A: Three-year state report card data summary (provided by Fordham, included by school for record).
- Appendix B: Documentation of board action authorizing submission of this application.
- Appendix C: Current board roster, with member names, roles, term dates, date of last election, and brief identification of expertise relevant to the turnaround plan.
- Appendix D: Current school leadership organizational chart, including any new leadership material to the theory of recovery.
- Appendix E: Most recent board-approved organizational budget and projected budget for the proposed provisional renewal term.
- Appendix F: Most recent independent financial audit (cover and management letter).
- Appendix G: Documentation supporting Section 5 evidence entries — board resolutions, employment agreements, partnership agreements, curriculum adoption records, or other verifiable evidence as referenced in that section.
- Appendix H: ODEW Monitoring System submission verifying current-year board adoption of special education policies and procedures.

SECTION 9

Signature Page

By signing below, the board chair affirms the attestations in Sections 1 and 8 and the head of school affirms operational accountability for execution of the Turnaround Plan in Section 6. The Board Chair Attestation in Section 1 carries the substantive certification of this application; signatures here confirm the application as a whole.

Board Chair

NAME

TITLE

SIGNATURE

DATE

Head of School

NAME

TITLE

SIGNATURE

DATE

— END OF APPLICATION —