

DCSD Charter School Application
Evaluation Standards
2021

APPLICATION MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

This section is not evaluated.

NEW CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION AND EVALUATION STANDARDS

INTENT TO APPLY

1. Letter of Intent

This section is not evaluated.

ASSURANCE CHECKLIST

1. ASSURANCE CHECKLIST

Check for completion.

CHARTER APPLICATION

A. Executive Summary

This section summarizes the key points of the proposal for the reviewers to prepare them for the upcoming content and is no more than two to three pages.

A concise summary of the core sections of the application that includes: mission and vision, grades served the first year and at full build out, target student population and community, educational philosophy and program, professional development, and school governance and leadership.

B. Vision & Mission Statements

This section reflects the school's mission and vision statements as developed and agreed upon by the members of the founding committee and the school community once the school is formed. These statements should answer the questions, "What is the purpose for the school and what is the applicant team's vision for the school?" An explanation should be given as to the process and impetus for developing both the Mission and Vision Statements.

The vision statement articulates what the school hopes to be, but not how the school will reach that vision. The statement is focused on the future (5-10 years). It concisely and succinctly defines what the school looks like when it is "all grown up."

The mission statement articulates clear guiding purposes and priorities that are meaningful, measurable, and attainable, and explains how the school will reach its vision.

C. Goals, Objectives & Pupil Performance Standards

This section focuses on the specific outcomes anticipated for the school and its students within the terms of the charter (usually four or five years). The majority of the goals and objectives are focused on specific student outcomes (pupil performance or educational performance goals); others are broader school-based goals and objectives (organizational and management performance goals).

- *All goals are written as “SMART” goals, which means they are: Specific, Measurable, Ambitious and Attainable, Reflective of and Relevant to the School’s Mission, and Time-Specific with a Target Date*
- *Goals demonstrate an understanding of and strategy for complying with state and district achievement and reporting requirements including those related to accountability reporting and Accreditation.*
- *Goals reflect the unique aspect of the application. Specific measures and metrics for monitoring these additional goals are included.*

D. Evidence of Support

This section provides detail on the student population to be served, how the founding committee has reached out to parents of targeted students, how many parents have expressed interest in the school by submitting Letters of Intent to Enroll, and what community organizations, colleges and universities, nonprofits, and local groups are in support of the school as evidenced through Letters of Support.

- *Describes the student population based on publicly available demographic data including racial/cultural, socioeconomic, special needs, ELLs, and achievement data for the proposed school’s area and comparable schools. The educational program reflects an understanding of the identified student population.*
- *Identifies community members and leaders who are in support of the school and current and future partnerships, including the role in the school pre and post school opening. Letters of Support or draft Service Agreements are provided as an attachment.*
- *Captures the types of outreach the founding committee conducted to make the student population, their families and community members aware of the proposed charter school. Outreach is diverse and designed to reach target population. A timeline is included to reflect ongoing outreach, student recruitment, next steps, and the current number of Intent to Enroll forms.*

E. Educational Program

This section details an effective, well thought out, research-based educational program that aligns with the school’s mission, goals, and the student population, and the state Common Core standards.

Educational Program Model and Philosophy

- *Cites research or academic history of school model the school is replicating or adapting.*
- *Aligns to the mission and vision statements, target population, school culture, and frames the context for choosing the curriculum, instructional practices, interventions, evaluations, and all components for the educational plan.*
- *If using an established/recognized school-wide program/model, provide research and history of academic success with similar student population. If evidence is not available, the applicant explains why the proposed program is likely to be successful.*

Curriculum and Alignment

- *Describes how the curriculum is aligned to the mission and vision of the school and tailored to meet the needs of the target population based on demographic and academic performance data. The curriculum meets district standards and is aligned across all subject areas.*
- *Provides an overview of all subjects to be taught at each grade level and cites alignment to the state academic content standards. This includes the curricular framework, along with the appropriate levels of detail for objectives, content, and skills for each subject and for all grades the school will serve.*

Instructional Strategies

- *Provides the methods and systems the teachers will use to inform instruction and to meet the needs of all students coming into the school with varying educational backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles.*
- *Explains how the Response to Intervention (RtI) model will be incorporated into the school's instructional program for all students.*
- *Describes classroom culture, learning environment, class size, and tools used to prepare and structure lessons. Describes how teachers incorporate common elements in their planning, such as learning objectives, academic vocabulary, essential questions, and differentiated student activities.*
- *Demonstrates how the inaugural staff will be trained the summer before school starts. This includes the number of professional development days, proposed schedule, and topics covered to implement the educational plan, and build the school culture. Training for SPED, ELL, and GT students are incorporated into all topics.*
- *Identifies the person(s) or organization(s) that will provide professional development to the staff and includes the frequency of the training and topics to be covered. Ongoing evaluation data is used to modify and enhance trainings.*

Structure and Supplemental Programming

- *Confirms if after school or summer school will be offered and the criteria for selection of participants, times of operation, and the number of students that may attend.*
- *Demonstrates that chosen programs are aligned to the mission and vision, educational philosophy, and the curriculum.*
- *Identifies the faculty, staff, or partnership organization that will oversee and provide services. Provides evidence of adequate funding for the program(s).*
- *Annual calendar and daily schedule reflect the minimum number of hours required by the state and notes whether the proposal includes an extended day/year.*
- *The daily schedule gives the length of the school day with the start and dismissal times and the hours and minutes/day and week dedicated to academic instruction per grade. A "day in the life" description for both students and teachers is included.*

F. Plan for Evaluating Pupil Performance

This section expands on the Goals, Objectives, and Pupil Performance Standards by defining how the school will determine whether it is meeting its goals. It focuses both on internal assessments used to drive instructional decision-making, as well as external assessments used to communicate academic achievement and growth to stakeholders.

- *Defines how/what standardized tests the school will use to gather baseline data on all students.*
- *Identifies timelines for the administration of Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) (which include the Colorado Summative Assessment of Science and Social Studies and the PARCC Mathematics and English Language Arts assessments), Colorado SAT (CO SAT) for High School Juniors, and comply with Colorado Academic Standards (CAS), and Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (READ).*
- *Evaluation data is used by teachers and administrators for continuous improvement to the educational program and informs professional development*
- *Describes how the school will use summative assessments, interim, and formative assessments to track and ensure students are making progress toward short and long-term goals. A testing timeline is included*
- *States how the school will communicate student academic progress to parents/ guardians, students, and the community.*
- *Defines the grading scale for advancement to the next grade level. This includes graduation requirements and course pass requirements.*
- *Identifies trigger points for intervention and procedures for taking corrective action if student performance at the school falls below the described targets.*

G. Budget and Finance

This section details the school's budget and fiscal policies and management.

Establishing Business Operations

- *Describes the process to contract with a Certified Public Accountant to conduct an annual, independent financial audit. Demonstrates an understanding of financial transparency laws.*
- *Provides financial policies and procedures to ensure that the school remains fiscally solvent. Describes the internal controls to be implemented to ensure a sound financial management system that includes checks and balances in cash disbursement and oversight.*
- *Describes any arrangements with outside service providers, such as HR and bookkeeping services, if applicable.*

Budget Narrative

- *Demonstrates reasonable revenue and cost assumptions including secured grant/fundraising assumptions, including identifying the amount and sources of all anticipated funds, property or other resources (noting which are secured versus anticipated, and evidence of firm commitments where applicable). Budget is designed to meet the mission and vision and the programs described in each section of the application.*
- *Describes an understanding of State and District budget reporting requirements throughout the year.*
- *Provides a sound contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated.*

Five-Year Budget

- *Demonstrates complete, realistic, and viable start-up and 5 year balanced operating budgets that align with the educational, organizational, and school growth plans as described in each section of the application.*
- *Provides a 5 year balanced budget assuming 85% enrollment that continues to allow the school to maintain critical design elements necessary to meet the mission and vision.*

H. Governance

This section provides detailed information on the governance philosophy and how the board will approach its oversight role, the role and make-up of the board and the role of the school's administration in carrying out the school's mission and vision.

Founding Board/Steering Committee

- *Describes who can serve on the board and the process for recruiting, onboarding and ongoing training for board members.*
- *Describes the number of members, composition of the board of directors, committee names and functions, and member skill sets. Bios or resumes for each board or steering committee member are included as an attachment.*
- *Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation are included as attachments. A board member conflict of interest policy and a policy for handling parent and staff complaints are included as an attachment.*
- *Demonstrates an understanding of the requirements of Open Meetings and Open Records laws, as well as FERPA.*
- *Describes the process for creating and maintaining a School Accountability Committee.*

Board Procedures

- *Provides a clear description of the differences in roles and responsibilities of the board and school administration. A job description for the head of school is included as an attachment.*
- *Describes the plan and timeline for how and when the board will evaluate the school leader and use this information to analyze the leader's need for coaching and professional development is in place.*
- *Describes how the board will regularly monitor key indicators such as finance, student achievement, and school culture. Sets forth a plan for a board annual self-evaluation and how the results will be used to identify areas for board growth and professional development.*

I. Employees

This section provides a variety of information on the school's employees and employment policies, and the relationship that will exist between the charter school and its employees.

- *Describes the process to locate, interview and hire the School Leader.*
- *Describes the recruiting and hiring process and includes a hiring timeline. Describes how the school will ensure that teachers are highly qualified for their positions.*
- *Job descriptions for all key employees, including teachers and administrative staff are included in an attachment.*

- *Describes which employees will be under contract and which will be “at will.”*
- *Sets forth a plan to use data to manage, disaggregate, display, and adjust or change curriculum and instruction, as well as identify professional development focus areas.*
- *Provides a description of the staff evaluation process and timeline.*
- *An Employee Handbook is included as an attachment. If a Handbook is unavailable, a summary of the school’s policies and procedures is included in the narrative with a timeline for completing the Handbook.*
- *An organizational chart is included that shows all key positions as an attachment.*

J. Insurance Coverage

This section explains what types of insurance the school plans to carry to protect itself and its students.

- *Describes the insurance needed to meet state and district requirements and meets appropriate amounts.*

K. Parent & Community Involvement

This section addresses the roles parents/guardians, community members, and community organizations will play as part of the school community.

- *Describes how parents have been involved in the charter application process and explains the parent engagement or volunteer plan that provides opportunities for parents to be partners in their students’ learning.*
- *Sets forth identified community resources and partnerships, including a description of the nature, purpose, terms, and scope of services of any such partnerships. Evidence of commitment from identified community partners is included as an attachment.*
- *Describes the process by which parent/guardian satisfaction with the school will be determined.*

L. Enrollment Policy

This section explains how students who want to attend the school will be admitted and enrolled, and how the school manages the process once students are interested in attending the school.

- *Enrollment and lottery policies and procedures are included as an attachment. Demonstrates that enrollment is available to all students without regard to race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, ancestry, disability, or need for special education services. Sets forth any enrollment priority weighting for particular groups of students.*
- *Describes how the larger community will receive information about the school, including a description of outreach to at-risk and minority communities.*

M. Transportation and Food Services

Transportation: This section addresses whether the school plans to offer any transportation services to students and if not, describes how students' transportation needs will be met without transportation services.

- *If the school plans to offer transportation, the applicant explains how this will be provided to include field trips, before and after school, and extracurricular activities.*
- *If the school does not plan to offer transportation, the applicant describes any alternative means for meeting students' transportation needs. This includes low-income students.*

Food Services: This section addresses whether the school plans to offer food service to its students.

- *If the school plans to offer food service, describes anticipated arrangements with a Food Service Authority or other food service arrangements, including catering.*

N. Facilities

This section provides information on the school's short and long-term facility plans. If the founding committee has not already identified a definite school facility, the committee has identified at least two prospective facility sites and the application contains a cogent strategy for acquiring one or more of the prospective sites.

Needs Assessment

- *Provides a facility needs assessment that aligns with the mission and vision of the school and the anticipated curriculum, including number of classrooms, specials rooms, administrative space, common spaces, outdoor spaces, square foot needs per student/space, and anticipated cost per square foot.*

Facility Options

- *If a facility has been identified, describes any lease or purchase arrangements along with timelines for acquiring the building. Provides a budget and timeline for any needed retrofit or tenant finish for the building. Demonstrates an understanding of zoning and fire code requirements.*
- *If a facility has not been identified, describes the target location(s) for the school building, the appropriateness of the location for the anticipated student population, and whether a permanent or temporary site is anticipated. Sets forth a timeline for securing a site before school opening.*
- *An appropriate and realistic facility contingency plan is provided.*

O. Waivers

This section includes statements acknowledging a commitment to comply with all laws and policies that are not waived and a list of proposed state and district waivers. The requested waivers should match the proposed autonomy, school mission and vision, goals, operations, governance, and employment relationships of the proposed charter school. In addition, the school should acknowledge if they will accept automatic statutory and policy waivers, or if the school plans on taking the non-automatic state waivers.

- *Presents a list of district policies for which waivers are being requested. Sets forth replacement rationales for the non-automatic waivers being requested, including expected financial impact if any and how the effectiveness of the waiver will be evaluated.*
- *Provides a list of the automatic and non-automatic state statutes for which waivers are being requested. Sets forth replacement rationales for the non-automatic state waivers being requested, including expected financial impact if any and how the effectiveness of the waiver will be evaluated.*

P. Student, Discipline, Expulsion or Suspension

This section defines how the school intends to handle student discipline and establish a student culture in which all students are able to learn.

- *Provides a Discipline Policy and Procedures Manual as an attachment that aligns with state law and district policies, unless waived. Sets forth how the policy will address state statutory requirements, policies, processes, due process rights and alignment with school culture.*
- *Describes how disciplinary expectations will be communicated to parents/guardians and students.*
- *Describes how the school will handle discipline for students with disabilities to ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and 504 regulations to include Manifestation Hearings and Behavior Plans as appropriate.*

Q. Serving Students with Special Needs

This section addresses how the school will meet the needs of a variety of “special needs” students who may enroll at the school. Specific research-based instructional programs, practices and strategies should be employed to produce a continuum of services to help ensure academic success for all students that is supported by good assessments.

Program Administration

- *Explains how the assessment system will enable the school to identify students with special needs and how the student and teacher daily schedules provide adequate time for services and supports.*
- *Describes the strategies for serving students with special needs and how the program will be implemented and overseen. Identifies the number and type of instructional or other staff that will teach or support special needs students, including contracted service providers.*

Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans

Programming

- *A continuum of services designed to meet ongoing student needs is clearly described.*
- *Service models demonstrate that students are provided specialized instruction according to their identified needs while they are ensured access to the general education curriculum with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible.*
- *A plan for communication to teachers and staff regarding student needs for accommodations is in place. A plan for oversight to monitor compliance is fully described.*

Staffing

- *Teachers and related service providers are identified and budgeted for according to required staffing levels.*
- *From date of hire, staff hold required CDE endorsements for their role at all times.*
- *Appropriate staffing levels are maintained at all times, including how mid-year/unanticipated vacancies will be addressed.*
- *Staff receive ongoing mentoring, coaching, and professional development specific to their practice.*

Budget

- *Proposed budget clearly includes all necessary staff, equipment, instructional materials, assessments, etc.*

Response to Intervention (RtI/MTSS)

Programming

- *A plan or structure is in place for monitoring all students for academic, social-emotional, and/or health concerns.*
- *Universal screening processes are in place, and targeted and intensive interventions are readily accessible to students.*

Staffing and Budget

- *Screening, assessment and progress monitoring materials are included in budget, and trained staff are available to conduct and review the screening, assessment and progress monitoring.*

English Language Learners (ELLs)

Programming

- *Provides the implementation plan for meeting the needs of English Learners that supplements the general education curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies. This includes the qualification process for services, model for direct instruction, type and frequency of progress monitoring, parent and family communication, process for exiting students from the program, and continued evaluation of programming to ensure students are successfully served.*
- *A plan for oversight to monitor compliance is fully described.*
- *If the district is under court order to provide mandated services for English Learners, describes the process following the terms of the law.*
 - *Provides the plan for meeting the needs of English Learners that support and supplement the current curriculum and instructional strategies. This includes the qualification process for services, the frequency of progress assessments, how parents will be notified, how the school will exit students from the program, and continued evaluation of the program to ensure students are successfully served.*

Staffing

- *Teachers and related service providers are identified and budgeted for according to required staffing levels;*
- *Staff hold required CDE endorsements for their role at all times;*
- *Appropriate staffing levels are maintained at all times, including how mid-year/unanticipated vacancies will be addressed;*
- *Staff receive ongoing mentoring, coaching, and professional development;*

Budget

- *Proposed budget clearly includes all necessary staff, equipment, instructional materials, assessments, etc.*

Gifted & Talented Students (GT)

Programming

- *Provides the implementation plan for meeting the needs of gifted learners that supplements the general education curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies. This includes the identification process, planning for service provision and instruction, type and frequency of progress monitoring, parent and family communication, and continued evaluation of programming to ensure students are successfully served.*
- *A plan for oversight to monitor compliance is fully described.*

Staffing

- *Teachers and related service providers are identified and budgeted for according to required staffing levels;*
- *Staff hold required CDE endorsements for their role at all times;*
- *Appropriate staffing levels are maintained at all times, including how mid-year/unanticipated vacancies will be addressed;*
- *Staff receive ongoing mentoring, coaching, and professional development.*

Budget

- *Proposed budget clearly includes all necessary staff, equipment, instructional materials, assessments, etc.*

At-Risk Students

- *Describes interventions and strategies to bring low performing and credit deficient students up to grade level and the anticipated areas of support students will need.*

R. Dispute Resolution Process

This section reflects the school's understanding of and compliance with C.R.S. 22-30.5-107.5, which explains how the school and its authorizer agree to resolve disputes that may arise concerning governing policy provisions of the school's charter contract.

- *Sets forth a method for resolving disagreements which arise of the school's charter contract between a charter school and its chartering district, in compliance with statutory requirements.*

S. School Management Contracts

If the proposed charter school intends to contract with an education service provider (ESP), such as a charter management organization (CMO), education management organization (EMO), or any other type of school management or service provider, describe the content of the services to be purchased.

EMP Selection

- *Explains the process by which the ESP/service provider was selected.*

EMP Track Record

- *Provides evidence that the provider has been successful in the academic and/or business operation aspects of other schools, including demonstrated academic achievement with the target population, as well as successful management of non-academic school functions.*

EMP Management Plan

- *Provides a draft management contract as an attachment, including the cost, length of contract, and the process to evaluate, oversee, renew, or terminate the contract without adversely affecting the viability of the school.*

Legal and Contractual Relationship with EMP

- *Provides an explanation of any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the governing board of the proposed charter school and the education management provider.*
- *Provides clear evidence that the ESP/service provider is authorized to conduct business in Colorado.*