

Charter School Renewal Petition

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

July 1, 2024

CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL PETITION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Name of Charter School: ____Utopian Academy for the Arts Elementary School____

Current Grade Range: ____K-5____ Grade range at the end of the proposed charter term: ____K-5____

Expected enrollment at the end of the proposed charter term: ____300____

This petition was approved by _____Local Board of Education on _____, 20____

For each year of the proposed charter term, indicate the number of students the charter school plans to serve.

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Year 1	50	50	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	125
Year 2	50	50	50	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	175
Year 3	50	50	50	50	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	225
Year 4	50	50	50	50	50	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	275
Year 5	50	50	50	50	50	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	300

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 Elementary currently serves students in grades K-5 who reside in Clayton County.

Academic Performance: Utopian has met academic performance standards for each year of its current five-year charter contract. In the most recent year for which the CCPS has data available, 2023-2024, Utopian had higher content mastery, progress, and value-added scores than the comparison schools' scores.

Financial Performance: Utopian Academy has demonstrated financial viability since its inception. The school meets standards across both short-term and sustainability measures and consistently submits its annual independent financial audit before the required deadlines.

- (a) State the charter school's mission and describe why this initiative is important to the community it serves.
 - (b) Provide a brief description of any defining features of the school. Include a description of how stakeholders were involved in the petition process and how they will continue participating. (350 words or less)

Mission Statement: Through a structured and supportive environment, the Utopian Academy for the Arts will develop 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.

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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 elementary 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 learner needs.

UAFA also 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 continue to build upon a community network 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. Parents and community members have been directly involved in the planning process and in developing the petition since its inception. Parents and community members were a part of the group of initial incorporators. Parents and community members have also contributed to the research and have provided input which was inclusive of the petition composition.

2. Describe the charter school's academic program, specifically focusing on why it is innovative in your school district(s). Include mention of any waivers of state law and SBOE rule that are needed to implement the academic program. Be sure to describe any special characteristics of the charter school, such as a special population or some other feature(s) that enhance educational opportunities for students. (350 words or less)

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

- Implementation of Georgia Standards of Excellence for all grades K-5
 - Differentiating instruction (including gender-based classroom environments) 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 fine, dramatic, and media arts as a supplement to the core curriculum
 - 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
 - Committing to technology use and integration into the school's academic program and culture
3. Describe the charter school's organizational structure, specifically focusing on its innovation and need for flexibility, its general partnership structure with an Educational Service Provider (ESP), if any, and the school's community interest and need. (350 words or less)

The idea for this school was the result of matching a need with a solution. The rationale for the enrollment plan for Utopian Academy for the Arts is multi-fold and is supported by research. Utopian has developed a model to serve elementary school students based on: interests and support from current stakeholders and

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members of the local community; the desire to support the needs of academically challenged students; and the desire to scale, extending the impact of the Utopian Academy for the Arts program and educational model beyond middle school, to include elementary school students.

The demand for the expansion of the Utopian model in Clayton County has been consistent since the opening of the middle school program in 2014. Parents of elementary and middle-school aged children have desired for a pipeline in which students could have access to the Utopian model together.

Additionally, since the inception of its middle school program, Utopian Academy for the Arts has enrolled students from various elementary schools from across Clayton County. For each school year between 2014-2018, nearly 33% of each enrolled cohort of new students have entered without several foundational skills necessary to be successful in middle school and beyond; literacy and numeracy skills. We seek to address the root cause of this problem by expanding vertically to create a pipeline of preparedness for middle school that includes a rigorous elementary school experience.

As a charter elementary school, we also seek to provide an innovative model, while providing a significant educational benefit to our students, through the offering of gender-based classroom environments; and supplemental arts instruction in the areas of theatre, dance, general music, chorus, visual art, photography, and filmmaking; non-traditional areas not typically offered at the elementary school level.

Utopian Academy for the Arts does not intend to contract or has contracted for the services of a for-profit entity or any other educational management agency. 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 on the overall operational performance of the school at the scheduled Board Meetings of the Governing Board. The Governing Board of Utopian Academy for the Arts will be responsible for monitoring and reporting the financial and educational success of the school to the Clayton County Public Schools.

PERFORMANCE FROM CURRENT CONTRACT TERM

1. Complete and attach as Exhibit 5 the Accountability Report available on the OCSC website to show the school's performance during each year of the current charter term and include with the Renewal Petition. This Accountability Report will be presented to the SBOE with the petition. Please ensure it is accurate. As per Allen Mueller there is not an Accountability Report template available.
2. Page 9 Provide a narrative describing how the charter school performed in meeting the academic and organizational goals set forth in its current charter contract. In the narrative:
 - Address the school's performance in each year of the current charter term.
 - The petitioner is urged to include any supporting charts, tables, or graphs that provide quantitative data.
 - If the charter school did not meet all of the goals in its charter contract, explain any mitigating factors to which this can be attributed, and explain specifically how the school plans to address these areas of low performance in the proposed charter renewal term.
3. Page 11 Describe the school's current financial situation. In the description:
 - Include an explanation of financial results.
 - Detail any financial successes or struggles the school experienced during the current charter term. Include any instances of fraudulent behavior or accusations of fraudulent behavior by school staff, governing board members, or anyone else associated with the school.
 - Explain how the school will address any struggles discussed above as well as any outstanding debts, if approved for renewal.
 - Explain how the school will allocate any surplus funds.
4. Page 12 Provide a brief overview of the school's current governance structure. In the description, please include:
 - Specific examples of decisions the governing board has made on behalf of the school;
 - Specific examples of decisions the school leader has made on behalf of the school;
 - How the governing board holds the school leader, any charter partners (ESP/CMO/EMO), and any independent contractors accountable; and
 - The governing board's training program for the current and proposed charter term. Attach as Exhibit 6 a copy of the board's Governance Training Plan.
5. Page 14 Describe how the school provides state- and federally-mandated services to students with disabilities. Reciting the requirements of law and rule is insufficient. The description must include the school's practices and procedures to:
 - Evaluate and identify students with disabilities;
 - Develop, review, and revise Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);
 - Integrate special education into the general education program;
 - Ensure that the school facility meets the requirements of other related laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act;
 - Address student discipline;
 - Handle programming disputes involving parents;
 - Ensure confidentiality of special education records;
 - Coordinate with the district regarding service and placement determinations;

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- Purchase services from special education vendors or to contract with your local district to provide a continuum of special education services and how this arrangement will work; and
 - Secure technical assistance and training.
6. Page 20 Describe how the charter school provides state- and federally-mandated services for English Learners (ELs). Reciting the requirements of law and rule is insufficient. Your description must include the diagnostic methods or instruments that are used to identify and assess those students, as well as the instructional program that is provided to ELs.
7. Page 27 Provide the number and percentage of students receiving In-School Suspensions, Out-of-School Suspensions, or Expulsions during the current charter term (e.g., the past 5 years). How does this discipline and dismissal data compare to district and state data?

	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic		%		%		%
American Indian		%		%		%
Asian / Pacific Islander		%		%		%
Black / African American		%		%		%
White		%		%		%
Two or More Races		%		%		%
Total Population						

8. Page 27 Describe in detail how the charter school's students, governing board, faculty, and staff reflect the socio-demographic diversity of the community served by the charter school. If the charter school does not reflect the community's diversity in one or more areas listed above, provide a comprehensive plan to address this need for diversity. Included in such a plan could be, for example, the use of targeted recruitment or the use of a weighted lottery to provide an increased chance of admission for educationally disadvantaged students pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1) and State Board Rule 160-4-9-.05(2)(g).
9. Page 27 Describe in detail any difficulties faced during the current charter term that were not already addressed above, how the school dealt with such difficulties, and if they remain an issue for the school. Also explain how the school plans to avoid these difficulties during the proposed charter renewal term.

PROPOSED CHANGES

10. If the answers given above to questions 1 - 9 reflect a change to any of the following, please provide the rationale for the change:
- A. Page 28 **ACADEMIC CHANGES:**
- The academic program and curriculum.
 - The use of waivers/innovations.

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- School programs – this includes Students with Disabilities, Gifted and Talented, English Learners, etc.
- Any assessments being used.
- Any administrative positions.

B. Page 29 **GOVERNANCE CHANGES:**

- The school's governance structure.
- The school's governing board composition, including its diversity.
- The school's relationship with an Educational Service Provider or other Charter Partner.
- The relationship with the local district.

C. Page 29 **FINANCIAL CHANGES:**

- The school's financial structure.
- The school's Chief Financial Officer.
- The school's relationship with any major creditors (e.g., landlords, investors etc.)

D. Page 29 **OPERATIONAL CHANGES:**

- The school's facilities – this should include any proposed expansions or renovations.
- The school's attendance zone and any enrollment priorities being used (see O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1)).
- Whether the school's students, faculty, and staff reflect the diversity of its attendance zone.
- Whether the school will utilize a weighted lottery to provide an increased chance of admission for educationally disadvantaged students pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1) and State Board Rule 160-4-9-.05(2)(g).
- Any services provided to students, such as transportation, food service, etc.
- The grades the charter school will serve. Please note this includes adding additional grades or reducing current grades.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

11. Page 29 Briefly describe how the school has and will continue (with its proposed changes) to serve the needs of its students for the proposed charter term.

PERFORMANCE FROM CURRENT CONTRACT TERM

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS					
YEAR	GRADE	LVL.1	LVL.2	LVL.3	LVL.4
2023	3RD	36%	34%	19%	10%
2024	3RD	49%	26%	23%	2%
2024	4TH	36%	43%	17%	5%

MATHEMATICS					
YEAR	GRADE	LVL.1	LVL.2	LVL.3	LVL.4
2023	3RD	22%	47%	28%	3%
2024	3RD	32%	49%	19%	0%
2024	4TH	30%	54%	11%	5%

Performance Narrative

UAFA Elementary opened as a K-1 school and scaled within its first term as a K-5 grade band. In its inaugural year, the goals set for its scholars were in Literacy and Math to score in the range of proficiency and distinguished using GMAS. I-Ready and Map assessments were used as internal benchmarks. After setting a baseline for its students, the goal was to increase by 5% in both Literacy and Math. By the end of the first year, the goal was met for K-1 by using the aforementioned data. The impact of COVID-19 during the first year hindered the ability for a consistent, realistic, engaging learning environment for all scholars due to virtual learning. We, along with the district, elected to continue virtual learning for the remainder of the school year. The

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inability to adequately give additional support (face-to-face) for our scholars created gaps. The 1st-grade students who attended UAFA Elementary in its inaugural year were also the first students to take the Georgia Milestones in their 3rd-grade year. A baseline was established, and Utopian elementary scholars outperformed CCPS in content mastery and readiness for the academic years 22-23 and 23-24. The other two areas scored as follows:

CLOSING THE GAP	
YEAR	PERCENTAGE
2022-23	NA (BASELINE)
2023-24	0.0

READINESS	
YEAR	PERCENTAGE
2022-23	NA (BASELINE)
2023-24	+2.9%

After an analysis of the data was conducted, there were qualitative factors that impacted student achievement. Despite the school leadership's ability to monitor the progress of student achievement leading up to the GA Milestones, the necessary additional interventions and remediation could not be conducted due to a lack of funding. Teacher quality on grade level for tested content had an impact. Of the 5 teachers in grades 3 and 4, only two were certified and experienced to provide the instruction necessary to address the myriad of gaps illuminated by the pandemic. Lastly, the implementation of small group instruction could not be executed fidelity due to limited or adequate breakout spaces.

The evidence of the factors listed above has birthed a strategic plan to focus on teacher quality and ongoing targeted professional development for instructional staff. Building leadership will target differentiated instructional strategies through additional support from Metro RESA. Building leadership will utilize the TKES instrument and monitor instruction with fidelity. Targeted walk-throughs will be conducted for “look-fors,” and constructive, timely feedback will take place during their planning. UAFA Elementary will also incorporate vertical planning and cross-curricular expectations to ensure a comprehensive and long-term approach to student outcomes, which will shift from a year-end perspective to a K through 5 model of readiness.

Current Financial Status

The attached spreadsheet illustrates a five-year projection. We started year 1 of the renewal with three hundred (318) students. We assume for the next 4 years there will be a 50-student increase and a 25-student yearly increase in year 5. At the same time, we seek to maintain a student-teacher ratio of 23 to 1 to meet the minimum funding requirement. This is how we developed the assumptions to determine the revenue we would generate. The average teacher's salary was based on current compensation while also anticipating a 2%-4% increase, per year. Personnel, instruction, services, supplies, and facility expenses were projected based on historical data from the first contract term.

During the current charter term, there were a couple of challenges. One of the most critical challenges was losing funding for food services in 2022. Furthermore, our facilities presented a challenge due to the age of our facility. Our school building required repairs and revitalization in key areas such as the HVAC system and a need to install structures to provide adequate security. Lastly, we didn't have adequate spaces to provide the dramatic arts experience intended or space to deliver additional small group and breakout models for enrichment and remediation purposes.

Despite the challenges faced, through perseverance, collective problem-solving, and philanthropic grantmaking, Utopian Academy for the Arts Charter Network (UAFCN) has been able to meet each challenge head-on. Although we lost funding for food services, we still met the needs of our students. There wasn't a decrease in the quality or the amount of food provided for the students. Through our receipt of grants and operational funds, we were able to purchase equipment, furniture, and supplies to adequately support our student and faculty growth. In addition, we were able to establish security enhancements, including security doors and cameras throughout the school, and make major repairs. Among all that was done, we were able to construct the Black Box Theater where we hold our performances. The growing pains that have come with student enrollment due to limited facility space will be met through the purchase of portable units, which can be obtained through the facilities grant offered by the Georgia Department of Education. Since we share the building with the middle school, we were able to leverage the economies of scale for the operation of the building and expenditures such as utilities and maintenance.

Lastly, since UAFA Elementary's opening, we have had an independent audit each year. We are operating in compliance with county policies and procedures. Any surplus funds will be rolled over to the subsequent school year to help fund anticipated growth.

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.

Specific examples of decisions the governing board has made on behalf of the school:

The Governing Board has the final review and approval of the annual operating budget, school calendar, the faculty and staff handbook, employment contracts, and financial agreements with a threshold that exceeds \$25,000.

Specific examples of decisions the school leader has made on behalf of the school:

As the building Leader of UAFA Elementary, Dr. Selena Walton has made staffing recommendations, proposed targeted professional development, established achievement goals, requested facility-based resources, determined instructional-based resources, recommended additional academic support, and added progress monitoring tools (Beacon & Amira) during the first charter term. Dr. Walton effectively makes comprehensive data-driven decisions prior to requests from the board throughout her tenure as the inaugural principal of UAFA Elementary.

How the governing board holds the school leader, any charter partners (ESP/CMO/EMO), and any independent contractors accountable:

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. Under the guidance of the Governing Board, the Executive Director provides support to the principal through informal and formal network leadership meetings and monthly site-visits. The Governing Board has developed an academic committee chaired by a founding board member to provide guidance, monitor progress toward strategic planning goals, and serve as a thought partner to address academic concerns in concert with the building leader. The Governing Board requires a report from the building leader monthly to note student growth and performance.

The Leadership Key Evaluation tool (LKES) has been adopted as the evaluation instrument to serve as guidance for the Executive Director and establish clear expectations of performance and professionalism. Informal evaluations are 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.

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For all charter partners and independent contractors the CEO/Executive Director receives reports to monitor the progress, the impact of the partnership, and scope of work contracted throughout the term. This information is shared with the board for further oversight and recommendations.

Board Training

The governing board's training program for the current and proposed charter term. All new governing board members will be trained annually by the State Charter Schools Commission and the Georgia Charter Schools Association on how to evaluate the Executive Director and Principals according to selected evaluation tools.

STATE AND FEDERALLY MANDATED SERVICES

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

It is the policy of Utopian Academy for the Arts Charter Network (UAFACN) to provide a free and appropriate education to each enrolled student. UAFA Elementary will provide a full continuum of services to students with disabilities to the same extent as other schools in the state of Georgia. UAFACN 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. UAFACN 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, UAFACN has employed a full-time, experienced, and fully certified Special Education Coordinator. UAFACN will add additional staff as needed based on the actual caseload that is present at UAFA Elementary. The Special Education Coordinator works 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 but also for costs associated with instructional materials and transportation. UAFA makes budget and staffing revisions based upon actual student enrollment. The budget is adjusted for students with disabilities according to the services they require.

Least Restrictive Environment

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.” The statute is clear that students 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 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:

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

Before 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 manifestation 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.

The IEP team discusses the following 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.

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.

Pre-Referral Process

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.

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 the 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. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Facility Requirements

UAFA will make adaptations to school facilities, to the maximum extent appropriate and within provisions of the law, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), to ensure that students with disabilities enrolled in the School will be educated in the least restrictive environment.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Students are classified as English Language Learners (ELL) when they primarily speak another language at home and their limited English abilities impede their learning in school. As such Utopian Academy for the Arts (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. 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). Service delivery models include a “pull-out program,” which UAFA will use for gifted/LD students and will use for ELL.

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
 - 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?

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- 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.

Suggested Placement Procedures

Scheduling of ESOL Students

ESOL students will be 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

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.

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.

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

The regular education teacher needs 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 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.

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	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	0	%	0	%	0	%
American Indian	0	%	0	%	0	%
Asian / Pacific Islander	0	%	0	%	0	%
Black / African American	0	%	0	%	0	%
White	0	%	0	%	0	%
Two or More Races	0	%	0	%	0	%
Total Population						

In comparison to the district, throughout the term, UAFA Elementary has not had any suspensions or expulsions for all demographics and subgroups attending UAFA Elementary. Through a hands-on approach, a culture of restorative practices, and leadership that has established an open line of communication with all stakeholders, expectations are clear. Moreover, the standards, procedures and expectations are approached collectively. The incidents that have occurred required redirection, parent contact, and opportunities for reflection and redemption without loss of instruction or a change of placement for all subgroups.

UAFA Elementary's students, governing board, faculty, and staff have been a direct reflection of the larger Clayton County community. The network intends to hire not only those who have a heart for children but also possess an understanding of who we serve. Consequently, ensuring positive relationship building, empathy, and an appropriate level of ownership in the success and setbacks of students and the families served. With every hiring opportunity UAFA Elementary leadership and the Charter Network at large seeks candidates who not only reflect the community but the greater diversity of the American landscape.

Describe in detail any difficulties faced during the current charter term that were not already addressed above, how the school dealt with such difficulties, and if they remain an issue for the school. Also explain how the school plans to avoid these difficulties during the proposed charter renewal term.

TEACHER QUALITY

Nationwide, there has been "a cost" due to the pandemic that continues to impact education, particularly teacher quality. Attracting lifelong educators who enter the profession led by purpose and passion is no longer the dominant landscape of candidates. Although we exercise the waiver to hire teachers without certification, finding

highly qualified candidates is an area of need. Furthermore, teacher retention and underlying factors that contribute to attrition and retention are amplified by varying classifications of by the candidate's perception of “quality of life.” Given this challenge, our approach to recruitment and retention is a nuanced process that demands an intentional and individualized strategy. UAFA Elementary has been fortunate to have a minor turnover in staff and has made every endeavor to ensure that those who are entrusted with delivering instruction to our scholars represent the standard and can execute the mission and vision of the greater charter network.

Leadership has identified an enormous degree of support that non-certified teachers need in comparison to certified teachers. To meet this challenge and to better serve teachers where they are, as a network, UAFA created a role that specifically supports new teachers from orientation to targeted support throughout the year. Initially, UAFA Network hired an Instructional Coordinator. Unfortunately, funding eliminated that role. Currently, an Instructional Coach serves as a coach for the network to assist with lesson planning, time management, resource development, developing class culture and norms, establishing the physical classroom setting, and perseverance and grit. As a result, the various needs for the number of teachers in the network make it difficult for one person to adequately provide support. Supporting scholars with varying needs, talents and strengths for any teacher is a challenge. Establishing a firm foundation, making learning curve adjustments, and obtaining resources necessary for success can become a monumental task for one (Network) coach.

As a locally authorized charter, receiving resources from Clayton County to aid in professional development for our teachers, in addition to the support of the instructional coach, can be the value add necessary to address this challenge.

PROPOSED CHANGES

ACADEMIC CHANGES

After the implementation of the school model and innovation during the first term, some consideration for proposed changes lends to the discontinuation of gender-based grouping. Enrollment numbers make it difficult to

maintain the integrity of gender-based grouping. Enrollment numbers create class sizes that are imbalanced. Furthermore, training is needed to plan and teach content-specific for gender-based grouping adequately.

To align with the district, UAFA Elementary will transition from using SAVAS as the curriculum resource to delivering Reading, English Language Arts and Science content to HMH. To assist with academic achievement, growth, and development, UAFA Elementary will add Beacon and AMIRA testing as a tool to monitor student progress. Moreover, UAFA Elementary will continue with quarterly benchmark cycles and include a bi-weekly cycle to more accurately capture areas for growth and adjust for remediation and acceleration.

To increase engagement and exposure for our scholars, UAFA Elementary will add an Introduction to Animation course to its curriculum. This addition will provide a foundation and rich experience aligned with opportunities offered at UAFA Middle and High schools.

UAFA Elementary will add a Math Coach to focus on student needs and address Math gaps for the 2025-26 school year.

GOVERNANCE CHANGES: There will be no changes to the governance of UAFA Elementary

FINANCIAL CHANGES: There will be no changes to the finances of UAFA Elementary

OPERATIONAL CHANGES: There will be no changes to the operations of UAFA Elementary

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Briefly describe how the school has and will continue (with its proposed changes) to serve the needs of its students for the proposed charter term.

UAFA Elementary has hit the ground running. UAFA Elementary has provided a safe place and environment for scholars to learn. It has also provided opportunities for scholars to be exposed to the performing arts and media arts. The experiences scholars have provided have given them a strong foundation that will propel them toward a path that will empower them to be successful now and in the future. UAFA Elementary has been mission-focused, and the leadership has created a consistent strategy of accountability and support that is creating an infrastructure for scholars to achieve. Despite the reality of the challenges faced. UAFA Elementary makes

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data-driven decisions and adjusts to do what is best for scholars. UAFA Elementary seeks to ensure that all of its scholars grow, compete, thrive, and succeed through cultural and academic experiences daily.