



Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent
"Educating Georgia's Future"

New Charter School Application

**For Schools Seeking Initial Approval
from Both a
Local Board of Education and the
State Board of Education**

July 2016

SCHOOL NAME

Utopian Academy for the Arts

SCHOOL CONTACT ADDRESS

2750 Forest Parkway

Ellenwood, GA 30294

2023 Petition Cycle



UTOPIAN

ACADEMY FOR THE ARTS

MIDDLE SCHOOL



UTOPIAN
ACADEMY FOR THE ARTS
MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHARTER SCHOOL PETITION COVER PAGE

Part I. Proposed Charter School Information

Name of Proposed Charter School: Utopian Academy for the Arts

Name of the Georgia nonprofit corporation that will hold the charter if granted:

Utopian Academy for the Arts: The Miller Foundation, Inc.

Check one:

- ☐ The proposed charter school has a state-wide attendance zone.
- ☐ The proposed charter school has a state-wide attendance zone but offers only virtual instruction.
- ☒ The proposed charter school has a defined attendance zone that is not state-wide.

LEA in which the School will be Located: Clayton County Public Schools

LEA(s) that will be Included in the Proposed Attendance Zone: Clayton County Public Schools

Prospective Address for School Location: 2750 Forest Parkway
Ellenwood, GA 30294

Part II. Petition Contact Information

Applicants must designate one individual to serve as the contact for official communications.

Name: Dr. Artesius Miller Title: CEO

Physical Address: 2750 Forest Parkway, Ellenwood, GA 30294 Phone Number: 470-446-1070

Fax Number: _____

Email Address: artesiumiller@utopianacademy.com



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Name of Proposed Charter School: Utopian Academy for the Arts

Proposed Launch Date Post Renewal: August 7, 2024 Proposed Charter Term: Five Years

Grade Range: 6-8th Will the School Enroll All Grades the First Year? (Yes/No): Yes

Expected Initial Enrollment: 375 students Proposed Full Enrollment: 375 students

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Yr 1							115	125	135					375
Yr 2							115	125	135					375
Yr 3							115	125	135					375
Yr 4							115	125	135					375
Yr 5							115	125	135					375

School Model: Utopian Academy for the Arts is the 2023 Georgia Charter School of the Year. The mission of Utopian Academy for the Arts (Utopian) is to develop, through a structured and supportive environment, academic and artistic students to enter and to succeed in the global society with proficiency to enroll in a college, university, or specialty school of their choice. The school offers gender-based classroom environments for all core curricula classes, and classes in the dramatic, media, and creative arts as a supplement to core classes for all students. Utopian Academy for the Arts currently serves students in grades 6-8 who reside in Clayton County.

Charter Conversion: Utopian Academy for the Arts is completing its tenth school year in its second charter term which expires on June 30, 2024. Since inception, Utopian Academy for the Arts desired to become a locally authorized charter school by the Clayton County Board of Education. Utopian petitioned unsuccessfully from 2011 to 2013 to Clayton County Public Schools. In 2013, Utopian Academy for the Arts was authorized by the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia, the first and only charter school approved amongst 16 initial applicants. Utopian Academy for the Arts is the first in a network of four schools. Utopian Academy for the Arts Elementary School and Utopian Academy for the Arts High School are locally approved schools in Clayton County. Last year, the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia approved Utopian's replication application for Utopian Academy for the Arts at Trilith. Although Utopian Academy for the Arts has received feedback and recommendation for a successful charter renewal through the State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC), Utopian's governance board and leadership team seeks to convert its state-charter to a local charter school, through the charter renewal process. With guidance from the Charter School Division of the Georgia Department of Education, Utopian Academy for the Arts has submitted its original charter petition, which was subsequently approved by the State Charter Schools Commission of Georgia to the Clayton County Board of Education. On September 28, 2023, the Governance Board for Utopian Academy for the Arts



approved a resolution to acknowledge and request a local charter, through the charter renewal process under the leadership and authorization of Clayton County Public Schools.

Academic Performance: Utopian has met SCSC academic performance standards for the each year of its current five-year charter contract. In the most recent year for which the SCSC has data available, 2021-2022, Utopian had higher content mastery, progress, and value-added scores than the comparison schools' scores. In 2018, Utopian Academy's overall performance was higher than 78% of Georgia public schools and its students' academic growth outpaced 99% of the state's schools, according to the Governor's Office of Student Achievement.

Financial Performance: Utopian Academy has met SCSC financial performance standards and has demonstrated financial viability, as shown in the SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework. The school meets standards across both short-term and sustainability measures and consistently submits its annual independent financial audit before the required deadlines.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The education program at Utopian Academy for the Arts (UAFA) will include the following:

- Differentiating instruction (*including single-gender instruction for all core curricula classes*) to meet the wide ranging learning needs of its entire student body and offering flexible learning spaces that complement and encourage varied instructional methods
- Offering classes in the dramatic arts, media arts, and creative arts for all students as a supplement to the core curriculum
- Fulfilling all State of Georgia intermediate level standards and core curriculum, and providing additional curriculum benchmarks aligned to state standards for a complete middle school program from which to prepare students to meet and exceed state performance standards
- Utilizing data from all aspects of its operation to inform decision making and improve student performance, including administration of internal diagnostic assessments, aligned to state standards

UAFA's mission of developing academic and artistic students to enter and to succeed in the global society with proficiency to enroll in a college, university or specialty school of their choice will remain at the core of all decisions. Teachers and leadership will have the needed information and resources to focus on prompt and timely solutions.

UAFA's curriculum, instruction, and assessment features will support the needs of students at risk, but also offer the kind of learning environment that middle school students thrive in. We will focus our efforts on providing learning opportunities and instruction that are relevant and challenging, integrative, and utilize a variety of instructional methods. Our assessment program will not only improve instruction but also, because it is intended to promote learning, students will not view it as punishment. Our school culture around learning and scholarship will encourage struggling learners.

School leadership and staff will share the school vision and align with the stated school mission. All staff will hold high expectations of students. This means believing that students at risk for failure hold the capacity to learn and expecting them to meet state standards. Additionally, staff will be prepared for students as a result of extensive professional development around early adolescent needs.

UAFA agrees to unannounced visits and announced instructional audits conducted by the Clayton County School District's Instructional Audit Team as needed and are determined by the Charter School office.

Meeting Academic Needs of Adolescents

In Clayton County, the statistics for middle school students are especially worrisome as they continue to struggle academically in district schools. In particular, as they progress through the middle level grades, students are falling farther behind academically, with most completing 8th grade unprepared for high school. By endeavoring to educate middle school students, UAFA will address the complicated task of providing instruction to young people during one of the most variable times in their lives. Young adolescents experience one of the most intense periods of physical, cognitive, and emotional growth, the sequence and pace of which varies greatly from person to person as well as between the genders.

Rationale for Enrollment Plan

The rationale for the enrollment plan for Utopian Academy for the Arts is to provide a significant educational benefit of having a gender-based classroom environment, longer school day, longer school year, and performing /visual; media; and creative arts classes for middle school students in Clayton County, GA. UAFA will offer an average class size of 25 students to 1 teacher. UAFA will remain small enough to operate in a fiscally sound manner, while offering the requisite programming for students to fulfill middle school prepared to continue into high school.

We seek to address this challenging situation faced by our students by establishing a school driven by high expectations; using additional time to focus on academics and remediation; and creating a culture that values hard work, achievement, and preparation for upper grades such that young boys and girls will be ready for a range of public and private high school options upon entering 9th grade.

A majority of the 14 million young adolescents (grades 5–8) enrolled in U.S. public schools continue to fare poorly on national and statewide performance assessments.¹ Many eventually tune out or drop out of school. One reason for this low level of achievement is that too many middle-grades students attend large, impersonal schools where substantial numbers of students are not purposefully engaged in learning, lack meaningful relationships with adults, and are increasingly alienated from school. Creating small schools and small learning communities represents a giant step toward personalizing middle-grades education and establishing the right conditions for enhanced teaching and learning. Utopian Academy for the Arts will provide a teacher-to-student ratio of approximately 1 to 25. Maintaining a small teacher-to-student ratio will help us to effectively differentiate instruction. This will allow us to quickly identify students in need of additional academic assistance and provide the appropriate support. The school's small size will allow for the effective fulfillment of our mission through individualized instruction. Students will also be divided into advisory groups of approximately 15-16 students each. Each advisory group will have a single teacher or administrator who leads the group and has primary responsibility for communicating with parents and reporting on student progress. Furthermore, UAFA has budgeted for attrition, as shown on the Half Enrollment Operating Budget (*Refer to Appendix N*).

Empirical Research

Single-Sex Approach

The proposed school design has been strategically informed by research on the efficacy of a gender-based educational model for our student population. Recently, there has been an increased effort on the part of education reformers to remedy the seemingly ever-widening achievement gap in innovative and strategic ways. Studies indicate that one strategy to correct educational equity and support strong student achievement may lie in single-sex environments, and single-sex schooling.

Many theories have been offered as a reason that single-sex learning environments work better for some students. In single-sex schools, preoccupation with neighboring students of the opposite sex is eliminated, allowing for a more single-minded focus on academics. The U.S. Department of Education

¹ Association for Middle Level Education. *Small Schools and Small Learning Communities*. Findings from recent literature. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved April 26, 2012 from <http://www.amle.org/AboutAMLE/PositionStatements/SmallSchools/tabid/293/Default.aspx>

recently concluded that “single-sex schooling can be helpful, especially for certain outcomes related to academic achievement and more positive academic aspirations.”²

Single Sex Instruction

In the last few years the creation of single-sex schools has been embraced in various parts of the U.S. as a strategy for ameliorating the risks and hardships commonly associated with the academic performance and social development of Black and Latino students (Martin et. al 2010). Following the amendment changes in NCLB in 2002, there has been a rapid proliferation in the number of public schools offering single-sex education. In 1999, only four public schools offered single-sex education. By 2006, there were 223 public single-sex schools (Martin et.al 2010). Despite this dramatic increase, the research supporting the benefits of an intervention that isolates males from their female peers varies based on the outcome. “Nonetheless, policymakers and educators have begun to embrace single-sex schools and single-sex classrooms, especially for Black and Latino students, as an intervention they hope will solve some of the problems these at-risk groups face.”³

The U.S. General Accounting Office found that urban males benefit from single-sex schools: “Many educators are convinced of the value of single-sex settings for urban minority males. Several program officials...reported improved test scores, better attendance, or improved behavior among students in single-gender settings.”⁴ This is supported by Dr. Cornelius Riordan’s research on single-sex education. Cornelius Riordan, educational researcher and Associate Professor of Sociology at Providence College, notes that the results of single-sex education for both boys and girls are clear, and that these positive impacts are even more dramatic for African-American and Hispanic children. He found that the performance of African-American and Hispanic students in single-sex schools is stronger on all tests, with scores, on average, almost one academic year above that of their peers in coeducational settings.⁵ Research confirms that single sex schools benefit students that are the most educationally at-risk, including boys and minority students. UAFA’s single-sex learning environment will offer a significant educational benefit to those students at risk for academic failure.

The Black and Latino Male Schools Intervention Study (BLMSIS) is a longitudinal study (2006-2009) of seven single-sex schools serving primarily Black and Latino boys ages 9 to 18. BLMSIS focuses on examining the components of these schools (e.g., instruction, leadership, curriculum, climate, out-of-school time activities) and their effect on the boys being served (Fergus & Noguera 2010). Each of the schools’ School Directors and teachers framed their discussion with the alarming statistics of Black and Latino boys’ academic outcomes and their related life opportunities. Practitioners expressed that many of the students, even those considered by schools as being exceptional students, have major academic skill gaps due to minimal literacy, math, and critical thinking opportunities (Fergus & Noguera 2010).

² U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, Single-Sex Versus Secondary Schooling: A Systematic Review, Washington, D.C., 2005.

³ Martin, M., Fergus, E. F., & Noguera, a. P. (2010). *The Academic Characteristics of Black and Latino boys*. New York: Metropolitan Center for Urban Education Mission.

⁴ *Public Education: Issues Involving Single-Gender Schools and Programs*(Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office, 1996)

⁵ Cornelius Riordan, *Boys and Boys in School: Together or Separate* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990).

“In order to provide boys with a “rigorous” or “challenging” education that will help them succeed, the schools are first teaching boys the “basics” or filling in necessary skills students are lacking.”⁶

The BLMSIS found that academic engagement, school climate, and out-of-school activities were key contributors to the academic performance of boys in single-sex schools. “Among these factors, academic engagement was the single most important contributor to academic performance. The more students feel intellectually engaged with what they are learning and the better the quality of school-based adult relationships students have at these single-sex schools, the more likely they are to exhibit academically supportive behavior, which in turn bolsters their academic performance” (Martin et.al 2010). Across all schools in the BLMSIS, “relevant” instruction emerged as a salient academic need of ‘at-risk’ students (Fergus & Noguera 2010). Relevant instruction, defined as instruction that connects to students’ cultures or current lives, was conceptualized as a remedy for the deficits in males’ education.

Furthermore, our school’s desire to educate female students through a single-sex instruction approach is also supported by a strong body of research that includes that of Dr. Rosemary C. Salamone who writes in *Same, Different, Equal: Rethinking Single Sex Schooling*: “All girls settings provide a certain comfort level that helps girls develop greater self confidence and broader interests especially as they approach adolescence.”⁷ The National Coalition of Girls’ Schools (NCGS) fully supports this research. The message in its 2005 Executive Summary is clear: “In the case of girl’s schools, single-sex education works. Students and families seek it out.”⁸ NCGS contracted the services of a research group to explore the attitudes and opinions of graduates of all girls’ schools. Over 1,000 alumnae participated in this survey, and each rated their satisfaction as high in key areas such as: academic rigor, opportunities for personal growth, the development of leadership skills and preparedness for life beyond high school. Alumnae responses were positive and indicated high degrees of satisfaction with their single-sex schooling, and a great majority of the survey participants stated that they were well prepared to excel in college and in the careers beyond college.

Emory Law professor Kimberly J. Jenkins highlights a study that reveals that middle school girls are less confident in learning math and science, and that they perceive these subjects to be less useful. More specifically, a 1992 study by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) entitled *How Schools Shortchange Girls* revealed disconcerting findings on girls in coeducational schools, including finding that girls were “not expected or encouraged to pursue higher-level mathematics and science courses.”⁹ Professor Jenkins also adds, “Girls are more likely than boys to have their abilities overlooked in math and science – a pattern that limits their future opportunities.” While girls are also more likely than boys to be identified at a young age for gifted programs, girls fall off this gifted track at a higher rate than boys, particularly once they reach high school. Many researchers conclude that there, peer pressure tells many girls to hide their intelligence and be quiet.

⁶ Fergus, E., & Noguera, P. (2010). *Theories of Change Among Single-Sex Schools for Black and Latino Boys: An Intervention in Search of Theory*. New York: Metropolitan Center for Urban Education Mission.

⁷ Salamone, Rosemary C., *Same Different, Equal: Rethinking Single Sex Schooling*, New Haven UP, 2003.

⁸ The Girl’s School Experience, A Survey of Young Alumnae of Single-Sex Schools Retrieved September 10, 2006 from <http://www.ncgs.org>.

⁹ Jenkins, Kimberly, (2006) p. 8 —Constitutional Lessons for the Next Generation of public Single Sex Elementary and Secondary Schools, Public Law & Legal Theory Research Paper Series, Emory University School of Law Research Paper No. 05-28.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

English/Language Arts

We believe that it is language that makes human beings unique. However, it is the writers of literature, the language they give to their characters, and the ideas their works convey that define human beings as individuals and mark our place in society. Not only do their stories, poems, and plays entertain us, but they also teach us lessons about life. We learn about bravery and courage, about love and sacrifice, as well as about fear and distrust. We learn about the elegance of the human condition in its most noble moments and also about the tragedy and disappointment of humans at their lowest point. Some stories are told with joy, elation and pride; others are told with sorrow and pain. But it is through these tellings and readings that we find our way and learn which steps to take on the journey of life.

It is by exposing students to all areas of the language/literature experience that we encourage them to explore their own selves, their relationships with others, their place in the world, and to reflect on humans of all cultures and all times who have sought, seek, and will continue to search for the meaning of life.

The strands, standards, content knowledge and performance objectives that follow are designed to give UAFA's students the maximum opportunity to experience life through text: to talk, listen, read, write and view life in its many varieties and, after reflection, to present their thoughts. It is our hope that by working through these skills and objectives that our students will become learned, literate, productive, responsible, and thoughtful human beings.

Students will master the following reading skills:

- Using the reading process to construct meaning
- Understanding and applying literature terminology and literary devices
- Recognizing and understanding the characteristics of various literary forms
- Analyzing literary selections as a whole
- Analyzing characters and their words and/or actions
- Evaluating the authors purpose or intent, as well as actions or events that occur within the selection

Students will learn to select and use different forms of writing for specific purposes such as to explain, to inform, to persuade, or to entertain. Through targeted research activities, students will learn to collect and interpret information and then communicate their findings through age appropriate media productions, research reports, and projects. Through the various forms of the writing process, students will learn how to revise and edit work to produce final, error-free pieces of written composition. Students will learn how to take notes during presentations and lectures, preparing then not only for summarizing the spoken word but also for evaluating presentations. Students will identify key elements of a well delivered, first rate presentations allowing them to create a rubric that will be used to evaluate their own presentations.

Mathematics

A mastery of mathematics is critical for all students. Hence, UAFA will provide students with in-depth mathematics content that is standards-based and reflects the best thinking of mathematicians and teachers. It is our goal to ensure that every student achieves the essential skills needed for mathematical

literacy. In keeping with this challenge, UAFA teachers will have a strong interest and background in mathematics. Our teachers will have mathematical knowledge beyond the curriculum that is taught and will participate in ongoing professional development to better serve our students.

What students learn is fundamentally connected to how they learn it. In response to this, UAFA's mathematics program reflects a learning environment that emphasizes the unifying concepts of fundamental computational operations, communication, reasoning and proof, representation, problem solving, and connections. These are embedded in each of the content strands, which are based on those in the new standards from the National Council Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) 2000 as reflected in applicable state standards.

Algebra: The algebra strand introduces pattern recognition and the relationships among quantities, preparing students as a gateway to higher level math. Pre-algebra and applicable algebraic concepts are introduced early on and students explore and apply these mathematical concepts to real world problems.
Geometry: Geometry is the study of shapes and solids. It offers many connections to other areas of mathematics as well as to the real world. In this strand, students become familiar with hands-on tools and manipulatives that enhance opportunities to improve their reasoning skills. Geometric solids, graphing calculators, and dynamic geometry software all assist students in the exploration and understanding of concepts presented in this strand.
Measurement: The measurement concepts strand provides opportunities for students to participate in relevant activities to demonstrate that measurement is full of real-life applications and a necessary tool for all students to master. Students move from using simple measuring concepts tools to using measurement information in class to more sophisticated notions such as comprehending that measurements are estimates and applications of measurement systems to problems, an important concept for students to learn in mathematics and science.
Data Analysis: Working with data gives students an opportunity to connect mathematics to other subjects as well as to their world. Analyzing the results of school-wide elections, searching the Internet for data related to a research topic, or comparing results of trials in a scientific investigation engages students and teachers in active learning.
Mathematical Thinking: The process strands that enable students to communicate what they learn, solve a multitude of problems, make decisions involving mathematical thinking, organize thinking through graphic and visual representations, and make the connections between mathematics and other subjects are integrated with the content and methodologies of UAFA's mathematics program.

Presenting the mathematics curriculum in this way helps all students experience the subject as significant and relevant to their lives.

Science

UAFA will offer a science curriculum that reflects the practices of scientists by providing hands-on, minds-on opportunities for students to apply the scientific method. They will inquire, explore, analyze, classify, and test hypotheses in the classroom and in their environment. The science curriculum is based on national academic standards presented in the strands of Physical Science, Life Science, Earth and Space Science, Science as Universal Inquiry, and Science, and Society. Unifying concepts of systems

and organization, evidence and explanation, constancy and change, and form and function link content between strands and across disciplines.

Physical: Physical Science is one of the strands of the science curriculum. In this strand, students will enhance, refine and explore the concepts they bring to school about the nature of matter, the way things move, and how different forms of energy behave and interact.

Life Science: Life Science focuses on observation, exploration, experimentation, and fact-finding expeditions about the life processes in natural communities. Students will use a myriad of scientific tools to document the processes of life and access books, magazines, software, and the Internet to augment and clarify their understanding of the living world. Taking part as questioning members of diverse environments, our students form associations that lead to a multitude of discoveries in our natural world.

Science and Society: Science and Society is a strand that enables students to broaden the horizons of their scientific knowledge and gain a new sense of the world around them. They begin to question the events that may jeopardize the harmony of life on Earth and to take an active role as solution finders. Students' problem solving abilities are enhanced by participation in purposeful tasks using technology to seek solutions. Additionally, students explore important aspects of personal health and safety. The Charter School students will become learning contributors, decision-makers, and problem solvers while acquiring a sense of the ever-changing world in which they live.

Universal Inquiry: Science as Universal Inquiry is a strand for curious young minds. Whether students are observing unicellular organisms under a microscope or simply exploring the various states of matter, they will be encouraged to ask questions, to provide explanations, and to reflect on their findings. This strand is infused into the overall science curriculum, providing students with opportunities to explore and experience the excitement of science by doing science and increase their competence in the subject by interacting with teachers who are subject area specialists. As they engage in activities that combine science knowledge with scientific reasoning and critical thinking, students will develop an understanding of the skills needed to become active and efficient learners.

Social Studies

The Social Studies portion of our curriculum incorporates several fields. The Social Studies curriculum uses literature, science, technology, and the arts to enrich the canvas on which students learn. A personal and global perspective are essential elements for students facing a world of rapid change, so both perspectives are present throughout the four social studies strands of History, Geography, Civics, and Economics. Embedded within these strands are themes ranging from cultures to environments, providing for the integration, extension, and application of knowledge to active participation in a global society.

History: History should build on students' prior knowledge of their own lives and communities by taking them on journeys to those of other places and times. Integrating their own experiences with those of other cultures, children construct meaning and develop important concepts that help them to link the past and the present and pose questions about the future. History is present in each strand of the Social Studies curriculum, enabling students to understand the vital role that past events have on our lives today.



Geography: Students develop the understanding that this strand is a powerful force that motivates human behavior and influences movement, cultures, beliefs, and values. In learning to access and use geographical tools and technologies, students gain valuable literacy skills for a world that becomes figuratively smaller day-by-day.

Civics: Civics activities impart both the specific content as well as the development of skills related to good citizenship, democratic principles, and the application of these to active participation in community affairs at local, national, and global levels. UAFA's classrooms will be microcosms of social systems, enabling our students to gain respect for the rights and differences of others through a strong infusion of character education, service learning, and problem-solving programs.

Economic Literacy: Economic Literacy enables our students to become wise consumers and make good financial choices. Activities that tie economic understanding to events in history, geography, and civics establish a strong foundation of basic economic principles that prepare our students to participate in the worldwide marketplace.

The Arts

Dramatic Arts

UAFA sees the arts not as a peripheral part of the curriculum, but as an essential part of the knowledge all children should learn. Early instruction in the arts should be noncompetitive, and provide many opportunities to sing, dance, listen to music, act, read and write poetry, draw, paint, make objects, and explore nutrition through academics. Equally important, children should be exposed to journalism, fine paintings, great music, and other inspiring examples of art. As children progress in their knowledge and competencies, they can begin to learn more about the methods and terminology of the different arts, and become familiar with an ever wider range of great artists and acknowledged masterworks. Through attaining a basic knowledge of the arts, children are not only better prepared to understand and appreciate works of art, but also to communicate their ideas, feelings, and judgments to others. A good understanding of the arts grows out of at least three modes of knowledge—creative (i.e., directly making artworks), historical, and analytical. Early study of the arts should embrace all three modes with special emphasis on creativity and active participation.

As a supplement to the Expeditionary Learning, UAFA plans to adopt a fine arts curriculum that is aligned with Georgia Performance Standards. Within UAFA's arts focus, students will learn and experiment with the following artistic forms in all grades 6-8:

Drama

- Script write by the creation of improvisations and scripted scenes based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
- Act by developing basic acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes designing by developing environments for improvised and scripted scenes
- Direct by organizing rehearsals for improvised and scripted scenes
- Research by using cultural and historical information to support improvised and scripted scenes
- Compare and incorporate art forms by analyzing methods of presentation and audience response for theatre, dramatic media (such as film, television, and electronic media), and



other art forms - Analyze, evaluate, and construct meanings from improvised and scripted scenes and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions - Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the community and in other cultures
Visual Arts - Understand and apply media, techniques, and process - Use knowledge of structures and functions - Choose and evaluate a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas - Understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures - Reflect upon and assess the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others - Make connections between visual arts and other disciplines
Music - Sing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music - Improvise melodies, variations, and accompaniments - Compose and arrange music within specified guidelines - Read and notate music - Listen to analyze and describe music - Evaluate music and music performances - Understand the relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts - Understand music in relation to history and culture
Dance - Identify and demonstrate movement elements and skills in performing arts - Understand choreographic principles, processes, and structures - Understand dance as a way to create and communicate meaning - Apply and demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills in dance - Demonstrate and understand dance in various cultures and historical periods - Make connections between dance and healthful living - Make connections between dance and other disciplines

Media Arts

As a part of its focus on the media arts, UAFA will offer and introduce students to journalism. Developing student writers are expected to achieve an increasingly broad and deep knowledge and understanding of the value of writing in their lives, of their own individual writing processes, of the range of writing strategies available to them, and of the benefits of sharing and publishing their writing for a wider audience. Research provides data showing that students who participate in journalism programs and courses do better on testing and college language arts courses. In Journalism Kids Do Better (Dvorak, Lain, Dickson), research shows students who take journalistic writing courses score higher on the Advanced Placement English Language and Composition exam than students who take



only AP or honors English courses. Students will learn and practice professional story structure and writing techniques, cinematography and video editing.

Journalism

- Construct logical sequences and understand the conclusions to which they lead
- Recognize different purposes of journalistic writing
- Recognize how content, topic, purpose, and audience influence the structure and use of language
- Use a variety of writing styles for various audiences (news stories, features, sports, and editorials)
- Analyze issues to determine timeliness and relevance to the medium
- Organize, select, and relate ideas and develops them into articles and stories

Broadcast/Video Production

- Demonstrate proper set-up and use of basic production equipment.
- Identify and create different script types
- Demonstrate proper use and operation of studio equipment and production techniques while working as part of a production team.
- Identify different editing methods, equipment, and techniques and demonstrate them in the production of an edited story.

Arts-Related Courses: Comparison Between Utopian Academy for the Arts and Roberts Middle

	<u>Roberts Middle School</u> CCPS School of the Arts (Traditional Public)	Utopian Academy for the Arts (Charter School)
Eligibility Requirements		
Admission Requirements	Yes	No
Audition	Yes	No
Academic Criteria	Yes	No
Conduct	Yes	No

Classes Offered		
Dance	Yes	Yes
Vocal Music	Yes	Yes
Theatre	Yes	Yes
Orchestra	Yes	No
Band	Yes	No
Journalism	No	Yes
Video/Broadcast	No	Yes
Production	No	Yes



Film & TV Fashion Design	No	Yes
Classes offered to ALL students regardless of their track?	NO	YES

Health and Physical Education

UAFA's Health and Physical Education curriculum focuses on health and physical fitness skills and will be aligned to Georgia Performance Standards. As our students progress through their academics, they will participate in activities and experiences that emphasize the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

Teachers and instructors work on the premise that a sound body is essential to a sound mind. When students are healthy and active, they are more motivated to learn about the world around them. UAFA will focus on building understanding, knowledge, and developmentally appropriate skills and practices related to health and physical fitness as students progress through the academics.

Health: Health topics are closely linked to science content as well as physical education. Concepts include:	Physical Education: The Physical Education program will help our students keep fit through a variety of organized activities that focus on:
• Basic hygiene and health habits • Nutrition • Functions of body parts and systems • Disease prevention • First aid and safety • Dangers of substance abuse • Benefits of exercise	• Control and coordination of movements • Rhythm, agility, and balance • Simple sports skills • Basic games and exercise • Fitness • Respect for rules • Sportsmanship • Proper use of equipment • Strategy • Competitive and non-competitive sports • Lifetime sports

Foreign Language

Today foreign language skills are vital to national defense, law enforcement and economic security. It is therefore the goal of Utopian Academy for the Arts and the Georgia Department of Education to enable all students to graduate from high school fluent in one language other than English. Acquiring this kind of skill in a second language is a long and arduous process, demanding hard work and motivation on the part of the student, and a combination of linguistic and pedagogical skill on the part of the teacher.

Spanish will be taught in sixth through eighth grade. The goal of the Foreign Language Curriculum is not only for students to know about the cultures of the people, but also for students to understand the cultural framework that determines what people say or do. Students also need to understand other cultures in relation to their own, so that they may gain a deeper understanding of why they think, live, and behave as they do.

Multimedia resources (videos, CDs, CD-ROMs, children's books) in the target language will convey to students the cultural experiences of their peers in their respective countries. Spanish-speaking students at UAFA will be an essential component of Spanish class. Spanish speakers will work with unilingual speaking students as "teachers". This instructional method achieves the highest levels of learning for students as students evaluate their own knowledge in their need to teach others. For our Spanish-speaking students, those who are bilingual or LEP students, engaging learning in this structure reinforces their language and culture and increases their own native language skills.

In the study of foreign languages, students will practice the following methods:

- Students learn oral and written conversation skills, and learn about French countries, culture, and food
- Each unit includes an introduction to new words, a review of previously learned words, practice with common phrases and conversational statements, and independent practice on mastered words and phrases
- Each student's level of proficiency is assessed monthly. Students are expected to make simple conversation using words and phrases taught during the course, as well as translating common verbs, nouns, and adjectives.

Character Education

Character education is an approach to learning, living, and engaging core values into one's everyday life. In the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities, character development enhances the learner's capacity to make informed and responsible choices. It involves a shared educational commitment that emphasizes the responsibilities and benefits of productive living in a global and diverse society. Character education prepares students to come face to face with the realities of life, equipped and capable of making ethically sound decisions and responsible choices in a world of challenge, opportunity, and change.

Lessons in character building provide principles and practices that have the potential to transform ethical ambiguity into ethical clarity. Students are encouraged to think critically and act responsibly. Instructional materials, methods, and strategies, when developed into interdisciplinary curricular themes, support the classroom teacher's efforts to engage students in authentic learning opportunities. Lessons in character development build into the existing curriculum time for student self-reflection.

The pursuit of understanding values through examining choices, consequences, and goals provides a framework for students to cultivate knowledge and skills into a purposeful synergism for productive living. Character education provides a foundation upon which the educational community can share in a commitment to the academic, emotional, and social well-being of young people. The choices students make with their acquired knowledge from within our schools and beyond will shape their character and their response to life.

Gifted and Talented Students

The founders of UAFA believe that all students have a right to educational experiences that challenge their individual development whether it is below, at, or beyond the level of their age peers. In accordance with this philosophy, UAFA plans to make provisions for the special needs of gifted and talented learners. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission must certify and endorse the gifted

education teacher. UAFA is committed to ensuring a quality program. Reciprocity will be granted, upon proper identification, to all county and in-state transfers. An outline of the referral, eligibility, and methods of delivery is provided below.

Referral Process:

- Referrals can be initiated by parents, teachers, or students (self). Automatic referrals occur when a student scores at the 90th percentile or higher in total mathematics, total reading, or composite scores on a norm-referenced test;
- Supporting documentation is collected on student (work samples, anecdotes, test scores, report cards);
- An eligibility team composed of the gifted educator, an administrator, and an additional staff member meet to decide if child should be referred for testing;
- Parents are notified, by writing, if testing is to be pursued.

Testing/ Eligibility Process

- Written permission must be received to test the child and proceed with referral;
- Students will be evaluated by a certified gifted teacher or psychometrist using the SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 for eligibility (mental ability, achievement, motivation, and creativity). UAFA will use the same tests and measures as other Clayton County Public Schools to ensure quality and continuity within the county;
- Tests and measures will be scored by gifted certified teachers or psychometrists;
- Students will be retested, using an alternate measure of assessment, in mental ability and achievement if they are within 7% points of qualifying;
- The gifted teacher will determine eligibility based on SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 or the psychometric rule;
- The gifted teacher will notify parent(s) in writing of eligibility status.

Delivery Models

- The certified gifted teacher will work with the student, parent(s), and classroom teacher to develop challenging assignments which will enhance and expand the core curriculum areas the gifted student has already mastered. A detailed plan will be included in the student's Individualized Learning Plan and a communication log will be maintained to document the collaborative process between the gifted specialist and classroom teacher;
- Resource classes will be utilized primarily. Class size will be limited to 17 (Rule 160-5-1-.08 Class Size), and the instruction will have an academic content foundation, but it will focus on interdisciplinary enrichment activities;
- Cluster Grouping will also be utilized as UAFA seeks to have its educators receive the gifted endorsement. Under this model, small groups of students will be served within the regular classroom by using a documented, differentiated curriculum. This model will be used in addition to resource and collaborative models;
- Mentorship and internships will be used to help the academically and creatively talented students flourish. The certified gifted teacher will work closely with the mentor and student to ensure that acceptable progress toward the student's individual learning goals is met;

- UAFA reserves the right to design and implement an approved innovative model if the need arises;
- All students will be served a minimum of 5 segments a week in order to earn all available FTE funds.

Extracurricular Activities

Students have a variety of talents and interests that need to be developed. In addition, students must be given opportunities to experience new things to help expand their knowledge of the world and to help them to become culturally literate. UAFA will meet these needs in several ways.

First, “study skills” time may be implemented to allow students to utilize community resources to enhance and deepen their understanding of content. Second, field trips will be planned that introduce students to additional community resources that cannot be brought into the school and to allow students to experience the beauty in drama, dance, music, and art. Finally, a before and after school program, which provides structured activities in a variety of areas will be offered.

Some examples may include:

- School Newspaper Team
- Drama Club
- Glee Club
- Step Team
- Art Club
- Student Council
- Academic teams (e.g., Quiz Bowl, Debate Team, etc.)

Students are motivated to learn when they are interested in what they are doing; therefore, choice will play a large role in this program. UAFA will work collaboratively with community experts in the various areas to provide rich experiences for students.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

By what method does one person enable another to learn? Instructional methodology makes a major difference in the quality of the educational process. Intelligent and sensitive choices lead to academic achievement and a sense of purpose. Poor choices present learners with barriers to learning they may never overcome. Instructional methodologies at UAFA will be a repertoire of research-based teaching and learning practices that enable children to succeed in a rigorous curriculum. Based on state-of-the-art cognitive theory about how humans learn, the teachers will plan their lessons around activities that impact student thinking through the mastery of rigorous academic standards and development of the traits of an effective life-long learner.

We believe all learners are unique, especially young, adolescents, and require instructional methods and interventions that meet their particular needs and complement their learning styles in order to be successful. The school will not use auxiliary or peripheral programs, which are often untimely and substandard, to meet the needs of its students who are struggling or at risk of academic failure; rather, the school program is designed with elements of Response to Intervention (RTI) and in the spirit of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to best meet our students needs. RTI is a tiered approach that

integrates assessment and intervention instruction with ongoing monitoring of student progress and adjustments to intervention methods. UDL identifies and maximizes three primary brain networks and the roles they play in every individual's unique way of learning: *Recognition Networks*- gathering facts, *Strategic Networks*-planning and performing tasks, and *Affective Networks*- how students are engaged and motivated. These principles of RTI and UDL will help inform UAFA staff when crafting instruction and encounters with students in ways to maximize the strengths and remediate any weaknesses. Providing a robust, responsive, and flexible core school program will be a significant educational benefit for UAFA adolescent, male students.

Two widely accepted and researched documents that will be used are, *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents*, from National Middle School Association, and *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st century*, a report of the Carnegie Corporation. These describe what schools can do to assure quality education for early adolescents.

Most of the processes and programs described at the school are in line with the recommendations of not only the National Middle School Association, but in accordance with the two part findings of Just for Kids-New York/University at Albany-State University of New York. Just for Kids NY and SUNY Albany documented characteristics and practices of top performing middle schools that led to higher performance in their report, "What Makes Middle Schools Work." The proposed UAFA program is based on these researched and well documented characteristics and features as well as a relentless focus on using data to promote student performance, together, proven to offer all students, including those at risk of academic failure, a significant educational benefit.

A Central Set of Essential Methodologies

A central set of research-based practices will be infused into the instructional program at UAFA. These include cooperative learning, critical thinking, home learning and practice, questioning methodologies, choosing learning goals, summarization, note-taking competencies, and arts integration. Classroom activities become meaningful experiences only when students think and act upon them. UAFA's instructional methods are designed to promote active involvement and engagement in learning. Research shows that active learning methods are critical to student success. The following methods will be implemented in all UAFA classrooms.

Cooperative Learning

While many challenges in life are faced using one's individual abilities, two important realities must be faced by any effective school:

- Employment opportunities in an information age favor people able to work effectively with others
- Research on effective organizations reveals that team learning - the process of people sharing strengths and solving problems as a team - is an essential element

Students will not be prepared for the 21st century unless they master these essential workplace competencies as a routine part of their school experience. For these reasons, UAFA will infuse age appropriate cooperative learning processes into every classroom.

Critical Thinking Strategies



Research shows that students are more engaged and make better connections between existing and new knowledge when they have recurring opportunities for generating and testing hypotheses. Through applying these methods across the curriculum by predicting what happens next in a story, hypothesizing why an historical event occurred, or testing ideas about what will happen in a science experiment, students will practice and apply tools necessary to generate and test hypotheses.

Specific Feedback on Home Learning and Practice

UAFA students will have home learning and homework responsibilities. They will all be required to practice essential skills and competencies in order to develop proficiency. Specific and timely feedback will always be provided to students on their home learning efforts and the impact of their practice. Students will understand that home learning is a time to both improve proficiency and to generate questions. All home learning activities will be followed up in the classroom to provide students with specific feedback.

Questioning Methodologies

UAFA's teachers will use a variety of question formats to engage students with differing learning styles. Question variations will enable students to remember, reason, relate, and imagine. Students will be taught questioning techniques to guide clarification processes and focus on problem solving behaviors. Students will be taught to recognize cues to understanding in both written and oral contexts. Through a variety of methods such as concept maps, time tables, flow charts, and time lines, they will learn to organize their work and focus attention on key issues.

Choosing Goals and Objectives and Systematic Feedback

Becoming a life-long learner requires early student engagement in selecting learning objectives and seeking feedback on the quality of one's understandings and performance competencies.

UAFA's instructional methodologies will guide students in the process of selecting learning goals to which the student makes a personal commitment. We will teach students to clarify their learning objectives for the tasks assigned. Our students will be taught to seek out and make use of feedback from others to improve the quality of their understanding and performance skills.

Student learning portfolios will be used to enable students to focus on priority objectives and gather work products, which will serve as a basis for feedback reflecting growth toward mastery of their targeted objectives.

Summarizing and Note Taking

Comprehension is a critical element in successful learning. Comprehension is accelerated by recurring opportunities for students to summarize the essential meaning of the subject under study. Students will be taught note-taking techniques so that key points are recognized and recorded as tools for later review and study. The use of summaries and note taking enhances students' ability to recognize key concepts, think, and express themselves in writing while expanding their vocabulary in the academic disciplines being studied.

Arts Integration

Essentially, arts integration is an instructional method in which teachers use arts such as drama, visual arts, or music to aid in the teaching of other subjects. It is a powerful tool for highlighting the creative aspect of any subject. It is not a substitute for teaching the arts for their own benefit. The purposes of

arts integration are to improve students' learning of core subjects and to give students regular practice in using their creative and imaginative powers. The arts can be integrated effectively into both project-based learning and systematic instruction to improve academic achievement. The power to envision, an artistic skill, is useful whether envisioning the display of a project's final product or a graphic representation of a correlation. Examples of arts integration include:

- Memorization through music: Children of all ages are capable of memorizing complex lyrics to songs they hear frequently. Using music makes the experience of rote memorization of important facts more fun and effective.
- Process Drama: This is a well-established teaching approach that employs spontaneous theatre techniques to create living models of human experience and understanding. It is more about mutual exploration than performance. Participants create the story or drama and become their own reflective audience in this process, allowing students to experience history, live social studies, and act out complex concepts related to ethics, conflict, and more.
- Illustrating for meaning. To help students memorize vocabulary or increase reading comprehension, students illustrate or act out interpretations of linguistic meanings.
- Communicating through the arts. The arts include many powerful languages, as is evidenced by the careful thought we put into the visual and audio messages of web pages, advertisements, architecture, clothing, and more. To give students practice with communicating through the arts, students will often communicate the experience and results of their various projects through art media as well as linguistics and/or mathematics.

A Repertoire of Supporting Methods

The general practice methods described will set a basic pattern to the learning activities typical in an UAFA classroom. Teachers will use assessment information and direct observation of student performance to select additional and supplementary instructional methods to enhance student achievement. They will select strategies from a well-defined research-based repertoire of methods, which includes individualized instruction and group learning processes. Some methods will be used across the curriculum and others are specific to particular academic disciplines.

Parental Involvement Activities

UAFA will encourage a curriculum of the home that is linked to and supportive of the student's responsibilities at school. The methods that involve parents effectively in the child's education include daily parent-child conversations about what is happening at school, encouraging student reading (academic and leisure), and parent-child discussion about the leisure reading. It includes thoughtful parental monitoring of television watching. It involves active support and interest in the student's schoolwork. UAFA will encourage these parent-child relationships and provide support to parents in nurturing the home-school connection.

Time on Task

As a Curricular Focus: Learning tasks are centered on the standards-based core curriculum. As a general rule, the more time students spend on core academic disciplines, the higher they will achieve. UAFA's teachers will design activities that focus student use of time on academic content. Attention will be directed to the content and performance skills that should be mastered at specific grade levels and ages.

Learners who are actively engaged in learning tasks that focus on explicit instructional objectives make more progress toward achieving those objectives.

Direct Teaching

An approach to learning requires that students construct knowledge and meaning. Application of a constructivist strategy to a standards-based curriculum requires a balance of student inquiry and direct teaching. UAFA's teachers will use direct teaching to enhance student ability to construct knowledge and make content connections. These include:

- Daily review of essential concepts, homework, and re-teaching;
- Engagement with new content/skills, but in small steps;
- Guided student practice with careful teacher monitoring;
- Clarifying feedback and reinforcement of success;
- Individual practice;
- Weekly and monthly reviews of key content/skills.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

Students will be taught to monitor and manage their own learning. This includes learning to plan, allocate time, and review prior learning. This will be accomplished by:

- Teachers modeling these behaviors for students;
- Guided practice where students plan learning strategies with teacher help;
- Independent student application of learning strategies to master specific instructional objectives.

Tutoring

Students learn at different rates. Individualized assistance helps focus student effort and provides additional time on task. Students will not only receive tutoring as needed, they will learn to tutor others. The process of organizing to help each other deepens understanding of the content and fosters time-management and communication competencies.

Competency-Based Learning

UAFA's instructional methodologies are not designed to "cover" the curriculum, but to enable students to master it. Competency based or mastery learning focuses on clear identification of the concepts to be mastered, on-going assessment to measure actual learning, and adjustments in instruction based on assessments. Feedback systems and re-teaching processes will be used to help students until mastery is accomplished.

Use of 21st Century Methodologies as Learning Tools

Students will apply strategies they will be expected to perform in the workplace. Our students will learn to use the following elements:

Data-Driven Decision-Making

Students will be trained to use systems thinking, continuous process improvement methods, and data analysis tools for problem solving. Students will apply these concepts to their schoolwork to prepare them for the workplace and higher education.

Learning Organization Paradigm Research has identified the behaviors and characteristics of people in highly successful organizations. Schools must foster the emergence of these characteristics such as personal mastery, shared vision, mental models, team learning, and systems thinking in students. UAFA's teachers will model these learning organization behaviors for students and parents. Our instructional methods enable our students to learn the skills needed for effective participation in the workplace.

Project-Based Learning

Projects are a central part of the UAFA's multidisciplinary instruction. Teachers will plan projects that support grade level themes. Students will be required to develop individual and group projects every nine weeks. Project-based learning is an effective strategy to extend student learning. Projects allow students to investigate, construct knowledge, problem solve, and use multiple forms of creative expression. Technology is an integral part of student presentations and displays. Students will work individually or in groups to prepare presentations, produce products, or extend knowledge. Projects help students build conceptual understanding and provide opportunities to engage students in meaningful, creative activities.

Personal Learning Goals

One of the core purposes of education is to enable the students to take over their own education and become lifelong learners. Like other skills, you must "do it" to master it. Therefore, every UAFA student, in addition to routine school selected objectives, will have personal learning goals. Such goals, selected by the student in consultation with teacher and parent, will focus on something the student sees as a valuable or interesting thing to learn. Portfolios, shared at intervals with parents and teachers, will share student progress on these learning agendas.

Technology Literacy

Students will be engaged in mastery of the use of technology as a learning tool of the Information Age at all grade levels. Grade appropriate activities will be provided in each major strand of technology literacy:

- Basic operations and concepts
- Social, ethical, and human issues
- Technology productivity tools
- Technology communications tools
- Technology research tools
- Technology problem-solving and decision-making tools

TECHNOLOGY PLAN

One of the distinguishing features of UAFA's educational program is its approach to providing computer technology to children integrated into the curriculum in a meaningful and authentic way. Our approach is in accordance with the following fundamental principles (Jordan and Follman,1993)¹⁰:

¹⁰ Jordan, W. R., & Follman, J. M. (1993). Using Technology to Improve Teaching and Learning. Hot Topics: Usable Research. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED355930).



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- Technology in our school is used to increase higher-level problem-solving skills while also reinforcing basic skills.
- Technology at UAFA promotes “interactions” between students and teachers rather than being used as "teaching machines" to supplant the teacher.
- Technology facilitates cooperative learning models, allowing heterogeneous groupings of students to work together collaboratively.
- Technology creates interactive learning environments built around real-world problems and adaptable to a variety of learning styles.
- Technology is used to create mental bridges between hands-on knowledge and symbolic knowledge.
- The technology is driven by the curriculum needs and the classroom use. All technology in our classrooms and in the computer labs assumes the role of an amplifying medium for the concepts brought forth from the curriculum.
- Technological advancements are continuously evaluated alongside research and development in the field of education.

Technology Resources

UAFA seeks to have desktops and/or wireless laptop computers at hand for student use in every classroom to help integrate technology in the overall education and to clarify, amplify and enhance the curriculum. Additionally, UAFA will offer a dedicated computer lab and additional computer stations in the media center. Technology is also used to expand UAFA interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum in a method such as the Gaggle Network - that promotes safety to provide safe, teacher-controlled email. Students also get exposure to other forms of technology such as calculators, video players, camcorders, LCD projectors and digital cameras that are for presentations. Students at UAFA will enhance their presentation skills through technology in the form of software and digital projectors.

UAFA will seek to use the latest interactive whiteboard technology, SMART Board Technologies. When using the SMART Board system, teachers actually record information as it is written and drawn on their existing whiteboards. The Smart Board system also allows the teachers to create engaging lessons and on-the-spot interactive assessments.

To ensure that technology is effectively integrated into UAFA’s culture, a committee comprised of teachers, administrators, and parents, will collaborate to create a comprehensive Instructional Technology Plan by the midterm of the first year of operation. This instructional technology plan, developed in accordance with the principles mentioned above and implemented through UAFA’s learning experiences, will promote UAFA’s overall communication skills goal by creating meaningful learning and collaboration, and providing for the needed professional development and support of faculty.

Key points of contact regarding the use of technology at UAFA will be (1) the Principal who will train teachers on how to integrate technology into their curricula; and (2) the IT Director, who will manage the use and maintenance of the technology program’s hardware and software.



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UAFA will continue to research best practices in technology, to ensure that when the technologies of today become obsolete, we will advance with the times to ensure that our students stay ready for tomorrow. UAFA aspires to make a positive difference by offering a curriculum that will allow our students an advanced education by offering state of the art technology programs.



STATE AND FEDERALLY MANDATED SERVICES

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

It is the policy of Utopian Academy for the Arts (UAFA) to provide a free and appropriate education to each enrolled student. UAFA will provide a full continuum of services to students with disabilities to the same extent as other schools in Clayton County Public Schools. UAFA ensures that students with disabilities will be served regardless of a student's disability pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, along with any applicable provisions of the Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated law concerning the identification, evaluation and services provided to students that are deemed eligible for the student's disability. UAFA will work closely with members of the Georgia Department of Education, and the Georgia Charter Schools Association in order to develop and maintain policies and procedures consistent with local, state, and federal standards, and best practices.

As part of its commitment to serving students with disabilities, UAFA will employ a full-time, experienced, and fully certified Special Education Coordinator/Director. UAFA will add additional staff as needed based on the actual caseload that is present once the school is open. The Special Education Coordinator/Director will work with eligible students according to their Individualized Education Plan. UAFA will include reasonably anticipated special education costs in the budget submitted with this petition. UAFA has made budgetary provisions for not only anticipated costs of having a Special Education Coordinator/Director, but also for costs associated with instructional materials and transportation. UAFA will make budget and staffing revisions based upon actual student enrollment. The budget will be adjusted for students with disabilities according to the services they require.

UAFA is subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school. The provision of services and due process procedures will be implemented for students with disabilities and English Language Learners in accordance with all relevant Federal and State laws, rules, and regulations.

Least Restrictive Environment

In order to comply with the U.S. Department of Education's standard of 90% and Georgia's target of 67% of students with disabilities to be educated in the general education classroom for a minimum of 80% of the school day, UAFA will meet this target by implementing a co-teaching and inclusion program. Should the school enroll students with severe disabilities, UAFA will ensure that proper monitoring and quality of services are in place to service the needs of such student populations.

As defined by the U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily."¹¹ The statute is clear that students

¹¹ U.S. Department of Education. Building the Legacy: IDEA 2004. Retrieved October 29, 2012 from <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/root/statute,I,B,612,a,5>.

must be included to the maximum extent appropriate, with the use of supplementary aids and services, in order to have access to, and make progress in, the general education curriculum. Inclusion shall be the preferred delivery model that will be followed to ensure that all students participate in the educational and extracurricular environment of UAFA. UAFA acknowledges that the regular classroom may not be the least restrictive environment (LRE) for all students with disabilities. In cases where inclusion is not the LRE, UAFA will ensure that students are serviced with the LRE as outlined in their IEP's.

Due Process for Students with Disabilities

Manifestation Determination Hearing

Manifestation Determination is a process to determine if a student's behavior problem was or was not a manifestation of the student's disability. A Manifestation Determination is completed as part of an IEP team meeting. The IEP team must convene no later than 10 school days when:

- A parent requests such a meeting following a disciplinary incident.
- A student is suspended for 5 or more consecutive days.
- A student is suspended for more than 10 cumulative days in a school (and for every suspension thereafter).
- A change in placement for more than 10 consecutive days is being sought for disciplinary reasons.
- Exclusion or expulsion is being considered.

IEP Team Meeting for a Manifestation Determination:

In order to determine if the behavior was or was not a manifestation of the student's disability, the team needs to follow the steps below:

1. Prior to the IEP meeting, information such as evaluation and diagnostic results, observations, current IEP, placement information and other relevant information supplied by the parents must be gathered for review by the IEP team. As part of the discussion, the team must determine if:

- the information gathered is sufficient information to make the manifest determination.
- further information is needed in order to make the manifestation determination.
- there is a need for changes in the student's current special education program.

If further information is needed, the IEP team must follow the due process steps in obtaining written parent consent for an evaluation. The IEP team must discuss the characteristics of the student's disability (e.g., withdrawn, aggressive, impulsive, academic or cognitive deficits, information processing, organizational deficits, peer relationships, etc.). This information should come from current data, observation and parent reports as well as from the IEP, evaluations (ESR), teacher reports, discipline records, etc.



2. The IEP team discusses the following four questions. If the team is unsure about any of these questions, the behavior is automatically assumed to be a part of the student's disability. If there is disagreement among the team members, the administrator makes the final determination.

- Are the IEP and placement, supplementary aids and services judged to be appropriate by the IEP team?
 - Initially, this is based on the current IEP. As the discussion progresses, it may be decided that one or the other, or both needs to be changed.
- Are IEP services and behavioral intervention strategies described on the IEP consistently applied?
 - This is based on the identified needs in the current IEP.
- Does the disability impair the student's ability to understand the impact and consequences of the behavior?
 - In addition to the cognitive component, the IEP team should explore the way in which the rules were presented to the student and if they were understood.

3. Manifestation Determination

If the student's behavior is not a manifestation of his or her disability, the relevant disciplinary procedures applicable to students without disabilities may be applied to the student in the same manner in which they would be applied to students without disabilities.

If the behavior is determined to be a part of the disability, the IEP team makes an appropriate plan to address some or all of the following areas (the student may not be expelled from the school system):

- Consistently implement the IEP as written.
- Change the IEP as needed (e.g., adaptations, service, alternative consequences, etc.).
- Complete additional evaluations to provide additional service, if needed.
- Conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment to develop more effective behavior intervention strategies.

UAFA shall notify the parent of the decision to take disciplinary action and of the procedural safeguards no later than the date on which the decision is made. If the parent disagrees with a determination that the student's behavior was not a manifestation of the student's disability, or with any decision regarding placement, the parent has the right to an "expedited" due process hearing. If UAFA places the student in the allowed interim placement, the "stay put" placement is that setting until its expiration or until the hearing officer's decision, whichever is first.

Pre-Referral Process

In an effort to make well informed decisions regarding the appropriate placement of students, faculty members are required to follow a pre-referral process which requires that proper documentation is made of the student's academic progress, cognitive strengths, weaknesses, and ability to complete academic tasks. UAFA will provide additional systematic interventions and appropriate progress monitoring in accordance to the Response to Interventions (RTI) guidelines as determined by the Georgia Department of Education (GA DOE) for all students suspected of having disabilities. This progress will be evaluated by the team before a referral to special education is recommended.

UAFA shall provide additional systematic interventions and appropriate progress monitoring in accordance to the Response to Interventions (RTI) guidelines as determined by the GA DOE for all students suspected of having disabilities. As mentioned above, this progress will be evaluated by the team before a referral to special education is recommended. UAFA will implement the same identification, evaluation, placement, reporting, and due process procedures and use the same special education forms as other schools in Clayton County, GA.

Identification

Once students are admitted to UAFA, part of the enrollment process is to obtain records from prior schools. It is through this process that UAFA will obtain IEP's and related documents from students who were identified and/or serviced in their prior school. UAFA will also have ongoing training and will disseminate information to its staff for identifying students eligible for special education, including guidelines for emotional disturbances, developmental disabilities, learning disabilities, and speech/language impairment. Identification will be completed for each new student enrolling without appropriate records of screening, evaluation, and progress in school. A parent or guardian of an enrolled student at UAFA may refer their child for special education at any time. Students who have not been identified by their prior schools, as requiring special education services, may be referred for testing by the UAFA's Response to Intervention Team. If such testing reveals that a student has a disabling condition and is in need of special education services, the school will follow the processes and procedures outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title 11 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, for developing an individualized plan for the student's education and ensuring that such plan is fully implemented.

Student Support Team (SST)

Through the implementation of a Student Support Team, students suspected of having a disability will be screened, monitored, and assessed. This multidisciplinary-team, comprised of general education teachers, the school counselor, and Principal will plan strategies and organize resources for redressing problems and concerns about a student. UAFA will implement the Response to Intervention process and allow students to appropriately matriculate through the various RTI steps. Parents will also be invited to attend any SST meeting regarding their child. The special education coordinator will be invited to attend all SST meetings as an Ad-Hoc member, however when a comprehensive educational evaluation is being considered, his/her attendance will be mandatory. It will be mandatory for the committee to have a minimum of 3 participants with one participant being the Principal.

The SST referral will indicate the suspected area(s) of disability, provide school history and document the modifications that have been tried and proven unsuccessful prior to making a referral. An assessment plan will be developed and the parents/guardians will be asked to give written consent to initiate the

plan. If the parents are not in attendance, all necessary paperwork will be sent home for the parents/guardians to review and return to school. Student referrals for comprehensive educational evaluation to determine eligibility and the need for special education shall be preceded by interventions recommended by the Student Support Team.

In the event that a student completes the final step in the RTI process without significant growth being obtained, the student will be referred to the special education and educational psychology department for initial hearing and vision screenings and initial achievement and ability psychological assessments (assuming they pass the hearing and vision screening). Any student found to have a disability will be provided with an Individualized Educational Plan that will outline specific goals and objectives, as well as FTE percentages of special education services that should be received, and the specific environment in which services should be received (i.e. inclusion, resource, self-contained, etc...).

Evaluation

A. Initial Evaluation: After informed written parental consent has been obtained, an initial evaluation will be conducted by a multidisciplinary team composed of those personnel required by law. This initial assessment will serve to determine whether the student meets the criteria for disability in accordance with 20 USC Sec. 1400, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and its amendments.

B. Reevaluation: UAFA will act in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 Sec. 614 (a)(2) and, after written parental consent has been obtained, will perform a reevaluation if conditions warrant a reevaluation or if the child's parent or teacher requests a reevaluation, but at least once every three (3) years students will be evaluated to determine continued eligibility.

UAFA will incur the cost of conducting complete psycho-educational evaluations. Such evaluations will be conducted by a qualified psychologist.

Notice of Parental Rights

UAFA will provide a copy of the procedural safeguards to the parents of a child with a disability upon initial referral for evaluation, each notification of an IEP meeting, reevaluation of the child, and receipt of a request for due process. The procedural safeguards notice will include a full explanation of all of the procedural safeguards available (e.g. prior written notice; parental consent; access to educational records; opportunity to present complaints to initiate due process hearings; and child's placement while due process hearings are pending).

Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)

The written individualized educational plan for each child will include a statement of the child's present levels of educational performance; annual goals; measurable short-term instructional objectives; the specific special education and related services to be provided to the child; a description of the extent to which the child will be able to participate in regular education programs and the extent to which the child will be able to participate with non-disabled children in nonacademic and extracurricular activities. IEP plans will be updated on an annual basis, or as deemed necessary by the IEP team.

Related Services Personnel

UAFA will contract necessary personnel to provide services as required by student IEPs. All personnel who provide related services (e.g., services provided by a speech-language pathologist; psycho-social counseling provided by a psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist, or mental health

professional) to students at UAFA will meet all required licensure and/or certification requirements pertaining to their area of related service.

Screening Forms

UAFA will utilize Georgia Department of Education approved/recommended screening forms to ensure that all federal requirements are met regarding identification, referral, due process, evaluation, individualized educational plans, and procedural safeguards. The forms will incorporate guidelines for assisting staff and parents to understand the nature of disabilities.

Release of Information

UAFA shall not disclose any unauthorized third party any personally identifiable information concerning any student enrolled in the charter school without first obtaining prior written parental permission. Parental consent will be obtained before personally identifiable information is disclosed to anyone other than officials of participating agencies collecting or using this information in accordance with state and federal laws; FERPA, 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g.

Methodology

Modification of classroom instruction will provide students with additional support to understand the materials and skills that are being presented. Various techniques will be utilized to allow students to make the connections and enhance success when being exposed to new skills. These will include the following:

- Visual aids;
- Hands-on learning;
- Role-playing;
- Multi-sensory techniques;
- Co-teaching
- Assisted technology
- Read-alouds;
- Guided questions;
- Step-by-step questions;
- Key words.

Certified Special Education Teachers

UAFA will employ teachers who meet all Georgia Professional Standards Commission licensure and/or certification requirements that apply to the area in which the individuals are providing special education. UAFA will seek to hire SPED teacher(s) with prior experience as program coordinator(s). The special education teachers shall provide: direct teaching services to students, oversee support aids, provide training to UAFA paraprofessionals, and coordinate a resource program that provides comprehensive services to students with special needs.

Transportation for Students with Disabilities

UAFA will meet the needs of students whose IEPs include provisions for transportation. UAFA will provide free, door-to door transportation, as required by a student's IEP. Any vehicles or drivers used for transporting students will meet the same safety standards applicable to public schools in this State. Additionally, UAFA will comply with applicable laws: SBOE 160-5-3-.03, 160-5-3-.04, 160-5-3-.13,

GADOE Assessment Contractor Supplement, and other state guidelines related to transportation. If UAFA intends to contract with a third party to provide transportations, UAFA will ensure that it is in compliance with O.C.G.A. 20-2-1090 and SBOE rule 160-5-3-.04.

Treatment of Student Records

UAFA shall maintain all student records in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, regulations, rules, and policies. UAFA shall maintain all student records during each student's enrollment in the charter school. UAFA shall maintain and ensure the privacy and confidentiality of each student's educational record in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g. Upon request, we will provide parents with a list of the types and locations of education records collected, maintained, or used in our school. A parent who believes that information in the education records collected, maintained, or used is inaccurate or misleading or violates the privacy or other rights of the child may request the information be amended. UAFA will decide whether to amend the information in accordance with the request within a reasonable period of time of receipt of the request. If UAFA refuses to amend the records, the parent will be notified in writing of the refusal and advised of the right to a hearing. Parents have the right to request a copy of the contents of their child's IEP file, in part, or its entirety.

UAFA will designate an official custodian of student records who will be responsible for ensuring the confidentiality requirements. Employees who will utilize the records will receive instruction regarding the procedures for handling and managing confidential student information and the custodian will maintain a listing of employees with access to the records and a logbook of each individual who has had access to the records. Student records will be available for audit by the Business Manager at any time during the year to ensure that funds are properly allocated. UAFA will require a request in writing at least one week in advance of the audit to ensure that the custodian and the Principal are available to assist with the files. We will also require auditors to provide proper identification and sign the logbook.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL's)

Students are classified as ELL or LEP (Limited English Proficiency) when they primarily speak another language at home and their limited English abilities impede their learning in school. As such UAFA will comply with all applicable federal and state mandates with regards to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) instruction.

Students enrolled at the UAFA will not be excluded from curricular and extracurricular activities in school because of the inability to speak and understand the language of instruction.

Federal Mandates

Federal law requires schools to provide language assistance services. The United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has responsibility for enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states:

"No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Title VI regulatory requirements have been interpreted to prohibit denial of equal access to education because of a student's limited proficiency in English. Thus, Title VI protects those students limited in their English language skills such that they are unable to participate in, or benefit from, regular or special education school instructional programs.

State Mandates

Under Georgia law (20-2-156), the State Board of Education must create a program for limited English proficient students whose native language is not English, subject to appropriation by the General Assembly. The purpose of this program is to assist such students to develop proficiency in the English language, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, sufficient to perform effectively at the currently assigned grade level.

Delivery Model

According to state law, "eligible limited English proficient students shall receive ESOL services when they have an English-language proficiency score below 5.0 on WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT). The W-APT is an English language proficiency "screener" test given to incoming students who may be identified as English language learners. It assists educators with programmatic placement decisions such as identification and placement of EL's. The W-APT is one component of WIDA's comprehension assessment system. Service delivery models include a "pull-out program," which UAFA will use for gifted/LD students and will use for ELL.

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission must certify and endorse the ESOL teacher. All ESOL instruction students shall be based on the ESOL Quality Core Curriculum. Class size is limited to the maximum size specified in State BOE Rule 160-5-1-.08.

Grade Level	Maximum Individual Class Size*	
	No Paraprofessional	With Paraprofessional
4-8	14	15

**Maximum number of students that may be taught by a teacher in a class segment.*

Registration Procedures

The following are steps in the registration process for LEP families:

- a. Welcome the family to the school and conduct an interview with an interpreter, if necessary. Allow time for interpretation and questions. During the interview, give the family a card with the following information:
 - The name, address and telephone number of the school
 - The classroom number
 - The ESOL teacher's name and room number
- b. To assist with the identification of an LEP student for ESOL services, the following will be included in the registration packet:
 - Date of student's entry into the United States
 - Date of entry into United States; schools



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- Has student received ESOL instruction before?
- If yes: School system _____ School _____
- What was the language the student first learned to speak?
- What language does the student speak at home?
- What language does the student speak most often?

Students who answer “English” to all of the above three questions regarding home/native/first language will be labeled as native English speakers and are not eligible for the ELL program. Students who state a language other than English to any of the three language questions must register for ELL services. If students whose first/primary language is other than English score below a 5.0 Composite Proficiency Level on the W-APT, they will be eligible for ELL services. UAFA is responsible for placing these students in appropriate instructional levels and supplemental programs.

- c. Give parents a “Welcome Packet” written in their native language if neither parent nor guardian has command of English. This packet should include important registration and school information, as well as a list of community resources, adult English language classes, and tutors. Explain basic school procedures such as:
 - ESOL services available in the school
 - Costs of meals of free/reduced lunch programs
 - Attendance
 - Immunization
 - School calendar
 - Transportation to and from school
 - Parent/teacher organization
 - Supply needs for classes
- d. Take the family on a tour of the school, if possible, and introduce them to the classroom teacher and/or ESOL teachers.
- e. Suggest supplemental software, such as “Jump-Start Spanish” and “The Rosetta Stone.” Suggest LEP governmental assistance programs from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, which can be found at: <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/resources/specialtopics/lep/index.html>

Assessment of Student Eligibility

All students served in the ESOL program should be administered the W-APT every spring to re-establish eligibility or determine readiness to exit, and to measure progress. These scores must be kept on file to document eligibility and provide data for possible future requests regarding program accountability. Eligibility decisions of new students can be based on W-APT tests administered by any Georgia system within the past 12 months. All data related to student eligibility should be maintained in the student’s permanent file.

Assessment of Literacy Skills

Non-English language background students who score at or above 5.0 on the W-APT will be assessed by a norm-referenced achievement test in reading/reading comprehension to determine if they have the

cognitive-academic language proficiency (CALP) in English for classroom success. We recommend, to maintain consistency across all Georgia school districts, the use of the reading/reading comprehension tests currently utilized for state assessments.

The score from the norm-referenced testing will place the student into one of three categories:

- Students ready to be exited.
- Students still in need of services.
- Students who are borderline and whose educational placement needs to be considered.

Assurance: All assessments will be administered in accordance with SBOE practices and in accordance with Georgia Department of Education guidelines.

Suggested Placement Procedures

ELL and LEP students should be placed in age appropriate grade levels or courses. If a lower placement is necessary due to lack of formal schooling, it should not be more than one year below the same-aged English peers.

- *Scheduling of ESOL Students*

ESOL students are grouped by their English proficiency level. Appropriate placement in classes for these students requires careful attention to school records from other countries (see Section on Registration Process). Mathematical skills will be assessed with caution.

Instructions written in English and variations in mathematical symbols internationally may interfere with assessment of actual math skills. Therefore, math teachers will help in determining math placement.

- *Monitoring Academic Progress of ESOL Students*

Monitoring of classroom performance includes measures of English-language proficiency and curricular achievement. Schools should compare ESOL students' achievement to that of academically successful native English-speaking students, as well as mainstreamed language-minority students. Educators should use classroom performance and/or available achievement test scores to revise a student's academic program or change the types of language assistance services he or she is receiving.

Language-minority students must be compared with native English-speaking peers in knowledge of subject matter. It is important to assess a student's foundation for the acquisition of new information, as well as the ability to effectively participate in mainstream classes.

- *Collection of Data for Monitoring Students' Success*

Monitoring is necessary while students are in the ESOL program, as well as after they exit. Comprehensive and comparable data on all students are needed to evaluate the success of students in obtaining an effective and appropriate education. Ideally, maintaining this data in a computerized database will facilitate monitoring. Data on ESOL and exited ESOL students should be maintained as part of a system that includes all students. This allows comparisons to be made between ESOL, language-minority and native English-speaking peers.

- *Testing Programs* (Excerpted from 160-3-1-.07)

LEP students may receive a deferment from tests (excluding mathematics and science) administered during the 12-calendar month period following their initial entry into U. S. schools if their limited proficiency in English indicates that testing is not in the best interest of the student. Any LEP student who receives this one-time deferment shall participate in all statewide assessments in subsequent years. Furthermore, all students shall be assessed in English.

Exit from ESOL

1. *Exit from ESOL Program:* A student should be ready for exit from the ESOL program when he/she:
 - scores at or above 5.0 on the W-APT; and,
 - scores at or above the 40th percentile on the reading/reading comprehension sub-test of a standardized norm-referenced test.

This student should have the skills necessary to perform in the regular classroom. In some cases, the student may still be eligible for and in need of other special instruction, such as reading. Recommendations for other needed services should be made when the student exits.

2. *Placement or Retention in the ESOL Program:* A student should stay in the ESOL program when he/she:
 - scores below the cut-off score on the W-APT; or,
 - scores above the cut off score on the W-APT but below the cut off score on the reading/reading comprehension sub-test of a standardized norm-referenced test.
3. *Possible Exit from the ESOL Program:* A student should be considered for possible exit when he/she:
 - scores above the cut-off score on the W-APT; and,
 - scores below the 40th percentile on the reading/reading comprehension sub-test of a standardized norm-referenced test.

Post-Exit Monitoring

It is important for the regular education teacher to recognize that exited ESOL students will need ongoing support as they continue to work toward grade-level academic language performance. They will still need help in making connections between new information and their background knowledge. They may also need to be guided in organizing information and in assessing their own learning.

Teachers may need to make adaptations to content material and present it to all second language learners in a less demanding language format. It is also important for a teacher to note the progression of an exited student's academic skills in order to increase the complexity with which information is provided as the student becomes more cognitively proficient. Teachers should also provide students with more opportunities to demonstrate what they know by using various assessments.

The goal of most second language students is to function as proficient learners in the classrooms. ESOL students are more motivated to learn at their individual language-proficiency level. If they are given tasks that they cannot complete successfully because these tasks are beyond the student's current level



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of language functioning, then they may lose their motivation to succeed and/or regress into their first language.

Recommended Procedures

An initial follow-up should be made within two weeks of exiting out of ESOL services:

- To verify the student can compete academically
- To check on the student's social and psychological adjustment

Periodic monitoring should continue for two years:

At the end of each progress reporting period, an ESOL professional will contact teachers in all mainstream classes the student attends

- To find out if the student is adjusting and succeeding academically
- To verify if the student is sustaining the criteria used to exit from ESOL
- To identify any academic or adjustment needs
- Review standardized test scores
- Review portfolio assessments
- Student interview
- Parental interview

If monitoring shows that the student is falling behind in classroom work and/or English language skills:

- The student must immediately receive support services
- Special services for language support if needed (return to designated ESOL services is only available upon meeting eligibility criteria) or content area tutoring.

Meeting the Needs of All Learners and Supplemental Education Services

UAFA recognizes that some students need additional support to meet the standards and that some students who are gifted need supplemental instruction. UAFA will provide Supplemental Educational Services in accordance with NCLB and State Board of Education Rule 160-4-5-.03 and 160-4-5-01 should the requirement arise.

Through implementation of Georgia's Pyramid of Intervention, UAFA is committed to identifying student needs early and supporting diverse needs to help all learners make significant academic gains. UAFA's remediation and supplemental education services assist students in grades 6-8 in all academic areas, with a focus on literacy and math. Students with behavioral needs are also addressed through the Pyramid of Intervention. The following strategies are used to ensure that the needs of all students are met:

- Differentiated instruction in all subject areas as part of the general education classroom, including differentiating by content, process and product. In addition, individual student needs are met through flexible grouping and differentiated centers.
- Small group instruction for students who are struggling
- Tutoring provided by volunteers, teachers and paraprofessionals during the school day to assist low-performing students
- An Intervention Block to provide math and literacy instruction targeted to individual student needs, including students who are gifted.



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- Professional learning to support teachers' efforts to differentiate and meet the needs of all students
- Continuous use of progress monitoring to inform instruction and tutoring
- In addition to the efforts described above, students spend more time learning, thanks to an extended school day and extended school year.

Remediation Services

UAFA will provide Remediation Services in accordance with NCLB and State Board of Education Rule 160-4-5-.01 and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-154. Remediation at UAFA will be fulfilled not only through participation in After School and Saturday School, but during the school day as well. After School and/or Saturday School will be offered for students not meeting academic standards. However, remediation will be based on progress monitoring of student performance goals according to each student's Individual Success Plan (ISP). An ISP will be developed for each student at the beginning of the school year using data from previous test scores as well as a pre-test to determine weak skill areas. Regular progress monitoring will be conducted by teachers through assessments and conferencing to evaluate students' progress and for successful differentiation of instruction within the classroom. Each student will maintain progress toward benchmarks of proficiency as defined by the Georgia Performance Standards through ongoing mandated and school-based assessment measures.

The Remedial Educational Program (REP) at UAFA will offer after-school opportunities for academic remediation and reinforcement at no cost.

The progress of all students enrolled in remedial coursework will be tracked alongside the progress of all other students, as required under Rule 160-4-5-.01 and DOE guidelines. REP student scores on the GMASs shall all be reported to the GA-DOE, annually.

Eligibility in Remedial Education Program

Students in grades six through eight are eligible for remedial education services if they meet two or more of the following criteria:

- A formal student support team process containing documented evidence that supports remedial placement.
- The student has been retained in the grade in which he or she is enrolled.
- The student is eligible to receive services under Part A of Chapter 1 of Title 1.
- The student has been recommended by a teacher who has documented any one of the following:
 - Low performance in reading.
 - Low performance in math.
 - Inability to verbally express ideas or write or dictate a meaningful sentence.
 - Current standardized test information indicates the student has scored at or below the twenty-fifth percentile in reading, writing, or mathematics.

For participation in UAFA's remediation programs, the most recent GMAS scores indicate the student has a score in the "Does Not Meet" category in reading or English/language arts or mathematics.

Students in grades 6-8 who are receiving services under the special education program (O.C.G.A. §20-2-152) may participate in remedial education programs if their Individualized Education Programs specify



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that they meet the eligibility requirements as specified above, and if their special education program is not designed to address their respective reading, mathematics, or writing deficiencies.

By June of each year, UAFA shall report the achievement results to GADOE of all students who received instructional services through the REP in the content area(s) in which they were served.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT METHODS

Utopian Academy for the Arts (UAFA) will collect student performance data by participating in the Georgia standardized testing program. Students will be administered the Georgia Milestones Assessment (grades 6-8).

UAFA petitioners agree that beginning with the completion of the first year of operation, UAFA will work with the Clayton County Public Schools to develop an Annual Evaluation Plan that will establish the precise levels of achievement that the charter school will meet or exceed on the state and District student assessments, student and stakeholder surveys, student and staff retention, and unique charter-based objectives.

UAFA will use assessment data to measure performance on Georgia standards, refine curriculum, instructional time, tutoring and scheduling, and ultimately prepare students to pass and excel on statewide assessment exams-pursuant to the school's achievement goals and Annual Evaluation Plan. Assessment data will be used to track progress toward accountability goals, identify baseline performance, set student growth goals, place students in differentiated class groupings, identify students for remediation and enrichment, identify gaps in curriculum and program design, evaluate the effectiveness of professional development efforts, and demonstrate and articulate school academic success.

It is critical for UAFA's data culture that the school's entire community of students, parents, staff, administration, and governing board are invested in data culture. The school's governing board will work closely with the school leader in the formative stages of planning to develop and implement goals, protocols, systems, and tools to facilitate the comprehensive use of assessment data to drive decision making. While the collaborative effort is essential, the components described below serves as examples of the ways we'd expect to use data to inform our decision making with regards to instruction and learning.

To track student performance in the area of the Arts, performances and/or arts related projects will be required of students at the end of each nine week period in drama, music, dance, visual art, journalism, broadcast/video production and creative arts. This can include drama performances, oral readings, dance performances, visual arts, demonstrations, and musical productions. Performances related to each discipline of the arts will measure if the student has developed an understanding, appreciation, and achievement in the arts.

Core Ideas

UAFA will take advantage of proven, effective tools and practices while continuously developing and refining their use. We have identified the following core ideas that will be used to set goals and inform our practices.

- Purposeful and frequent use of assessment data from Georgia standard-aligned assessments and national standards aligned assessment.
- Consistent application of standardized and regular data analysis (item analysis, by standard).



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- Full implementation of standardized reporting tools (e.g. dashboards, reports, and collection technology).
- Consistent and regular communication within the school and community (e.g. data conferences, group planning sessions, parent and student meetings, public outreach).
- Integration of assessment data analysis in strategic program evaluation procedures.

Data Goals

The goals of UAFA when using assessment data driving instructional strategies may include the following:

- Refine and direct classroom instruction, including setting individual student goals;
- Adjusting scheduling, including time for core subjects and time allotment for remediation, as well as adjustments to non-core subject periods to ensure students master the material;
- Refine the teacher-developed and diagnostic tests to ensure consistent alignment to the learning standards with the results indicative of outcomes on state exams;
- Inform policies for student retention and promotion;
- Evaluation of teacher and school leader performance.

Participation in Statewide Assessments

UAFA will not waive the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through § 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements and will participate in all state -mandated assessments. UAFA will participate in any additional assessments that the State of Georgia might develop and administer in the future. UAFA shall administer all State tests for grades sixth through eighth as determined by the State of Georgia Testing Schedule.

Performance Data for Internal Use

In addition to data acquired through statewide standardized testing, UAFA will gather data from other sources in order to gauge the effectiveness of its academic program. This includes a yearly writing assessment and weekly-updated “standards files”.

UAFA will conduct a school-wide survey of writing progress that will be administered and graded by UAFA staff according to a standards-based rubric. This assessment will gauge student growth from year to year in the area of writing excellence.

With students studying different concepts in different ways at the same time, keeping track of the progress of each student becomes critical to successful standards-driven education. To keep track of standards on an individual basis, each student will have a standards file that will be regularly consulted by the teacher, student, and parent.

Teachers will compile meaningful student work along with documentation from both informal and formal assessments in comprehensive portfolios in order to make decisions about a child's level of mastery of various standards. Standards will be assessed and the standards files will be updated by relying on a diverse array of assessments. Teacher observation, formal tests, and standards-based rubrics, and many of the formal and informal assessment methods described below will be utilized to maintain the standards files. It will be the responsibility of the Principal, and the Curriculum,



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Instruction, and Assessment Committee to develop and maintain the standards files, as well as to provide guidelines for instructional and assessment alignment. Instruction regarding how to best utilize standards files in the classroom will be administered during professional development sessions for new teachers and then throughout the school year; it will be the teacher's duty to keep each student's standards files updated.

At the end of each semester, teachers will present the standards files for the students in their classroom for analysis. The data will be interpreted to show areas in which UAFA students are strong and weak. Thus, standards files, along with comprehensive portfolios, will be an important source of student performance data for the UAFA model.

UAFA's performance goals do not specify the standards files or the UAFA internal writing assessment. They are designed for internal use so that the governing board, parents, and teachers can have an alternative perspective on the success rate of the school.

Establishing Baseline Data

UAFA will develop baseline student achievement data as required by Georgia's charter school law and regulations using student performance data from the prior school year. The Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Committee will be primarily responsible for this process. The baseline data for the GMAS, ITBS, and the Georgia writing assessment will be gathered via student records from previous schools they attended.

For students who do not have prior test results or whose records are unavailable for any reason, performance on standardized assessments during the spring of their first year at UAFA will be maintained to serve as their baseline achievement data. UAFA assessment data will be compared to the baseline throughout the five year term of the charter for performance measurement purposes.

Use of Assessment Data in Planning for Instruction

UAFA's success depends on successful implementation of a standards-driven academic program that relies on assessment to guide instruction. UAFA will achieve this goal through early and thorough formal assessment and by establishing structures to ensure the use of assessment in instructional decisions.

Assessment to Guide Policy and Management Decisions

The Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Committee, a managerial committee formed by teachers and led by the Principal, will be responsible for evaluating school-wide student assessment data and presenting overall findings to faculty. The committee will develop an annual Utopian Academy for the Arts Academic Evaluation Report that will serve as a key reference for instructional reflection and decision-making among individual faculty and faculty teams. This report, a compilation of various forms of student assessment data, will identify key areas of instructional strength and weakness within individual classrooms, across content areas, grade levels, and the school at large. The Evaluation Report will be a critical factor in policy decisions of the Board, all curricular and instructional decisions of the committee, and Personnel Committee decisions regarding future use of and focus for professional development hours.

At a minimum the report will evaluate the following data:

- all student state and national test scores from the previous year, including Georgia Milestones,
- students' quarterly grades from previous year;
- final assessments of students' content area portfolios from the previous year;
- completed student standards files from previous year;
- updated informal reading inventory assessment of the students' reading level; and compiled scores from writing rubrics

Note: During the first operational year, and if a student has transferred from another school, every effort will be made by teachers and parents to obtain test records and work samples from the previous school. If the student is new to the school, there will be no previously existent standards file. It will be the duty of the teachers to begin updating the student's standards file at the beginning of the year.

Formal and Informal Assessment Strategies

We emphasize data-driven decision making with two complimentary assessment processes.

Formal Assessments which are large scale standardized assessments and Classroom-based Assessments which are selected or designed and implemented by the classroom teacher.

Formal Assessments include:

- **Diagnostic Base-line Tests:** Given to collect base-line information in order to assess academic levels for instructional placement decisions. Initially, diagnostic tests will be administered at the beginning of each academic semester. These tests are again administered after instruction has taken place to re-evaluate a student's academic level.
- **Standards-based Unit Tests:** These tests will measure student achievement on the grade-level standards-based curriculum content. Unit tests are given to all students at the end of each nine-week period in reading language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.
- **School Climate Surveys:** give us input from students, parents, and teachers and serve as a guide for improving school services. Climate surveys will be administered annually by April of each academic calendar year.
- **Writing Assessments:** UAFA will give a series of assessments to measure student writing proficiency in grade 8. The tests require students to write responses to assigned topics in a single testing period. Once again teachers and students will use diagnostic feedback to guide teaching and learning.
- **Standardized tests:** Taken by each student annually, standardized tests will be used to plan improvements in program delivery. The state and district tests will be administered according to the provisions of the district's policies and the state's educational legislation.

Classroom-based Assessments include:

Performance-Based Assessments:

- *Learning Logs* demonstrate how well students express ideas, organize thoughts, interpret data and apply skills. Students keep logs for independent reading, journal writing, science notes and observations.
- *Anecdotal Records* describe observations of student interactions, participation, learning styles and strategies.



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- *Rubrics* describe the specific criteria used to assess projects and/or performances.
- *Student – Teacher Conferences* highlight strengths and weaknesses in student performance.
- *Observation Checklists* identify the critical attributes of specific activities and indicate the levels of mastery individual students have gained.
- *Art Performances* show authentic individual and/or collaborative performances. This can include drama performances, oral readings, dance performances, visual arts, demonstrations, and musical productions. Performances related to each discipline of the arts will measure if the student has developed an understanding, appreciation, and achievement in the arts. Performances and/or arts related projects will be required of students at the end of each nine week period in drama, music, dance, and visual art.

Grading System and Students' Academic Records

UAFA shall maintain all student records in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, regulations, rules and policies, unless otherwise specifically exempted herein. UAFA will maintain all student records, including transcripts during each student's enrollment in UAFA. UAFA will maintain and ensure the privacy and confidentiality of each student's educational record in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232g, and will not disclose to any unauthorized third party any personally identifiable information concerning any student enrolled in UAFA without first obtaining prior written parental permission.

UAFA shall maintain accurate enrollment data and daily records of student attendance. Enrollment data shall include the name, address, home telephone number, birth date, gender, and ethnicity of each student; identify special education, and LEP status; and each grade level and class/teacher.

Grading Scale

The grading scale used at UAFA will comply with Georgia law. All grades will be computed using a numerical scale from 0-100. A grade average of 70 or above will be considered a passing grade.

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

75-79 = C

70-74 = D

69 & below = F

Data and Grade Management System

UAFA will complete all tasks necessary to process data in Infinite Campus for federal, state, and district requirements in accordance with GA DOE timelines. There are no exceptions to the reporting requirements due to the size of UAFA. Requirements may change at any time due to modifications of federal, state, or district requirements. UAFA may choose to make use of other data elements in the basic installation of Infinite Campus for their data maintenance without the support from the GA DOE.

Infinite Campus Software

UAFA will integrate the Infinite Campus system and the school's operational technology plan will fully comply with State expectations. All data, including discipline, grades, schedules, transcripts, and other student data will be maintained in compliance with the standards set forth by the State and will be transmitted to the State in accordance with state guidelines. Report cards and/or transcripts will be



generated from the Infinite Campus software system. All costs associated with use of the required student information system and the cost of interfacing with the GA DOE will be UAFA's responsibility.

UAFA's Registrar will be responsible for maintaining accurate records.

School Promotion Requirements

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-282 and SBOE Rule 160-4-2.11 (Code IHE), UAFA will use the same promotion and retention policy as all other public schools in the State of Georgia. UAFA recognizes that the placement or promotion of a student into a grade, class, or program should be based on an assessment of the academic achievement of the student and a determination of the education setting in which the student is most likely to receive the instruction and other services needed in order to succeed and progress to the next higher level of academic achievement.



PERFORMANCE-BASED GOALS AND MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

UAFA will track student progress against the Georgia Standards of Excellence and include all state mandated assessment scores and accountability indicators in order to keep parents, the community, the State Board of Education, and the Utopian Academy for the Arts Board of Directors apprised of the students' individual, collective and comparative achievement. UAFA will report annually its progress in meeting its goals and objectives to parents/guardians, the community, and the GA State Board as required by the Charter School Act of 1998. In addition, the annual report will be made available to parents, students and the general public by posting the information on the school's website with hard copies available at the school.



	Assessment	Year 1 Baseline	Year 2 Target	Year 3 Target	Year 4 Target	Year 5 Target
Academic Goal #1: Growth of All Students/Combined Achievement and Growth. The students in the charter school annually demonstrate academic growth compared to their academic peers enrolled in the traditional schools (as measured by grade-band CCRPI progress scores) <u>and/or</u> the students in the charter school annually demonstrate academic achievement and growth compared to their academic peers enrolled in the traditional schools (as measured by the CCRPI overall grade band scores)?						
Measure 1: The charter school earned a higher “student progress” score on the CCRPI than the district in all grade bands served OR in all grade bands in which the school did not earn a higher CCRPI “content mastery” score.	Assessment: Georgia Milestones Assessment. Data Source: GaDOE: CCRPI Progress Sub-Score	Contingent on data from CCPS	Contingent on data from CCPS	Contingent on data from CCPS	Contingent on data from CCPS	Contingent on data from CCPS
Measure 2: The charter school earned a higher “overall grade band” score on the CCRPI than the district in all grade bands served OR in all grade bands in which the school did not earn a higher CCRPI “content mastery” or “progress” score.	Assessment: Georgia Milestones Assessment. Data Source: GaDOE: GaDOE: CCRPI Grade Band Score	Contingent on data from CCPS	Contingent on data from CCPS	Contingent on data from CCPS	Contingent on data from CCPS	Contingent on data from CCPS

WAIVERS

According to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(a) and in order to improve performance by using instructional strategies and a school design described in this charter, Utopian Academy for the Arts (UAFA) will utilize the broad flexibility from all State Board of Education (SBOE) rules, policies, regulations, and procedures and from provisions of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated other than the Charter Schools Act of 1998, as amended, that are in conflict with the provisions of this charter. Such broad flexibility is in the best interest of UAFA students and the Clayton County community.

The Accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. 20-14-30 through 20-14-41 will not be waived.

We believe that many academic and organizational elements described in this charter petition illustrate a model of education that is sufficiently departed from the traditional public education so as to require broad flexibility. By waiving the restrictions, UAFA can innovate academically and organizationally. Examples include offering single gender instruction approach, a unique curriculum that is consistent with the vision of UAFA and also fully aligned with the Georgia Standards of Excellence, and weekly seminar sessions. A large body of evidence that these innovations are highly demanded by parents and well-supported by research on raising achievement has been included in the petition.

Practically speaking, broad flexibility allows UAFA to avoid involvement in laborious amendments to the particular waivers the charter school might seek. The unique nature of the school could conceivably lead to a situation in which future freedoms could be limited unnecessarily by an unforeseen code that might have been waived. To avoid this and to allow for productive innovation in the sphere of public education, UAFA seeks broad flexibility from all local board of education and State Board of Education rules, policies, regulations, and procedures and from provisions of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated other than the Charter Schools Act of 1998, as amended that are in conflict with the provisions of this charter.

Below is a list of state and local provisions from Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia and Rule 160 of the State Board of Education that UAFA specifically wishes to waive. The identification of these specific provisions is in no way intended to replace the broad flexibility exemption, but simply to set forth specific examples that are of particular importance to the school. Any other state or local board policy, rule, regulation, or law which is not expressly listed below but is in conflict with this charter petition is assumed waived as well. The request for waivers does not suggest that UAFA will not follow the regulations, or their intent, but rather it reserves the ability to make changes it deems necessary and appropriate to provide the highest quality education possible for its students and community.

Textbook/Instructional Materials Selection and Recommendation-SBOE Rule 160-4-4-.10, 160-4-4-.20, 160-4-2-.18

In order to meet the needs of the student population, UAFA would like to waive the requirements set forth in selecting textbooks and instructional materials. The school would like the flexibility to choose resources and texts which support the instructional program outlined in this charter petition. As UAFA seeks to prepare its middle school students for entrance into top- quality colleges, adding rigorous texts to enhance the school's curriculum may become necessary to increase student achievement

Personnel Required-SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.22

UAFA would like to waive the requirements for personnel required. The school's population will not meet state requirements for personnel requirements. UAFA is committed to meeting the needs of the school's population and will hire or retain as needed contracted services for such positions as: counselor, psychologist, social worker, technology specialists, drama, dance, music, visual art, and physical education specialists, or other staff outlined in this SBOE rule.

Regulation of certificated professional personnel by Professional Standards Commission; certification requirement; consent required for withdrawal of application for certification; application fees-O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-200, Professional Standards Commission Rule 505-2-09 1(a)

The most qualified staff will be sought to fill teaching positions at UAFA; however, for some positions, particular experience or education may better meet the needs of the school; therefore, UAFA wishes to waive the certification requirements for teachers who are not directly responsible for core subject matter instruction (e.g. drama, dance, music, and art teachers), with the exception of special education teachers. All staff, other than the Principal and Dean of Students will be formally interviewed and chosen by a Personnel Committee comprised of the Principal, Dean of Students, one member from the founding board, one community representative, and one appointed parent. All employees will have a thorough background check and be fingerprinted. UAFA seeks to hire and retain the best teachers it possibly can. Wherein a certified teacher cannot be found that meets UAFA's hiring qualification, UAFA will exercise the right of this waiver to hire the staff best suited to improve instruction and student achievement. UAFA understands that future enforcement of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act will require certified teachers and fully intends to comply with such Federal laws at such time it becomes imperative. Until such time, UAFA reserves the right to employ uncertified, yet highly qualified and competent teachers.

Formation and Duties of Local School Councils-O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-85 and 20-2-86

UAFA will form a Governing Board comprised of a majority of parents as required by the Charter Schools Act of 1998, as amended. The creation of this Board will enable UAFA to be responsive to the needs of the school and to better meet the business and academic goals set forth in this charter. It ensures that parents and community members are substantially involved in the planning and operation of the school.

Common Minimum Facility Requirements-O.C.G.A. 20-2-261 and SBOE Rule 160-5-4-.08; Approval, Processing, and Design of Plans and Specifications for Public School Construction and Standards and Construction Costs Guidelines-SBOE Rule 160-4-.01, 160-4-.10, 160-4-.15-.16

UAFA requests flexibility in procuring a facility that meets the needs of the school's population, instructional approach, and budgetary allowance. All facility designs and plans will be submitted to the SBOE as required and outlined in the "Facilities" section of this charter petition. UAFA will ensure compliance of all state and local safety and accessibility requirements.

School Day-SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.02

In order to maximize instructional time and to ensure that instructional staff has time to plan and collaborate regularly, UAFA would like to waive the requirement that the instructional time be

facilitated by certified personnel. UAFA will have an 8-hour extended day and a 190-day extended school year calendar, providing more time-on-task for students to master content and improve skills. This request to waiver is consistent with the requested waiver of O.C.G.A. 20-2-212 and SBOE Rule 160-5-2-.05.

Number of Hours in Each Academic Subject- SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.05

This waiver is necessary to improve student academic achievement in reading comprehension, science and math. This waiver allows for additional enrichment and/or instruction in reading, science and math to be delivered to students who are below grade level and need additional assistance. It also allows the teachers to determine what the needs of all their students are and to meet these needs appropriately. This waiver does not undermine the intent of SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.05 MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM CRITERIA because the intent is to insure that students receive an adequate amount of instruction in core subjects. Because students will not be successful without good reading, science and math skills, this waiver is consistent with the intent of the waived rule.

Student Fees and Charges/Required Student Equipment and Materials-SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.12

In order to implement the dress code as outlined in “Parent and Community Involvement” section of this charter petition, UAFA requests to waive the part of this SBOE rule which does not allow schools to specify colors for articles of clothing.

Expenditure of Funds -O.C.G.A Section 20-2-167

To better serve the needs of the school, UAFA would like to waive requirements for expenditure of Quality Based Education Funds. UAFA wishes to rollover any excess funds to be used to expand upon the school’s instructional programs, services, or resources, staff development, or facility. Flexibility, coupled with responsible management of these funds, will ensure that UAFA is able to provide appropriate and effective resources in a timely manner, as well as reach the long term financial goals.

Minimum Direct Classroom Expenditures -O.C.G.A Section 20-2-171

UAFA request a waiver from this rule requiring that 65% of the school’s operating budget be spent on direct classroom expenditures. UAFA wishes to retain the flexibility needed to best utilize its resources in order to raise student achievement while remaining fiscally strong. UAFA will be held accountable under the terms of its charter to meet performance standards, and will allocate its resources appropriately to meet these goals.

Scheduling for Instruction-SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.16

UAFA wishes to provide meaningful experiences that enable the students to utilize skills in an authentic setting. The school will increase the number of field trip opportunities, as well as arts-based activities during the instructional day; and, therefore, wishes to waive the SBOE rule related to scheduling requirements. All decisions related to scheduling for instruction will be consistent with the school’s mission to develop academic and artistic male students to enter and to succeed in the global society with proficiency to enroll in a college, university or specialty school of their choice.

Professional Learning-SBOE Rule 160-3-3-.04 and 160-3-3-.10

This charter petition outlines academic goals to be measured and an instructional framework designed to meet these academic goals. UAFA would like the flexibility in choosing the professional learning opportunities which best meet the school's needs.

Duty Free Lunch Period-O.C.G.A 20-2-218

UAFA recognizes the importance of duty-free time during the instructional day. The school requests a waiver from the duty free lunch requirement to better schedule according to the needs of the students and teachers. Duty free time will be provided to staff according to the needs of the school. UAFA seeks to have the flexibility to design its schedule to best fit the needs of the students. In the first few years of operation, UAFA will have a relatively small staff. It might become necessary to require teachers to assist students during lunch hours. At UAFA, the extended lunch period will allow some students and teachers necessary time for tutoring or remediation. Seeking this waiver will allow the Principal the flexibility to maximize student-teacher interaction that will in turn boost student achievement.

Substitute Teachers-SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.05

UAFA would like the flexibility in choosing qualified substitute teachers in the school.

NON-WAIVER LAWS

- Charter Schools Acts Act of 1998: O.C.G.A. 20-2-2061 through O.C.G.A 20- 2-2071
- School Accountability Provisions: Part 3 of Article 2 Chapter 14 of Title 20; O.C.G.A. 20-14-30 through O.C.G.A. 20-14-41
- Open and Public Meetings: O.C.G.A. 20-2-85
- Inspection of Public Records: O.C.G.A. 50-18-70
- State Board of Education Charter Schools Rule: IEB 160-4-9-.04
- Shall not charge tuition: O.C.G.A. 20-2-133
- Unlawful Conduct in or near a Public School: O.C.G.A. 20-2-1180 through O.C.G.A. 20-2-1182
- Reporting Requirements- Student Data Collection: O.C.G.A. 20-2-320
- Brief Period of Quiet Reflection: O.C.G.A. 20-2-1050,20-2-1051
- Fingerprinting and Criminal Record Check of All Personnel Employed by the Charter School: O.C.G.A. 20-2-211

DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Through academic and organizational innovation, all instructional and operational functions and responsibilities for UAFA will be managed at the school level and governed by the UAFA Governing Board. Utopian Academy for the Arts (UAFA) will utilize fiscal management and will exercise full autonomy over budgets and expenditures within the constraints of Georgia charter school law.

The Governing Board will delegate all day-to-day operational, administrative, and instructional responsibilities to the Executive Director and Principal. The school's instructional staff will report to the Principal, who, in turn, will report the overall academic performance of the school and the teachers at the scheduled Board Meetings of the Governing Board. The school's operational and administrative staff will report to the Executive Director, who, in turn, will report the overall operational performance of the school at the scheduled Board Meetings of the Governing Board. UAFA will implement rigorous internal control policies. These policies will be reviewed by the Governing Board and Executive Director to ensure that they address legal compliance, conflicts of interest, signature authorities, government access to records, accounting procedures, cash management, budget development, financial reporting, property management, personnel matters, procurement, and educational planning and programming. Additionally, the leadership team and governing board of UAFA will receive ongoing training and support as members of the Georgia Charter Schools Association.

Utopian Academy for the Arts (UAFA) shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices and operations. UAFA will neither charge tuition nor discriminate on any student based on race, ethnicity, national origin, or disability or on any other basis that would be unlawful for a traditional public school. UAFA shall be open to any student who is eligible under the laws of the State of Georgia for admission to a public school serving grades 6-8, and UAFA shall ensure compliance with all applicable anti-discrimination laws governing public schools, including Title VI and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. New students will be admitted each year without regard to prior measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, (including, but not limited to physical disabilities), ethnicity, race, creed, national origin, religion, or ancestry.

Representatives from the charter school will attend all training and other meetings requested by Clayton County Public Schools (CCPS) including Principals' meetings and monthly Administrators' meetings. School administrators will use the school systems email system for primary written communication with the school system and will check email daily, as it is understood that this is the primary means of communication with the schools.

UAFA does not discriminate in the educational and employment policies under which it operates and will honor all appropriate laws relating to discrimination.

ATTENDANCE ZONE, STUDENT ADMISSIONS, AND RECRUITMENT

Attendance Zone

Primary Attendance Zone: All students in grades 6-8 who reside within Clayton County are eligible to enroll.



Priority Status: Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1), UAFA shall provide priority status for enrollment for in the following order:

1. Siblings of currently enrolled UAFA students. A “sibling is defined as a brother/sister, half-brother/sister, or stepbrother/sister who resides in the same household.
2. Children of the faculty, staff, and Governing Board.

Student Admissions and Enrollment

The rules and procedures concerning admission of students, including the process for the random selection, will be as follows:

In October prior to the start of the initial year, the Founding Board will conduct monthly community meetings throughout Clayton County in which registration forms will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. At such time, parents shall also submit an enrollment form required to fully enroll the student in the school. In the summer prior to the start of school, families will be invited for an orientation at the school to tour the school facility, meet the schools teaching and administrative staff, and receive pertinent information regarding enrollment at UAFA. Contingent that the school has not met its projected enrollments, registration will continue through the duration of the school year.

In subsequent years, admissions shall be handled in the following manner: Prior to regular registration there will be a pre-enrollment phase for returning students and their siblings and students of governing board members and teachers. Registration forms and information regarding the cutoff date for pre-enrollment will be sent at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the pre-enrollment period. All eligible returning students and their siblings and other eligible priority status students who submit enrollment forms during the pre-enrollment period will be enrolled for the following school year unless there are not enough spaces available in any particular grade. In that case, all returning students who submit complete registrations during the pre-enrollment period will be enrolled, and the siblings will be enrolled based on a lottery to be held in an open forum on the date stated in the pre-enrollment information. The pre-enrollment process will not occur prior to the first year of operation.

The dates of the registration period shall be established by the Governing Board each year and shall end no later than the last day of February for the school year beginning the fall of the same year (i.e. February of 2024 for the 2024-2025 school year). The public lottery shall be held...(i.e., within 2 weeks of the close of the registration period.)

Except for the initial year of operation, UAFA agrees to complete registration for the upcoming school year and provide the names, grade level, and addresses of all accepted students to the GA Department of Education no later than April 1.

Timetable for Registering and Admitting Students

<u>Task</u>	<u>Months</u>
<i>Orientation/ Pre-Enrollment</i>	<i>January 1 through January 31</i>
<i>Registration</i>	<i>February 1 through February 28(29)</i>



Public Lottery

By March 15

Lottery and Waiting List

If a lottery is required, the lottery will be held in an open forum at the time and place listed in the registration materials, fliers posted around the Clayton County Community, and/or the school's website. The lottery will be conducted in a manner that is consistent with the Georgia Charter Schools Act and that ensures that each eligible student receives an equal chance of being selected. All names will be selected in each lottery and the students who are not selected for registration will be placed on a waiting list in the order in which their name was selected. Once all grades are filled or once the lottery, if necessary, is complete, any additional students who register shall be placed at the end of the waiting list on a first come, first served basis.

Currently enrolled students will fill all seats first. Once all currently enrolled students have been placed, current siblings of students will fill any open allotments. Students of current faculty, staff, and board members will have next priority in any open allotments. If there are more applicants than available slots, a lottery will take place for all other applicants. Each priority level will have its own lottery.

Priority Level 1

Siblings of currently enrolled students (Priority Level 1) will be placed in one group first. In the event there are more siblings of currently enrolled students than open seats, the applicants will be placed on a waitlist (Priority Level 1 wait list) based on the order in which their name was drawn in the lottery.

Priority Level 2

Children of faculty, staff and board members (Priority Level 2) will be selected next to fill any open allotments. In the event there are no vacant allotments, children of faculty, staff and board members will be placed on a waitlist (Priority Level 2 wait list) based on the order in which their name was drawn in the lottery. This waitlist will only be used to fill vacant allotments after all those on the Priority Level 1 waitlist have been placed.

Level 3

If siblings of current students, students of faculty, staff, and/or board members do not fill the open allotments, then other open allotments will be filled by conducting a lottery of all non-priority applications. All applicants not selected will be put on a waitlist (Level III wait list) based on the order in which their name was drawn in the lottery.

Lottery positions and waiting list positions will not be secured from year to year. Those offered the opportunity to enroll from the waiting list will have three days to complete the registration process before the opening will be offered to the next student on the waiting list.

Withdrawal of Students

A student may withdraw without penalty from UAFA at any time and enroll in the appropriate Clayton County Public School (CCPS) based upon the student's residence address and grade level. A student who is suspended or expelled from UAFA as a result of a disciplinary action taken by UAFA shall be entitled to enroll in the student's regular attendance zone school only if such student would not have

been subject to suspension or expulsion by CCPS for the conduct which gave rise to the suspension or expulsion.

Recruiting

Informal recruitment will be conducted during the planning phase of the school. As soon as the charter is approved by the Georgia State Board of Education, formal recruitment of students will be conducted in Clayton County communities with signs posted in local businesses, public establishments, and on the school's website. The recruitment process will also include public notice through the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce, newspaper advertisements, local radio stations, community information sessions, town hall meetings and announcements in neighboring civic organization meetings, local places of worship, and direct mail to send invitations to informational meetings. During the recruiting process, UAFA will provide parents/guardians of potential students with accurate information about the programs, services, and amenities available at the school. The same recruitment techniques will be utilized every school year as needed.

UAFA will implement a student recruitment strategy that includes, but is not limited to, the following elements or strategies to ensure a racial and ethnic balance among students that is reflective of the community:

- An enrollment process that is scheduled and adopted to include a timeline that allows for a broad-based recruiting and application process;
- The development of promotional and informational material that appeals to all of the various racial and ethnic groups represented in the community;
- The appropriate development of promotional and informational materials in languages other than English to appeal to limited English proficient populations;
- The distribution of promotional and informational materials to a broad variety of community groups and agencies that serve the various racial, ethnic, and interest groups represented in the community;
- Outreach meetings designed by the Outreach Committee in a variety of diverse communities within Clayton County.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

To ensure consistence within all Clayton County Public Schools, UAFA will adopt the approved Clayton County Student Code of Conduct and Due Process policy and guidelines.

UAFA reserves the right to amend the middle school handbook based on the school's mission, vision, and goals. The Student Code of Conduct, Due Process and Student Handbook contain the county's expectations, goals, discipline procedures, activities, incentives, responsibilities, guidelines, policies and middle school philosophy.

Short Term Suspension

A short-term suspension refers to an in-school removal or out-of-school removal of a student for disciplinary reasons for a period of five or fewer days. A student who has committed any of the infractions listed below shall be subject minimally to a short-term suspension, unless the Principal determines that an exception should be made based on the individual circumstances of the incident and

the student's disciplinary record. The Principal reserves the right to adjust the punishment for each infraction per his or her judgment.

Disciplinary Infractions

- Fail to complete assignments, carry out directions, or comply with disciplinary sanctions;
- Cheat on quizzes, exams, or commit plagiarism;
- Skipping class
- Wear inappropriate, insufficient, or disruptive clothing or attire, or violate the student dress code;
- Repeatedly commit minor behavioral infractions which, in aggregate, may be considered an infraction subject to formal disciplinary action;
- Engage in conduct that disrupts school or classroom activity or endanger or threaten to endanger the health, safety, welfare, or morals of others;
- Engage in bullying or cyber-bullying
- Use obscene or abusive language or gestures;
- Steal, or attempt to steal, or possess property known by the student to be stolen;
- Endanger the physical safety of another by the use of force or threats or force that reasonably places the victim in fear of bodily injury;
- Misuse of school computer equipment, including viewing or downloading any inappropriate material not relevant to schoolwork;
- Engage in gambling;
- Engage in acts of verbal or physical sexual harassment;
- Possess tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs;
- Attempt to assault any student or staff member;
- Make a false bomb threat, or pull a false emergency alarm;
- Vandalize or abuse school property or equipment causing minor damage;
- Commit any other act which school officials reasonably conclude disrupts the learning environment of the school.

Procedures and Due Process for Short Term Suspension

The Principal may impose a short-term suspension, and shall follow due process procedures consistent with federal case law pursuant to *Goss v. Lopez* (419 U.S. 565). Before imposing a short term suspension, or other, less serious discipline, the Principal shall provide notice to inform the student of the charges against him, and if the student denies the charges, an explanation of the evidence against the student. A chance to present the student's version of events shall also be provided.

Before imposing a short-term suspension, the Principal shall immediately notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) in writing that the student may be suspended from school. Written notice shall be provided at the last known address of the parent(s) or guardian(s). Where possible, notification also shall be provided by telephone. Such notice shall provide a description of the incident(s) for which suspension is proposed and shall inform the parents or guardians of the right to request an immediate informal conference with the Principal. The notification provided shall be in the home language used by the parent(s) or guardian(s). The parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student and the student shall have the opportunity to present the student's version of the incident and to ask questions. Such notice and opportunity for an informal conference shall take place prior to the suspension of the student.

The Principal's decision to impose a short-term suspension may be challenged by the parent(s) or guardian(s) in accordance with the charter school's complaint process.

Long Term Suspension or Expulsion

A student shall be subject to expulsion for the remainder of the school year or suspension for any period in excess of ten (10) days for conduct that is in violation of rules contained in Clayton County Public Schools discipline procedures, rules and regulations of the Board of Education, and any state or federal laws. Such actions of expulsions and or suspension will be administered by the Board of Education (GBOE Policy JD 160-4-8-.15, O.C.G.A. 20-2-751). Expulsion refers to the permanent removal of a student from school for disciplinary reasons. A student who is determined to have committed any of the infractions listed below shall be subject minimally to a long-term suspension or expulsion, unless the Principal determines that an exception should be made based on the circumstances of the incident and the student's disciplinary record. Such a student may also be subject to any of the disciplinary measures outlined elsewhere in this document including a referral to the appropriate law enforcement authorities. No long-term suspension or expulsion decision will be made without consultation from the Executive Director.

Disciplinary Infractions

- Possess, use, attempt to use, or transfer of any firearm, knife, razor blade, explosive, mace, tear gas, or other dangerous object of no reasonable use to the student in school;
- Commit, or attempt to commit arson on school property;
- Physical assault;
- Intentionally cause physical injury to another person;
- Vandalize or harm school property causing major damage;
- Commit any act which could constitute a crime or is a more egregious infraction described under "short-term suspension", which school officials reasonably conclude warrants a long-term suspension.

A student who commits any of the acts previously described as causes for short-term suspension may, instead or in addition, be subject to a long-term suspension.

Procedures and Due Process for Long Term Suspension

The Principal, with consultation from the Executive Director, may impose a long-term suspension. Upon determining that a student's action warrants a possible long-term suspension, these parties shall verbally inform the student that he is being suspended and is being considered for a long-term suspension (or expulsion) and state the reasons for such actions. The Principal also shall immediately notify the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) in writing. Written notice shall be provided by personal delivery, or certified mail delivery to assure receipt of such notice within 24 hours of suspension at the last known address. Where possible, notification also shall be provided by telephone if the school has been provided with a contact telephone number for the parent(s) or guardian(s). Such notice shall provide a description of the incident or incidents which resulted in the suspension and shall indicate that a formal hearing will be held on the matter which may result in a long-term suspension (or expulsion). The notification provided shall be in dominant language used by the parent(s) or guardian(s).

The UAFA Governing Board shall observe Georgia law in developing and implementing disciplinary hearings held by a disciplinary hearing officer, disciplinary panel, or disciplinary tribunal pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-751 through § 20-2-758 including the ability to honor disciplinary orders of private schools and other public schools /school systems pursuant to O .C.G.A. § 20-2-751 .2. Disciplinary hearings shall be held no later than ten school days after the beginning of the student’s suspension unless the administrators of UAFA and the parents or guardians mutually agree to an extension. Any teacher who is called as a witness by UAFA shall be given notice no later than three days prior to the hearing.

Discipline for Students with Disabilities

UAFA commits to staying in compliance with any federal law and will follow the district’s policies and procedures regarding student discipline for children with disabilities, and will stay apprised of any shifts in the legislation. Students with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as other students and may be disciplined for the same behavioral offenses. If a student with disabilities has an individual educational plan (IEP) that includes disciplinary guidelines, that student will be disciplined according to those guidelines as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Students for whom the IEP does not include specific disciplinary guidelines may be disciplined in accordance with the standard school policies discussed above.

Any student who is receiving special education services or has been identified as a student with a disability under the IDEA and whose acts are determined by the Principal to have violated any rules, regulations or laws as alleged, shall be referred to an IEP committee. The IEP committee will be responsible for determining if the student's conduct is a manifestation of his disability and whether such conduct warrants a change in placement, amendments to the IEP and/or disciplinary actions. If the IEP committee determines that the student's conduct is not a manifestation of the student's disability, the Principal shall determine what, if any, disciplinary actions shall be taken with regard to offenses that the student has been found to have committed. The IEP team does not determine disciplinary actions.

STAFF EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES

Staffing Plan

UAFA will have one certified; highly qualified teacher for each classroom. Class sizes will not exceed Georgia Department of Education guidelines. There will be appropriate specialty teachers on staff to teach performing and visual arts, journalism, creative arts, physical education, foreign language, and Special Education and other specialty classes where needed. An instructional aid will be assigned to grades where necessary.

Recruitment and Hiring

Utopian Academy for the Arts intends to obtain the services of the finest teachers and administrators available for the school. To accomplish this goal, UAFA will utilize multiple resources to recruit highly qualified and professional faculty and staff. We will use the following venues to recruit for positions: the internet, professional networks, job fairs, local newspapers, local television advertisements, local radio stations, community boards, the Georgia Department of Labor, the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce, word of mouth, Teach Georgia, the Georgia Charter Schools Association annual job fair and website, PSC Job Fair, etc.

The Founding Board will be responsible for hiring through a formal interview process, supporting professional development, and monitoring and assessing performance for the Principal. The Founding Board will also be responsible hiring through a formal interview process, and monitoring and assessing performance for the Executive Director. The Governing Board shall delegate all other hiring decisions to the Principal and Executive Directors. Both Directors may utilize a Personnel Committee to provide recommendations.

All applicants will be required to submit a completed application and resume. Applicants that are invited to be interviewed will be interviewed using specific questions designed to screen their backgrounds, and to elicit specific types of responses related to experience, practice, and educational philosophy, which in turn meet the job description requirements. UAFA plans to maintain an extensive database of qualified applicants and will be able to fill any mid-year vacancies at the school in a timely fashion, if need be.

Teachers employed by UAFA will comply with NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals. However, UAFA reserves the right to hire teachers who are both non-certified as well as certified who have met the requirements of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Staff members responsible for instruction of core academic areas will be certified. Any person employed by UAFA, shall evidence working knowledge of, demonstrated skill in, and a commitment to, the purpose, vision, mission, and founding principles contained in this Charter, and the subject matter or skills of a job or position opening.

UAFA may employ or contract with skilled, selected non-certified personnel to provide instructional services (such as after programs) or to assist instructional staff members as teacher aides.

UAFA may employ or contract with skilled, selected non-certified personnel to provide instructional services (such as after programs) or to assist instructional staff members as teacher aides.

Recognizing the significant need within the state of Georgia for effective ESOL programs, UAFA will aggressively recruit teachers who are appropriately certified in ESOL. UAFA will require all teachers to provide the school with a copy of their teaching certificate. In addition, as part of the background check UAFA will perform on all new employees, we will confirm that their certification is valid with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

Background Checks

Extensive background reviews, including criminal background checks, will be performed to verify past experiences and to insure the safety of our students. This process will include the fingerprinting of all employees and others serving in an official capacity. UAFA will require volunteers who may have unsupervised contacts with students, and all board members to participate in annual criminal background checks and fingerprinting. All background checks and fingerprinting will include both the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) standards. UAFA shall use resources such as the local Sheriff's Office, local police departments, and/or the Federal Bureau of Investigators for conducting background checks. UAFA will not hire staff that would not be recommended for hiring by the GA DOE based on the results of the staff's criminal background check. And, Utopian Academy for the Arts will not offer contracts to staff before receiving their background checks.



Qualifications of Teachers Presented to Parents

It is planned that informational meetings be held to introduce parents to UAFA and its staff. As staff members are hired, they may be introduced to parents at subsequent meetings or via the newsletters and teachers' names, areas of expertise and certification information will be sent home in the UAFA's newsletters.

Compensation and Benefits

UAFA will be responsible for the payment of benefits, compensation and salaries. UAFA will pay teachers and non-instructional staff, at a minimum according to the state salary schedule. Stipends for ESOL-trained teachers will be paid in addition to their salaries. All payroll processes and procedures will be aligned with its existing practices and Georgia laws. UAFA's Business Manager will be responsible and will monitor the compensation package for all employees.

UAFA will contract with a State approved provider for medical benefits and payment into the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia. UAFA will also participate in the State Health Benefit Plan as provided in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-880 and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-910.

Professional Development

Opportunities for professional development will be an important component of UAFA in order to further the mission of the school and for the professional growth of our teachers. In order to provide comprehensive staff development training for teachers, funds will be allocated in the budget by the Board. Teachers will receive appropriate training prior to the start of the school year. Additionally, on-going training and support will be provided throughout the school year in response to needs assessments completed by teachers and administrators, as well as informed by data such as test scores and benchmark data. Teachers will also be trained to identify and respond to different learning styles. Knowing their own learning styles and those of their students will enable teachers to implement a variety of teaching strategies and assessments and will help to insure the academic success of all students.

UAFA will schedule staff workshops, seminars, interest group sessions, and individual sessions as appropriate for the topic, the school, and the faculty. UAFA will encourage its teachers to attend professional conferences related to their teaching responsibilities. In the daily and weekly schedule, UAFA will strive to provide time for informal, collegial discussions of teaching and learning.

In addition to professional development, the in-service training prior to the beginning of school will include an introduction to the rules, procedures, and policies of UAFA and the applicable district, state, and federal rules and regulations that school personnel will need to know. The Principal will review the Faculty Handbook with the faculty and will discuss such issues as attendance procedures, classroom management, safety procedures, and procedures for reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect.

Professional development will exist in the school throughout the year in formal and informal structures. During the two weeks before the first classes meet, half-day workshops will be scheduled to prepare teachers for the upcoming year while providing time for their individual needs in preparing their classrooms. During the school year, professional development sessions will be conducted during



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scheduled professional development days. The sessions will offer follow-up on topics covered during the opening meetings, respond to needs for additional or new training, and cover special interests that emerge during the year. At the end of the school year, sessions will be held to reflect on the previous year in order to determine the needs for and structure of professional development in the upcoming school year.

Evaluations

UAFA is committed to providing feedback to all employees to assist them professional growth. UAFA will align its staff evaluation process to enhance and promote teacher and leader effectiveness. As such, the Governing Board (Refer to Governance Section) will formally evaluate the Principal, Executive Director and Business Manager twice per year (December and May) and according to performance appraisal systems like Leader Keys, and/or the Charter School Leader Qualities and Quality School Standards, and performance against charter performance goals and objectives. Informal evaluations will be conducted throughout the year based on information gathered from a variety of sources including, but not limited to: observation, information provided to the Governing Board via regular reports, and parent, staff, and community surveys.

Certified staff will be formally evaluated twice yearly by the Principal. Informal observations will be conducted throughout the year based on information collected from a variety of sources including, but not limited to: observation, parent input, and student learning as evidenced by work samples, classroom and school-wide assessments, and standardized tests. The Principal will utilize an evaluation tool such as Teacher Keys, or a comparable measure.

Non-instructional staff will be evaluated by the Executive Director and/or Principal on a yearly basis using a tool utilized by the SBOE or developed by the UAFA Governing Board. All staff will perform a yearly self-assessment.

INSURANCE

UAFA will comply with all federal, state, and local rules, regulations, court orders, and statutes regarding insurance and protection of the physical health and safety of school students, employees, and visitors. UAFA will procure these insurances in the following categories and amounts:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| • General Liability | \$1,000,000 |
| • Board Insurance (Errors and Omissions) | \$1,000,000 |
| • Umbrella Coverage | Not less than \$3,000,000 |
| • Property Insurance | Based on Facility |
| • Auto Liability | \$1,000,000 |
| • Worker's Compensation | Based on Payroll |
| • Theft | \$500,000 |
| • Unemployment | Based on Payroll |

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(b)(5), the Clayton County Board of Education is included as an additional insured. UAFA shall hold harmless and indemnify Clayton County School District, the board of education, its members, officers and employees for every liability, claim or demand upon the charter

school; and the charter school petition shall contain a statement that the charter school agrees to defend and indemnify the Clayton County Board of Education in any action from the charter school's activities. The levels of insurance and bonding described in the petition will remain in effect and in full force throughout the term of the charter, unless changed by a charter amendment. Proof of insurance will be provided to the GA DOE upon request. Furthermore, UAFA's administrators and governing board will be appropriately bonded.

TRANSPORTATION

If and when the school is able to provide transportation for students, any vehicles or drivers used for transporting students will meet the same safety standards applicable to public schools in this State. Additionally, UAFA will comply with applicable laws: SBOE 160-5-3-.03, 160-5-3-.04, 160-5-3-.13, GADOE Assessment Contractor Supplement, and other district or state guidelines related to transportation. If UAFA intends to contract with a third party to provide transportations, UAFA will ensure that it is in compliance with O.C.G.A. 20-2-1090 and SBOE rule 160-5-3-.04.

UAFA will meet the needs of students whose IEPs include provisions for transportation. School operating funds have been allocated to meet this anticipated need.

JANITORIAL/MAINTENANCE SERVICES

UAFA intends to contract with a reputable janitorial/maintenance vendor to provide maintenance and janitorial services for the school facility and property. These services shall include, but are not limited to overnight cleaning, lawn work, pest control, plumbing, etc.

FOOD SERVICES

UAFA will advertise bids to local vendors in Clayton County and the greater, metropolitan Atlanta area for the food service program via advertisements in local newspapers and/or the school's website. UAFA intends to contract with a reputable food service vendor to prepare meals off site and then deliver them to the school. Meals will be provided at a cost to the parents who choose to participate in the breakfast and/or lunch program. The costs for each meal will be commensurate with the cost of breakfast and lunch at a local Clayton County public school. UAFA will provide meals including breakfast and lunch at free or reduced rates for students that qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. School meals will be wholesome, nutritious, and appetizing and will meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. UAFA will comply with all federal, state, and local policies, procedures, and requirements as they pertain to school nutrition.

Federal Eligibility Applications:

As a part of the school nutrition program, each school year, UAFA will provide Federal Eligibility Application forms for each student to determine free or reduced meal eligibility. These forms must be completed by each household and returned by UAFA to the State Department of Education following all procedures and timelines. Data from these forms will also be used to determine UAFA's eligibility for Title I funds. If a student population falls within the guidelines to be eligible to participate in the federal free and reduced price lunch program, the school will explore doing so within all the guidelines stipulated by such participation.



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UAFA plans to participate in the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program. UAFA will submit its own application to the State Department of Education and will be responsible for accurately counting meals and submitting financial reimbursement claims to the State Department of Education for meals meeting specified nutrient standards. The Business Manager at UAFA will oversee the management of the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program. He/she will be responsible for accurately counting meals and submitting financial reimbursement claims to the State Department of Education for meals meeting specified nutrient standards. The Business Manager will also be responsible for ensuring that UAFA meets all applicable code requirements for a school kitchen, including obtaining annual food service permits along with ensuring that the selected food service vendor is in compliance with all federal, state, and local policies, procedures, and requirements as they pertain to school nutrition.

UAFA will have a kitchen and dining facility in place that is architecturally designed to meet all applicable health regulations. In serving food, UAFA will be responsible for all state and local codes governing food service. UAFA will get a food service permit that allows for the storage, holding and serving of food that has been cooked elsewhere and transported by a properly-licensed caterer. The school will contract with a licensed caterer who provides a daily hot lunch that meets the NSLP guidelines. Breakfast will consist of prepackaged individual portions of milk, juice, cereal, fruit, etc. to comply with NSLP guidelines. UAFA will make the food service area available for inspection by the County. The food service area will comply with all state and local policies, procedures, and requirements.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Utopian Academy for the Arts (UAFA) recognizes that one of the cornerstones in the academic success of its students is the involvement of family and community members. It is our greatest desire to create a community school where parents and community members are an active part in the development and decision making of Utopian Academy for the Arts as much as possible. Our goal is to make a tremendous impact on both the quality of education received by the students at UAFA and the people and programs of which the Clayton County community is comprised. Founding Board members include individuals from the metropolitan Atlanta area including Clayton County, whom all share a passion for education reform and transformation in the Clayton County community. Additionally, parents and community members have been directly involved in the planning process and in developing the petition since its inception. Parents and community members are part of the group of initial incorporators. Parents and community members have contributed to the research, helped write the petition, and helped find a facility. We have been sure to invite participation and suggestions, in effort to create a petition that includes the voices and reflects the concerns of many parents of the Clayton County community. Parents were given anonymous surveys to determine their academic priorities, classroom configuration preference, desire for involvement, optimal school structure and so forth.

We will continue to nurture and grow community partnerships in order to ensure UAFA students have every opportunity to achieve and excel. Neighborhood businesses, local residents and others interested in our students' success will be welcomed partners at UAFA. We will also cultivate family engagement through official school communications and events, the Parent Teacher Association and outreach by the Executive and Principals, and Board of Directors. We will encourage community volunteers including local high school students and senior citizens to support our students in their quest for excellence. It is our belief that diversity adds to our strength, so significant efforts will be made to ensure the school is an inclusive environment for those who want to participate. Our goal is to design programs that create a sense of cooperation, trust and shared experiences that will transcend life at school and help to improve the entire community in which our students live.

DEMONSTRATION OF FISCAL FEASIBILITY AND CONTROLS

Utopian Academy for the Arts (UAFA) will not utilize the local school board for fiscal management and will exercise full autonomy over budgets and expenditures within the constraints of Georgia charter school law.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2068.1(c) it is further acknowledged that the proposed budgets will be calculated upon a projected enrollment. This revenue item will adjust to actual enrollment from projected enrollment upon the school's opening and enrollment. Adjustments will be made monthly (up or down) and FTEs by program will adjust at the October FTE count. Payments from state and local earnings will be paid monthly beginning July 1 through June 30th. Projected expenditures will adjust (up or down) to provide for actual instructional requirements and other expenditure items.

Financial Management and Accounting

There are three individuals responsible for the financial management of the Utopian Academy for the Arts. These are the Business Manager, Chief Financial Officer and CEO. The financial responsibilities are as follows:

- Business Manager: accounts payable, payroll, general ledger, reconciliation of accounts, production of financial statements, preparations for audits, accounts receivable, financial data entry (lunch and after-school programs, etc.)etc.
- Chief Financial Officer/CEO: approval of purchases, signing of checks, budget planning and overall financial responsibility.

The Business Manager will prepare and submit monthly financial statements to the Governing Board. The financial statements will include a balance sheet and a statement of revenues and expenditures reflecting year-to-date comparison with the Annual Budget. The financial statements will include the UAFA's actual expenditures and receipts, reported on a modified accrual basis of accounting. UAFA will submit monthly financial statements to the GA DOE in a format acceptable to the State within 30 calendar days after the end of each month. The financial reports may include, but are not limited to, the following information: balance sheet, income statement, statement of cash flow, BVA (budget versus actual), and notes regarding any extraordinary items. T

Internal Control and Management

UAFA will implement rigorous internal control policies. These policies will be reviewed by the Governing Board and Executive Director to ensure that they address legal compliance, conflicts of interest, signature authorities, government access to records, accounting procedures, cash management, budget development, financial reporting, property management, and procurement. UAFA will use a student information system like STI for its own internal management purposes. STI is a leading provider of education data management solutions to the K-12 market. STI's fully integrated suite of products addresses attendance, scheduling, demographics, discipline, grade reporting, health, fees, parent/teacher communications, special education, and assessment. STI makes data easily actionable, enabling user's use of funds, implement more effective education, and ultimately generate higher student achievement. All student records will be fully automated and available for audit as required. Cumulative files will also be available onsite for auditing purposes. Additionally, UAFA seeks to use an accounting software program such as MAS 200, which is password protected at the user level. Recommended by more

CPAs than any other application in its class, MAS 200 offers a broad selection of integrated business management and accounting solutions. UAFA plans to use this system to generate financial accounting data in the format required by the State of Georgia.

Additionally, the Governing Board will be responsible for establishing and maintaining a system of internal control in order to provide reasonable assurance that UAFA's assets are safeguarded against loss from unauthorized use or disposition, and that transactions are executed in accordance with management's authorization and recorded properly in the financial records. Specifically, controls will be established in the following areas:

- Revenues, accounts receivable, and cash receipts;
- Payroll;
- Expenditures, accounts payable, and cash disbursements;
- Budgeting and financial reporting;
- Risk management;
- School inventory.

Below is an example of some of the identified school-level risks and their associated methods of mitigation.

- Property Casualty: Maintenance Program; teacher supervision; Insurance
- General Liability: Administrator and teacher training; student supervision; Insurance
- Employer Practices Liability (including Teacher-Student Interaction): Administrator and teacher training and retraining; Insurance
- Employee Theft: Background checks, fingerprinting and drug testing; bonding of employees who handle cash
- Financial Reporting Misstatement: Monthly internal budget vs. actual reviews; annual external audit
- Attendance and Student Files Statistical Data: Random review and audit of student files; daily review of attendance reports; spot checking of class counts.

Budget

It is assumed, based on the provisions of the Charter Schools Act of 1998, as amended, that the GA DOE will provide UAFA with its allotment of Quality Basic Education earnings (QBE), applicable QBE grants, applicable non-QBE state grants, and applicable federal grants. In addition, it is assumed that the GA DOE will treat UAFA no less favorably than other public schools within the state with respect to the provision of funds for instruction and school administration, and, where feasible, transportation, food services, and building programs. UAFA will be provided its allotment of QBE funds monthly. The school will receive funding for teaching and experience based on what the school earns. UAFA charter school will comply with the Federal monitoring requirements for schools receiving Federal funds.

The initial estimated amount for each school year of this contract shall be established by no later than August 15 or as soon as feasible, unless delayed by the Georgia Department of Education.

The base funding amount shall be determined in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2068.1 and any other applicable laws.

State Funding

UAFA proposes that the SBOE will provide funding as per O.C.G.A. Section 20-2 2062(10) and 20-2-2068.1(c) and HB 797.

Funding sources may include, but are not limited to:

- Per-pupil local funding using the first 20-day student count
- Per-pupil instructional allowance
- Federal dollars available throughout the system-wide Food Service
- Department based on the number of free and reduced meals served
- Technology funds for special status
- School improvement plan funding
- Staff development
- Special Instructional Assistance (SIA) Funds
- Textbook/Title V, Part A funds
- Title I funds, if applicable
- Support staff
- Supplemented positions

State funding is determined by student full-time equivalency counts within the Quality Based Education weighted programs and applicable categorical grants pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-161.

School Level Revenue

As shown on the annual five year operating budget, and detailed on each respective operating year, UAFA plans to generate revenue from before/after school programs.

Contingencies

Utopian Academy for the Arts is committed to being prepared for the possibility that some key assumptions will be proven false. We understand that the first years for many charter schools hold surprises. Therefore, UAFA will attempt to end each year one with over \$30,000 of saved revenue. UAFA's Governing Board will also launch an aggressive capital campaign immediately following approval of the charter school.

Budget Surplus

UAFA will adhere to all of the statutory and regulatory requirements of managing federal funds and will comply with all financial and performance reporting requirements. Any surplus funds remaining at the close of one fiscal year will be used to enhance UAFA's academic performance the following year.

Budget Deficit

Any deficit occurring during or at the end of a fiscal year will be eliminated by an infusion of funds from the Utopian Academy for the Arts: Miller Foundation, Inc. Non Profit.

Cessation

In the unlikely event that UAFA may cease operation, the school and the Governing Board will notify the GA DOE immediately if the school is contemplating the cessation of operations, and will cooperate with the GA DOE to the extent necessary to provide an orderly return of the students to their local



schools. If UAFA ceases operations for any reason, the charter school personnel and its governing board will cooperate fully and be responsible for appropriately safeguarding and distributing the school's assets and closing the school's business and affairs. Should this occur, and the charter school does not have sufficient funds to pay its entire bill at the time it ceases operation, the GA DOE will not be responsible for the charter school's unpaid bills.

Financial Audits

UAFA will contract with a Georgia-licensed independent Certified Public Accountant to oversee financial processes and to provide yearly audits of UAFA's financial practices. As pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065 (b)(7), at least one audit per annum, as standard for all public school systems in Georgia, will be conducted by a Certified Public Accountant on the fiscal processes and finances of UAFA, and will meet GASB guidelines and will contain a complete asset inventory. The audit report, along with other financial data, will be submitted to the State Board of Education within 60 calendar days of the end of the charter school's fiscal year. The cost of the independent audit will be borne by UAFA.

Ancillary Funding

UAFA plans to supplement revenue by aggressively pursuing a variety of public and private grants, an on-going fundraising campaign and other sources of funding including corporations, individuals, foundations, philanthropic groups, or any other sources. The Governing Board, Executive Director, and Business Manager will be primarily responsible for applying for grants and soliciting charitable donations; however, instructional staff, as well as other school personnel, may also seek grant opportunities to benefit the school's instructional programs.

Fundraising

UAFA plans to form a fundraising committee to develop a process of identifying needs and various solutions to these needs. A report will be provided to the Governing Board routinely. The operation and support of UAFA will be the sole function of the corporation, and the corporation will not raise funds for any other purpose.

Donations

The Governing Board may accept charitable donations on behalf of UAFA. Such charitable donations shall not change the Annual Funding Amount.

DESCRIPTION OF GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Utopian Academy for the Arts: The Miller Foundation, Inc. shall be governed by a Governing Board. The Governing Board will have the following primary responsibilities:

- Implement and monitor the terms of the charter contract
- Have governing and policy-making authority
- Hire, support, monitor, and evaluate the Executive Director and Principal
- Legal and regulatory compliance
- Develop a strategic plan in collaboration with the school's leadership team
- Fulfill fiduciary duties in accordance with the UAFA By-Laws and applicable Georgia open meeting laws; O.C.G.A. 20-2-85.

As articulated above, the Governing Board will be responsible for monitoring and reporting the financial and educational success of the school. The Governing Board will delegate all day-to-day operational, administrative, and instructional responsibilities to the Executive Director and Principal. The school's instructional staff will report to the Principal, who, in turn, will report the overall academic performance of the school and the teachers at the scheduled Board Meetings of the Governing Board. The school's operational and administrative staff will report to the Executive Director, who, in turn, will report the overall operational performance of the school at the scheduled Board Meetings of the Governing Board.

Governing Board

The UAFA Governing Board is comprised of individuals with a strong commitment to creating a rigorous, community oriented and financially sustainable school serving grades 6-8. Board members include individuals whom all share a passion for education reform and transformation in the Clayton County community. The Board's primary role is to communicate the vision of the school to community members; provide input on educational, financial, and community support planning.

All governance board members (below) are applicants in this charter petition.

- Joshua Meniffee, Chair
- Reginald Colbert, Vice Chair
- Steven Garner, Board CFO
- Anthony Bryant, Board CFO Emeritus
- Terance Madden, Member
- Jamil Jude, Member
- Christopher Copeland, Member
- Stephany Walls, Member
- Gavin McGuire, Member
- Dr. Aquanette Salter, Member

The entire Governing Board will receive governance training annually from the Georgia Charter Schools Association on key issues relevant to charter school governance such as: duties and responsibilities (general and fiduciary), conflict of interest, developing policies, risk management, fundraising,

interacting with school administration, strategic planning, effective oversight and governance practices and evaluating the Executive Director and Principals. Each new Board member elected after the training will undergo an orientation to clarify the roles of each Board member and establish Board standards as an individual and as a member of the governing group. This structure provides Utopian Academy for the Arts the best opportunity to fulfill our goal of providing a high-quality education to the children of Clayton County. The makeup and structure of UAFA's Governing Board will reflect the interests of all community members, including parents, and other stakeholders and will include varied backgrounds and experiences required to effectively govern a public charter school.

The Governing Board shall be chosen from a selection of: educators, parents, school administrators, financial supporters, and community leaders, who bring personal and professional skills to the Governing Board. Some of the noteworthy skills would be persons with a variety of backgrounds including education, financial, legal, management, marketing, human resources, fundraising, and political expertise. The number of members on the Governing Board shall expand slowly; starting with 7 members growing to 9).

Composition: The Governing Board shall consist of not less than seven (7) and not more than nine (9) persons as follows:

- Three (3) founding or prior board members
- Three to Four (3-4) UAFA community representatives from organizations within Clayton County and/or those affiliated with the aims and mission of UAFA

Positions:

Board Chairperson, who must be an elected board member, shall be elected by the board each year and have the following responsibilities:

- Establish an annual calendar of meetings in conjunction with the Principal and Executive Committee.
- Establish the agenda for board meetings in conjunction with the Principal and Executive Committee.
- Conduct board meetings.
- Serve as liaison (with the Principal) between the school and the district office.
- Serve as a resource for the Principal, in an advisory capacity.
- Make final decisions on issues of parliamentary procedures, per Robert's Rules of Order.
- Ensure that the Governing Board's deliberations and decisions reflect UAFA's vision, mission, and beliefs/values/principles.
- Ensure that the Charter Contract is followed in all actions of the Governing Board.
- Ensure that ground rules and bylaws of the Governing Board are observed.
- Establish Committees of the Governing Board
- Ensure that each new board member will undergo an orientation to clarify the roles of each board member and establish board standards.

The Board Chairperson shall be not the Executive Director or Principal of UAFA during his/her term of office.

Vice Chairperson, who must be an elected representative shall be elected by the Board each year and shall have the following responsibilities:

- Assume duties of chair if he/she is absent.
- Assist the Chairperson in planning and conducting Governing Board meetings.
- Ensure that the Governing Board's deliberations and decisions reflect UAFA's vision, mission, and beliefs/values/principles.
- Ensure that UAFA's Charter is followed in all actions of the Governing Board.
- Ensure that the conduct, ground rules and bylaws of the Governing Board are observed.

Treasurer shall be elected by the Board and shall:

- Lead the Finance Committee
- Ensure that the Business Manager maintains regular books of account and establishes a system of adequate internal controls over financial accounting including recordation, synthesizing transactional data correctly, and preparation of monthly financial statements documenting sources and uses of funds.
- Oversee the preparation of an annual budget, in conjunction with the Executive Director, Principal, Business Manager, and finance committee.
- Provide recommendation to the Business Manager in the investment and reinvestment of funds, should there be a surplus of funds.
- Render to the Board and the members of the school community the current financial condition of the school.
- Coordinate with Executive Director and Business Manager to conduct an internal audit to ensure that routines and practices are working as planned.
- Recommend an auditing firm to be hired by the Board to review and audit the books

Secretary shall be elected by the Board and shall:

- Keep complete and accurate records of Board meetings.
- Record general proceedings, schedules, decisions, motions and resolutions, etc.
- Handle official correspondence of the Board.
- Maintain copies of the Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, the Charter, and School Insurance Policies.
- Provide a copy of the previous meeting's approved minutes to Board members and to the webmaster for posting on UAFA's web site.
- Prepare and disseminate board packets one week prior to board meeting.
- Maintain records on procedural issues.

In his/her absence, another Board member appointed by the Board Chairperson will serve in the capacity of Board Secretary.

School Director's role:

- Report academic and business information, as well as progress against charter objectives/goals to the Board.
- Provide input in scheduling and setting agendas for Board meetings.



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- Serve as liaison with the Board Chairperson between the school and the State Board of Education.
- Provide and post updated guidelines concerning federal, state, and county policies and regulations.
- Receive the Governing Board's directives and facilitate implementation where applicable.
- Support faculty and staff involvement in school governance.
- Act as a non-voting member of each committee, except where his/her evaluation, tenure, or salary is to be deliberated.

The Governing Board as a whole is responsible for:

- Implement and assure achievement of the mission and vision of Utopian Academy for the Arts
- Ensure long term financial sustainability and strategic planning initiatives are realized through resource development and fundraising
- Oversight of the business, property, and affairs of Utopian Academy for the Arts
- Review and appraisal of the School Director's performance
- Set, monitor, and enforce policy
- Measure accountability goals and objectives
- Approve the annual budget of anticipated income and expenditures, and prepare the annual financial audit report
- Approve the annual report to the State Charter Schools Division, to be made available to all parents of all students of Utopian Academy for the Arts, as well as other interested stakeholders
- Review the annual School Climate Survey and assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of the UAFA School Improvement Plan
- Interact with the Advisory Council (see below) to address the concerns of teachers, parents, students, and community members with respect to UAFA affairs
- Maintain written records of attendance and minutes of its meetings
- Nominate community replacements when member terms expire
- Ensure effective organizational and strategic planning

Elections:

Elections for community members will be held annually in June to fill open board seats for the upcoming board year, which runs from July 1 to June 30.

A governance committee, appointed by the Governing Board, shall actively recruit a committed, capable, and representative slate of candidates for open Governing Board seats.

Election of Community Representatives:

A governance committee, appointed by the Governing Board will identify individuals from the community for board membership. A meeting of parent representatives will be held, during which the Governing Board will:

- Introduce nominees
- Conduct balloting to select new Board members in rank order of votes received.

Election of Officers:

The Board Chair shall appoint a nominating committee consisting of both parent and community representatives to prepare a slate of officers for the following year such that the committee presents its recommended slate of officers for election no later than the August of the current term. The Chair may also allow for additional nominations at that time. The slate of officers, including Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Recording Secretary and Treasurer, will be considered “acting” until further ratification or election by the Governing Board duly elected for the new term at its first meeting of the new term in which a quorum exists.

Terms

The Governing Board selected during the first operational year shall serve one year, but majority of the board, which includes the officers, and Director, shall remain to complete two year terms. Thereafter, board member terms shall serve two years, such that one-half of the board rotates each year. Otherwise, board membership shall be limited to two consecutive two-year terms, or four (4) years. Previous board members shall be re-eligible for membership after a lapse of two years. The School Director’s term (as an ex-officio member) is limited to his/her tenure at UAFA.

Method of filling a vacant seat

- Once vacant, a founding board member’s seat shall be filled with no more than either one (1) community member, or parent. In other words, the board shall never have more than four (4) community members; and three (3) parents.
- If a Board member should for any reason be unable to complete his/her term, the remaining members shall elect a new representative.
- A seat shall be considered vacant if a member misses two consecutive, officially scheduled meetings without notice or misses a combined total of three meetings in any one school year. A member must be present in a Board meeting a minimum of one-half of the designated meeting allotted time to be considered having been present. The Board will consider any mitigating circumstances (i.e. illness or death) and make a determination by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board members. The vacated seat shall remain vacant until filled by the remaining members.
- A vacancy on the Board may be temporarily filled by a majority vote of the remaining members to elect a person(s) to fill the vacancy(ies) until the next annual Board meeting, at which time members so elected must be re-elected as specified in the Bylaws or step down from the Board as soon as his or her successor is duly elected and qualified.

Resignation and Removal

A Board member may resign by submitting his or her resignation in writing to the Board Chairperson. If the Board Chairperson seeks to resign, he or she may resign by submitting his or her resignation in writing to the Governing Board. A Board member may be removed with or without cause at a meeting by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the remaining members. Board Members being considered for removal shall receive at least two weeks’ notice of such proposed action and shall have the opportunity to address the Board regarding such action prior to any vote on such removal. Resignation and/or removal of a board member shall be a board meeting agenda item for before may take action.

Board Meetings

All meetings of the Board shall be held in accordance with the Georgia Open and Public Meetings Act (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq.) and Inspection of Public Records (O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq.).



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Regular Meetings

The Governing Board will hold one general business and legislative meeting per month. The chairperson, with a simple majority in agreement, may call additional meetings, as he/she deems necessary. Written notice of such meetings will be provided to faculty, staff, and parents/guardians.

Annual Meeting

The Governing Board will convene an annual meeting that will be held in June for the purpose of briefing the UAFA community on the accomplishments of the students during the current year. The annual meeting may be held in conjunction with other meetings or performances.

Proceedings

Proceeding of the Governing Board will be conducted to encourage the free exchange of ideas and the efficient consideration of business. No official business may be conducted without a quorum. A public meeting may be convened and discussion may take place without a quorum, but no motions or resolutions may be voted upon without a quorum. A quorum is defined to consist of a majority of current Board Members. When a quorum is present, a majority of the Board Members present may take any action on behalf of the Board. The Board will strive to reach consensus in all matters. If consensus cannot be achieved in a timeframe appropriate to the matter at hand, the matter will be tabled for future consideration.

Parents, staff members, and the community are invited to attend and offer their views and comments at Governing Board meetings at any time. In order to maintain an agenda, however, any member or non-member who would like to present issues (which lie within Board jurisdiction) before the Board are asked to notify the Board Chairperson, by means of one week's advance notice, in writing or by e-mail. The Board Chairperson will either place the issue on the agenda for the next meeting or redirect the issue to the School Advisory Council. A calendar of regular monthly meetings will be distributed to parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year, and will be published in the school's newsletter and on the school's website. All records of committee meetings including minutes, rosters, and recommendations will be available to staff and families for their review. Information will also be communicated through informal meetings, PTO, and scheduled informational meetings.

Forming a School Advisory Council

The School Advisory Council shall be a link between the school, the community, and the Governing Board. The School Advisory Council will consist of parents, Principal, teachers and community members. The School Advisory Council shall serve to make recommendations and/or provide key information and materials to the Governing Board. The School Advisory Council will not have authority to dictate policies of the school nor issue directives. It is designed to give parents a voice in the operations of the school. Its function is to both provide advice to the school leadership and surface concerns from parents, and communicate with and mobilize the larger school community. It may include representation of parents at each grade level. They will meet to discuss topics such as the volunteer needs of the school, advice on issues regarding the educational program (e.g., curriculum, extended day, use of technology), or the school atmosphere and culture. In addition, the council may also coordinate "town forum" meetings twice a year to get parent input and serve need of parents for information or discussion. This will serve as a mechanism for providing ongoing feedback to school leadership and



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governing board. In order to maintain consistency and productivity from year to year, it is suggested that the School Advisory Council members shall serve a minimum of two years.

Evaluations

UAFA is committed to providing feedback to all employees to assist them in growing professionally. As such, the Governing Board will formally evaluate the Executive Director and Principal twice per year. Informal evaluations will be conducted throughout the year based on information gathered from a variety of sources including, but not limited to: observation, information provided to the Governing Board via regular reports, and parent, staff, and community surveys. The Governing Board will utilize an evaluation tool that is comparable by Clayton County Public Schools. The Governing Board will also seek other evaluation tools to measure areas such as fiscal management, facilities, marketing/enrollment, etc. All new governing board members will be trained annually by the Georgia Charter Schools Association on how to evaluate the Executive Director and Principals according to selected evaluation tools.

Grievances and Complaints

Parents and Students

UAFA will establish an Advisory Grievance Committee to make non-binding recommendations to the Board concerning the disposition of complaints. The Grievance Committee shall have four members (two parents and two community representatives) who will serve one-year terms, with one member designated as chairperson by the other committee members. Committee members shall be appointed each year at the first Board meeting following the annual meeting. Grievance Committee members may serve no more than two consecutive terms on the committee. Parents will be directed to consult with their child's teacher if they have a concern or complaint. If the problem is not resolved at this level, they will consult with the Principal. Grievances brought from non-school parents will be directed first to the Principal. If the conflict persists, they will contact the Grievance Committee. If the conflict remains unresolved to the satisfaction of the parents, their complaint will be presented to the Governing Board during its monthly meeting. The Board will act in accordance with local regulations and state law, and adhere to the bylaws of the board. The Advisory Grievance Committee will meet on an "as needed" basis, per parent(s) complaint.

Employees

The process to be used to resolve UAFA employee and stakeholder complaints or grievances will be based on the chain of command established at the school. A teacher or other employees will meet with the Academic/Executive Director to address a concern; if necessary, the Academic/Executive Director will take the issue to the Governing Board. The board will make a determination based on the teacher's presentation of facts. Should the employee be a member of the Governing Board, he or she would not be allowed to vote on the outcome of the board's decision. Similarly, if the complaint is about the Executive/Principal, he or she (the Executive/Principal) would not be allowed to vote on the outcome of the board's decision.

The policies and procedures for resolving grievances and complaints will be presented at orientation meetings, PTA, and open houses, and will be a formal part of the board's adopted policies. All complaints and grievances will be addressed in a timely fashion.

Conflicts of Interest

The Governing Board for Utopian Academy for the Arts aspires to achieve the highest levels of professional excellence and service to the school and community in accomplishing its mission and goals. In furtherance of these goals, the Governing Board has adopted a policy that will protect the school's interest when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit (or appear to benefit) the private interest of a director or officer of Utopian Academy for the Arts. The Board Chairperson shall ensure all current and future Board members will sign Utopian Academy for the Arts Conflict of Interest forms each year prior to beginning their term. Any potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed at the time of signing the form.

The Board of Director's conflict of interest policy, as denoted in the Bylaws, is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state laws governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable corporations. In connection with any actual or possible conflicts of interest, any director, officer, or member of a committee with Board-delegated powers must disclose the existence of a direct or indirect financial interest and all material facts relating thereto to the Governing Board.

After disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts relating thereto, and after any discussion thereof, the director, officer or committee member shall leave the Board of Director's meeting while the financial interest is discussed and voted upon. The remaining Governing Board shall decide if a conflict of interest exists. After exercising due diligence, the Governing Board shall determine whether Utopian Academy for the Arts can obtain a more advantageous transaction or arrangement with reasonable efforts from a person or entity whose involvement would not give rise to a conflict of interest. If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably attainable, the Governing Board shall determine by a majority vote of the disinterested Directors whether the transaction or arrangement is in Utopian Academy for the Art's best interest and for its own benefit and whether the transaction is fair and reasonable to Utopian Academy for the Arts and shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement in conformity with such determination.

Legal Services

UAFA has procured the services of Robert L. Fortson, Esq. of Gilbert, Harrell, Sumerford & Martin, P.C. Mr. Fortson serves as a partner in Esq. of Gilbert, Harrell, Sumerford & Martin Consulting's state government relations group and also practices law with McGuire Woods LLP. He has experience in education, administrative law, and labor and employment matters. His practice focuses on advising local and state authorized charter schools on issues such as board governance, charter applications and renewals, employment issues, and contract negotiations with management companies and other vendors. He also represents local school board members and concerned citizens in matters related to board governance and school system accreditation.

Prior to joining Gilbert, Harrell, Sumerford & Martin, P.C., he served as counsel of for McGuire Woods LLP and Georgia360 Public Affairs and as a litigation and trial attorney with Turner Bachman & Garret. He has also served in various roles in and related to federal, state and local government, including stints in the legal counsel's office at the U.S. Department of Education and the Georgia Municipal Association, and a two-year clerkship for U.S. District Court Judge Thomas W. Thrash. Mr. Fortson received his J.D., magna cum laude, from the University of Georgia School of Law and was inducted into the Order of the Coif.



Mr. Robert L. Fortson will represent Utopian Academy for the Arts in any legal matters associated with the charter school renewal application for a charter with Clayton County Public Schools.

Effective Organizational Planning and Financial Stability

The Governing Board will ensure on-going training on fiscal sustainability and strategic planning from the Georgia Charter Schools Association for all Board members in order to properly exercise their areas of duties, and responsibilities. UAFA will demonstrate operational effectiveness and prudent financial management by operating within its means, maintaining an operating reserve and receiving a clean independent financial audit opinion each year.

Governing Board Governance Training

UAFA will engage the services of the Georgia Charter Schools Association to provide board development and training services. During the first year of operations, the UAFA governing board will attend quarterly training workshops on the following topics:

Quarter 1: Fundamental of Charter School Governance

Quarter 2: Monitoring the Mission: Fiscal, Academic and Operational Monitoring

Quarter 3: Strategic Planning Part 1

Quarter 4: Strategic Planning Part 2

After the inaugural year, the governing board will engage in a minimum of annual governance training to ensure compliance and full understanding of roles, responsibilities and best practices.

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

UAFA does not intend to contract, or has contracted for, the services of a for-profit entity or any other educational management agency.

FACILITIES

Utopian Academy for the Arts assumes the responsibility for finding a facility within UAFA's attendance zone. The site is located at 2750 Forest Parkway, Ellenwood, GA 30294 ("School Building"), and it allows for sufficient growth through the 5-year Charter term and beyond. The School Building is an existing facility, previously used as a traditional public school in Clayton County and is not in need of any necessary modifications for utilization for educational purposes. The School Building is freestanding on a 16+ acre campus. There are a total of two buildings on the property, including 35+ classrooms, a commercial kitchen, gymnasium, two cafeterias, media center, meeting spaces, athletic fields, playgrounds, and more.

Compliance with Codes and Certificate of Occupancy

UAFA will obtain the Certificate of Occupancy, demonstrating compliance with all building code standards, regulations, and accessibility requirements; fire marshal's approval, and state environmental and safety approvals in no later than 30 calendar days prior to the proposed opening date of school. The certification shall include, but not be limited to, a valid Certificate of Occupancy for the intended educational use, endorsed by the local authority having jurisdiction in the political subdivision where the proposed facility is located. Failure to submit the required certification prior to the 30 calendar days prior to the proposed opening date of the school will result in the delay of the school's opening until the following school year.

Ownership/Lease Documentation

Utopian Academy for the Arts shall obtain and submit to the GA DOE for review no later than 30 calendar days prior to the proposed opening of school: an executed copy of the lease agreement for the School Building, if the School Building is occupied under a lease agreement; or evidence of title to the School Building, if the School Building is owned by UAFA.

Emergency Safety Plan

UAFA will comply with all local and state policies related to health and safety, including evidence that the building has been approved by the local fire marshal. In compliance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1185, on an annual basis UAFA will prepare a school safety plan and submit it to the local offices of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) for approval no later than 14 days prior to the opening of the school to students for classes.



ANNUAL REPORTING

Utopian Academy for the Arts will provide an annual report to parents/guardians of students attending the charter school, and the Georgia State Board of Education. UAFA shall make copies of the annual report available to the community. The annual report will indicate the progress made in the previous year in meeting the performance-based goals identified in this charter and include all state-mandated assessment scores and state-mandated accountability scores and other necessary data (organizational effectiveness: financial, operational, satisfaction, etc.) as well as comply with all requirements set out in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2067.1(c) (1)-(6). In addition, a copy of the UAFA annual report will be available for all stakeholders. Utopian Academy for the Arts will report its progress in meeting goals and objectives by November 1 of each year, in accordance with the Charter School Act of 1998.