

MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT



Charter Schools Petition Process

In alignment with State Board Rule 160-4-9-.05, start-up charter school applicants must follow the below timeline if they are interested in opening a charter school within the boundaries of the Muscogee County School District (MCSD).

Annual Timeline

- **At least 6 months prior to submitting a petition** – An applicant interested in opening a start-up charter school within Muscogee County must submit a letter of intent to the Office of Charter School Compliance (OCSC) and to the office of MCSD’s Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Tim Smith (smith.timothy.s@muscogee.k12.ga.us)
 - The letter of intent must be submitted using the OCSC template
 - Failing to submit a letter of intent shall not preclude an applicant from submitting a petition if the applicant receives a waiver from both the OCSC and MCSD
- **By September 1** – MCSD must make and publish on the district website any needed revisions to this process (if applicable)
- **By January 1** – The final start-up charter school petition is due via email to MCSD’s Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Tim Smith (smith.timothy.s@muscogee.k12.ga.us) and skipworth.deborah.j@muscogee.k12.ga.us
 - The applicant must use the OCSC start-up charter school petition template
 - Once submitted, a 90-day window starts where MCSD will review the petition and submit to the local Board for approval or rejection
 - During the review process, if a petition is deemed to be complete and meets legal requirements, the applicant will attend a panel interview to determine the overall capacity to sustain operations of a high-quality charter school with regard to academics, operations, governance, finance, and compliance with all non-waivable laws, rules, and guidelines
 - The petition must be placed in one of the following groups:
 - **Rejection Group** – there are irreparable flaws and the petition is being rejected for the current year (this group does not require an interview)
 - A rejection letter will include a statement explaining the legal insufficiency of the petition
 - A new petition can be submitted in the following year’s review cycle
 - **Revision Group** – requires substantial and material revisions before it can be recommended to the MCSD Board for a vote (this group does not require an interview)
 - MCSD will provide a letter explaining an additional 30 days will be provided to the applicant to make required material revisions – the letter will include mention of MCSD’s agreement to the applicant granting MCSD 90 additional days to accept or reject the revised petition
 - If the applicant chooses to make the required material revisions, they will have one opportunity to resubmit within 30 days, and their resubmittal letter will include mention of the applicant granting MCSD 90 additional days to accept or reject the revised petition

- Applicants failing to submit a revised petition within the 30-day extended period will not be able to resubmit until the following year's review cycle
- **Clarification Group** – requires clarification and supplemental information (this group does not require an interview)
 - MCSD will issue a letter explaining what clarification and/or supplemental information is needed – the letter will include mention of MCSD's agreement to the applicant granting MCSD 90 additional days to accept or reject the revised petition
 - If the applicant chooses to provide the required clarification and/or supplemental information, they will have one opportunity to resubmit within 30 days, and their resubmittal letter will include mention of the applicant granting MCSD 90 additional days to accept or reject the revised petition
 - Applicants failing to submit a revised petition within the 30-day extended period will not be able to resubmit until the following year's review cycle
- **Approval Group** – after an internal review and panel interview with the applicant, the petition demonstrates near-perfect quality and compliance
 - No other action is required from the applicant regarding approval
- **Within 90 days of a petition submission (and no later than June 30 without OCSC approval)**
 - MCSD School Board must, by majority vote, approve or deny any petition meeting the preceding timeline requirements
 - If the Board fails to vote within this time period it is considered an indirect denial
- **30 days after a vote of approval**
 - If a petition is approved by the School Board, MCSD must submit a copy of the approval to the OCSC and a notice of approval to the petitioner
- **20 days after a vote of denial**
 - If a petition is denied by the School Board, MCSD must provide a detailed statement explaining the denial through the elements set forth in state statute to the petitioner, the State Board of Education, and the OCSC
 - The explanation shall specifically state the reasons for denial and include a list of deficiencies
 - If the Board cites that approval is not in the public interest, an explanation will be provided of what is not in the public interest
 - MCSD or the applicant may request mediation by submitting a written request to the State Board of Education within 30 days of the final denial – if the other party agrees to mediation a mediator will be assigned and the costs will be evenly shared by MCSD and the applicant
- **Pre-Opening Period**
 - A notice of approval triggers a pre-opening period (minimum 6-month period), or time of preparation, prior to receiving students

Questions?

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