



# **SOUTH CAROLINA**

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# **STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

## **South Carolina Public Charter School Application Guidance** (for schools planning to open in Fall 2015)

Deadline for Receipt of Applications:  
**12:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 1, 2014**

South Carolina Charter School Advisory Committee

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**South Carolina Department of Education Charter  
Application 2014-2024**

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## **PART I: General Information**

### **A. Introduction/Background**

In 1996, the South Carolina Legislature passed the Charter Schools Act, thereby providing citizens the opportunity to apply to operate a public school. The focus of charter schools is to provide quality educational choices for parents and students. The application outlines the necessary components to propose, receive approval for, and implements a high quality charter school.

All charter school applications must comply fully with the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-10 *et seq.*, and the Procedures and Standards for Review of Charter School Applications, S.C. Code Ann. Regs.43-601 (2013) (see page 35).

Application sections must be presented as outlined in this application guidance and labeled accordingly. It is important to remember that each of the sections relate to one another. For instance, educational program components should align with the proposed budget. Thus, a completed application should readily reflect that all of its sections, irrespective of their individual focus, coalesce to form a comprehensive and viable plan to open and sustain a high-quality charter school.

### **B. Definitions**

The following definitions, found in the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-40 *et seq.*, are included to assist the applicant in understanding various terms used in the application process.

Applicant means the person who or nonprofit corporate entity that desires to form a charter school and files the necessary application with the South Carolina Public Charter School District Board of Trustees, the local school board of trustees in which the charter school is to be located, or the board of trustees or area commission of a public or independent institution of higher learning. The applicant also must be the person who or the nonprofit corporate entity that applies to the Secretary of State to organize the charter school as a nonprofit corporation.

Certified teacher means a person currently certified by the State of South Carolina to teach in a public elementary or secondary school or who currently meets the qualifications outlined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-115.

Charter committee means the governing body of a charter school formed by the applicant to govern through the application process and until the election of a board of directors is held. After the election, the board of directors of the corporation must be organized as the governing body, and the charter committee is dissolved.

Charter school means a public, nonreligious, non-home-based, nonprofit corporation forming a

school that operates by sponsorship of a public school district, the South Carolina Public Charter School District (SCPCSD), or a public or independent institution of higher learning, but is accountable to the school board of trustees, or in the case of technical colleges, the area commission, of the sponsor which grants its charter. Nothing in this chapter prohibits charter schools from offering virtual services pursuant to state law and subsequent regulations defining virtual schools.

A charter school

1. is, for purposes of state law and the state constitution, considered a public school and part of the SCPCSD, the local school district in which it is located, or is sponsored by a public or independent institution of higher learning;
2. is subject to all federal and state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services; however, an applicant may seek to form a single-gender charter school without regard to the gender makeup of that proposed charter school;
3. must be administered and governed by a governing body in a manner agreed to by the charter school applicant and the sponsor, the governing body to be selected, as provided in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-50(B)(9);
4. may not charge tuition or other charges pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-19-90(8) except as may be allowed by the sponsor and is comparable to the charges of the local school district in which the charter school is located; and
5. is subject to the same fixed asset inventory requirements as are traditional public schools.

Charter school contract means a fixed term, renewable contract between a charter school and a sponsor that outlines the roles, powers, responsibilities, and performance expectations for each party to the contract.

Local school district means any school district in the State, except the SCPCSD, and does not include special school districts.

Noncertified teacher means an individual considered appropriately qualified for the subject matter taught and who has completed at least one year of study at an accredited college or university and meets the qualifications outlined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-115.

Resident public school means the school, other than a charter school, within whose attendance boundaries the charter school student's custodial parent or legal guardian resides.

Sponsor means the SCPCSD Board of Trustees, the local school board of trustees in which the charter school is to be located, and, as provided by law, a public institution of higher learning as defined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-103-5, or an independent institution of higher learning as defined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-113-50, from which the charter school applicant requested its charter and which granted approval for the charter school's

existence. Only those public or independent institutions of higher learning who register with the SCDE may serve as charter school sponsors, and the SCDE shall maintain a directory of those institutions. The sponsor of a charter school is the charter school's local education agency (LEA), and a charter school is a school within that LEA. The sponsor retains responsibility for special education and shall ensure that students enrolled in its charter schools are served in a manner consistent with LEA obligations under applicable federal, state, and local law.

### **C. Purpose of a Charter School**

The purpose of a charter school is to create a legitimate avenue for parents, teachers, and community members to take responsible risks and create new, innovative, and more flexible ways of educating all children within the public school system as defined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-20. This chapter is enacted to

1. improve student learning;
2. increase learning opportunities for students;
3. encourage the use of a variety of productive teaching methods;
4. establish new forms of accountability for schools;
5. create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site;
6. assist South Carolina in reaching academic excellence; and
7. create new, innovative, and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system, with the goal of closing achievement gaps between low performing student groups and high performing student groups.

### **D. Eligible Applicants**

An eligible applicant is any individual or group who desires to form a charter school and files the necessary application for review by the South Carolina Charter School Advisory Committee and the local school district, the South Carolina Public Charter School District (SCPCSD), or a public or independent institution of higher learning. The applicant must also be the same entity that is registered as a nonprofit corporation with the South Carolina Secretary of State to organize the charter school. Note that only public or independent institutions of higher learning that have registered with the South Carolina Department of Education may serve as a charter school sponsor.

### **E. Technical Assistance for Applicants**

A technical assistance session for charter school developers will be provided by the SCDE in February. Information on this session and notice of additional training dates, times, and locations will be posted on the SCDE website at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/se/School-Transformation/Charter-Special-Focus/>. Technical assistance is available as needed regarding

charter school law and the charter school application by contacting the SCDE Charter Schools Program at 803-734-0482.

#### **F. Deadline and Submission Procedures**

To allow adequate time for a complete review, applicants must submit a completed application packet by **noon, Tuesday, July 1, 2014**, for charter schools that plan to open for the 2015–16 school year. Applications received *after* the deadline **will not** be considered for a 2015–16 opening.

Prior to submitting the application, the applicant must submit one (1) copy of the application to the superintendent of the sponsoring district in which the charter school is proposed (either the local school district or the SCPCSD) or the board of trustees or area commission of a public or independent institution of higher learning. Applicants should verify with their proposed sponsor whether this submission should be an electronic or paper copy.

The applicant must include evidence of this copy submission to the sponsor with their complete application packet submitted to the Charter School Advisory Committee (CSAC). Acceptable evidence includes a return receipt from the postal service or written documentation from the potential sponsor confirming receipt of delivery.

Applicants may not amend applications after submission.

Only applications that are complete and follow these guidelines will be considered. Applications must present information in the order specified to be deemed complete; applications that are **not complete** and that **do not** present information in the order specified in these guidelines **will not be reviewed**.

Applications will not be returned. Keep a complete copy for your records. The SCDE will retain one copy of each application for archival purposes. After the CSAC review is complete, additional copies will be shredded and recycled.

Applicants must submit the following as an application package in one box labeled with the charter school's name:

- Evidence of submission to the proposed sponsor.
- One (1) original copy with original signatures on the Signature Certification Page. Clip the original application together in the upper left corner. Place the original in a separate envelope.
- Fifteen (15) signed copies of the application. Clip each of the copies together in the upper left corner. Place these copies openly in the box. Do not use envelopes.
- One (1) electronic copy of the application saved on a flash drive as follows:

1. Application Cover Sheet (accessible at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/se/School-Transformation/Charter-Special-Focus> (under the section titled “Important Charter School Information”).
2. Application Narrative (including the table of contents) in Microsoft Word format.
3. Required Application forms saved in one PDF file.
4. Appendices labeled as outlined in Part II, Application Overview of this application guidance and saved into a main folder titled “[Name of Charter School] Appendices.” Each appendix then should be filed under this main folder.

Submit the complete application package to:

South Carolina Charter School Advisory Committee (CSAC)  
c/o South Carolina Department of Education  
Office of School Transformation  
1429 Senate Street, Suite 605-B  
Columbia, SC 29201

#### **G. Review and Selection Process**

- After receiving a completed application, the CSAC will review the application, within
5. 90 days, to determine compliance or noncompliance with established standards that reflects the requirements and intent of the South Carolina Charter Schools Act. The CSAC will use the 2014 Charter School Application Review Guide to determine compliance (available at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/se/School-Transformation/Charter-Special-Focus> (under the section titled “Important Charter School Information”).

If the CSAC determines the application is compliant with state charter law, the applicant will be notified by letter, and the application will be forwarded from the CSAC within 45 days to the proposed sponsor for their consideration. The CSAC may recommend approval; however, the final decision-making authority rests with the proposed sponsor. If an application is denied by the proposed sponsor, the applicant may appeal to the Administrative Law Courts (ALC).

If the CSAC determines the application is noncompliant with state charter law, it will send an official letter outlining the deficiencies to the applicant. An applicant may appeal the decision to the ALC.

#### **H. Approval and Ongoing Authorization of Charter**

Upon recommendation for approval by the CSAC and final approval by the proposed sponsor (the local school district, the SCPCSD, or the board of trustees or area commission of a public or independent institution of higher learning), the proposed sponsor and the applicant will enter into a contractual agreement.

In compliance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-60 *et seq.*, the contract between the charter school and the sponsor must

- reflect all provisions outlined in the application as well as the roles, powers, responsibilities, and performance expectations for each party to the contract;
- include the proposed enrollment procedures and dates of the enrollment period of the charter school; and
- contain all agreements regarding the release of the charter school from school district policies.

The contract will state that student performance of all students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is the most important factor when determining to renew or revoke a school's charter.

Furthermore, the following section was added to State Board of Education Regulation 43-601 to address federal Charter School Program Assurances 3B:

Charter schools must provide evidence of increased student academic achievement for all groups of students described in Section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the ESEA. Authorizers must use increases in student academic achievement for all students described in ESEA as the most important factor when determining to renew or revoke a school's charter. Authorizers and charters must enter a contractual agreement that student performance of all students described in ESEA is the most important factor when determining to renew or revoke a school's charter. (36 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43–601)

Please note that a charter application, if approved, will constitute an agreement between the charter school and its sponsor. In accordance with the law, all provisions of the charter application must be included in the contract that must be executed between an approved charter school and its sponsor. The SCDE provides a contract template to be used by charter schools and the sponsor. This template must serve as a foundation for the development of a contract between the charter school and the sponsor and is posted on the SCDE website at <http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/se/School-Transformation/Charter-Special-Focus/documents/FinalContractTemplate.pdf>.

A material revision of the terms of the contract between the charter school and the sponsor may be made only with the approval of both parties.

## **PART II: Application Overview, Content, and Instructions**

Charter schools seeking to open in fall 2015 must submit an application presented in the order outlined below and labeled accordingly. Applications should comply fully with the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, S.C. Code of Laws § 59-40-10 *et seq.*, and the Procedures and Standards for Review of Charter School Applications, 2 S.C. Code of Regulations 43-601(2013) (see page 35).

Applicants should use the following overview as a checklist to ensure that they submit a complete application with items labeled accordingly and presented in the order outlined.

### **A. Application Overview**

- Application Cover Page (accessible at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/se/School-Transformation/Charter-Special-Focus> ; see page 30 for sample)
  
- Application Narrative (with table of contents)
  1. Mission Statement and Executive Summary
  2. Evidence of Need and Support
  3. Enrollment
  4. Educational Program
  5. Goals and Objectives
  6. Evaluating Pupil Performance
  7. Serving Students with Special Needs
  8. Student Discipline, Expulsion, or Suspension
  9. Governance and Operation
  10. Parent and Community Involvement
  11. Budget and Finance
  12. Employees
  13. Insurance Coverage
  14. Transportation
  15. Facilities
  
- Required Application Forms
  1. Signature Certification Page (page 33)
  2. Student Enrollment Projections for 10-Year Charter (accessible at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/se/School-Transformation/Charter-Special-Focus> ; see page 34 for sample)
  
- Appendices (with a table of contents)
  - A. Charter Committee
  - B. Evidence of Support

- C. Not needed
- D. Letter(s) from Sponsoring District Regarding Desegregation Order
- E. School Calendar and Daily Schedule for the Academic Year
- F. Virtual School List of Courses (if applicable)
- G. Supporting Documents for the described Educational Program
- H. Agreement with Sponsoring District for Special Education Services (if applicable)
- I. Student Handbook (if available)
- J. By-Laws
- K. Articles of Incorporation
- L. Organizational Chart
- M. School Enrollment Projection Form
- N. Five-Year Budget (Excel spreadsheet or PDF)
- O. Ten-Year Budget Plan (Excel spreadsheet or PDF)
- P. Memorandums of Agreement for Negotiated Services (if applicable)
- Q. Letter of Agreement from Sponsor regarding Compliance with S.C. Code Ann § 59-25-410 *et seq.* (2004 (if applicable)
- R. Sample Job Descriptions
- S. Key Employee Policies
- T. Insurance Documents (include all applicable)
- U. Transportation Services Contract (if applicable)
- V. Floor Plan of Identified Facility (if applicable)
- W. Proposed Lease or Rental Agreement (if applicable)
- X. Documentation from the SCDE’s Office of School Facilities (if applicable)
- Y. Proposed Education Management Organization (EMO) Contract (if applicable)
- Z. Evidence of EMO Can Do Business in South Carolina (if applicable)

**B. Application Narrative Format**

Required Font/Size	Times New Roman/12 point
Margins	One inch on all sides on 8.5” x 11” paper
Page Numbers	Numbered bottom right corner (number pages consecutively)
Header	Include the name of the proposed charter school at the top right of each page (may be placed at the .5 inch top margin)
Spacing	Double-space the narrative. Charts may be single-spaced.

## C. Narrative

### 1. Mission Statement and Executive Summary

**Mission Statement:** *East Cooper Montessori Charter School will provide rigorous public Montessori Education guiding children toward academic excellence, lifelong learning, and stewardship of the greater community.*

The Montessori Method of education was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori over 100 years ago. It is a child-centered approach that views “the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It is an approach that values the human spirit and the development of the whole child – physical, social, emotional, cognitive.”<sup>1</sup> Key components include multi-age classrooms, uninterrupted work cycles, hands-on Montessori materials in early childhood and the elementary years that advance learning from the concrete to the abstract in conjunction with an interdisciplinary curriculum, and the independent choice of work guided by the teacher. Learning may also occur in, but is not limited to, the following ways: independent studies, Socratic seminars, cooperative learning groups, creating podcasts, global collaborations through technology, developing peer-to-peer lessons, and academic business partnerships throughout the community. In addition to academic excellence, our goals for each student include:

- 1 a clearly demonstrated set of academic skills;
- 2 experience in community service; and
- 3 a personal and academic development plan for the years beyond our school.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.amshq.org/Montessori-education/introduction-to-montessori](http://www.amshq.org/Montessori-education/introduction-to-montessori), accessed December 1, 2014.

The core philosophy of the school is the integration of family and cultural values into the governance and curriculum of the school. Parental involvement through volunteerism is strongly encouraged and communication between school and family is essential.

**Executive Summary:**

*“One of the most urgent endeavors to be undertaken on behalf of the reconstruction of society is the reconstruction of education. It must be brought about by giving children the environment that is adapted to their nature” - Maria Montessori (1949)<sup>2</sup>*

At its most basic level, Montessori education is about creating environments that make sense for the way children learn. Dr. Maria Montessori believed that children are born with a desperate desire to learn, and that learning is naturally a joyful human experience. Honoring the tenets of the Montessori philosophy of education, East Cooper Montessori Charter School provides a warm, inviting, innovative and engaging educational experience where students problem solve, resolve conflict, debate, explore, build, collaborate and are encouraged to make mistakes in order to grow. Individualized instruction, a multi-age classroom setting, hands-on didactic materials, ability-driven, self-paced learning, and a peaceful, nurturing environment are just a few of the defining elements of Montessori which parents value. High academic achievement, global awareness, care for self and others, diverse culture and development of social skills also are characteristics that make Montessori a highly successful model.

East Cooper Montessori Charter School proposes to continue to serve the families of Charleston County School District choosing a Montessori education for their children. The

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<sup>2</sup> Angeline Lillard, *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

school is now in its twelfth year of operation and is a Palmetto Gold-rated public school serving over 250 students in grades one through eight. The school will add primary programming to its offerings as research continues to show early education as being one of the most influential factors on the outcomes of educational success for children. There are public Montessori programs in the four quadrants of the Charleston County School District (CCSD) and as such student recruitment will be concentrated on the geographical area of the District Two Constituent School District. In addition, ECMCS will aggressively recruit a culturally diverse population to meet its goals of a true Montessori educational program.

Private Montessori education has been the primary option for families as there have been only two very small public Montessori options for elementary- and middle school-aged children over the last ten years enrolling less than a handful of new students annually in Charleston County. Despite all it has to offer, however, private Montessori education is out of reach for the majority of families in Charleston County. According to Kids Count data, 27 percent of children in Charleston County lived in households with income below the poverty level in 2010. Many other families in the county do not meet criteria for poverty, but nevertheless cannot afford to spend thousands of dollars per year to send their children to private school. The leadership both at the state level in South Carolina and the local level with Charleston County School District's Superintendent, Dr. Nancy McGinley have given the families of Charleston County renewed hope in providing educational options and specifically, a public Montessori education for their children. East Cooper Montessori Charter School, established in 2003, has grown from 44 students in grades first through third to currently serving over 250 students in grades first through eighth. The continued success of the school has made it one of the most sought after

programs in the area. The school's leadership has committed to providing the opportunity to attend ECMCS beyond a few lucky enough to be chosen in the lottery to being able to serve the demand growing over the next five years to an annual population of 500 students. The school district has shown commitment to the demand for more Montessori options by offering to let ECMCS move into a repurposed building in Mount Pleasant in 2015, enabling the population growth to 500, as well as constructing a new building in West Ashley to serve the magnet program's 250 student population. In addition, CCSD has approved three other magnet programs throughout the county offering every parent the option to enroll in a public Montessori program.

Charter schools present an ideal model for offering Montessori to the public. Charter schools give parents, teachers, and administrators tremendous flexibility and empower them to create an administrative structure in which they can achieve their specific goals. A localized governing board, elected by the families and employees, is free to create school policies that make sense for the school's culture. It is this freedom to create its own policies that allows charter schools to be innovative. In the case of ECMCS, the most salient innovation is the implementation of the Montessori Method. While charter schools enjoy administrative freedom, they are still public schools, making access open and free to any child that lives within the district. In exchange for flexibility and support through public funding, charter schools must accept the highest level of accountability for producing results. Charter schools foster innovation within the public school system by encouraging parents, teachers and community members to take responsible risks in order to continuously improve education and increase student achievement. ECMCS wishes to exist alongside traditional schools as well as choice schools, offering a unique alternative to families who prefer the Montessori Method and also embrace

public education.

East Cooper Montessori Charter School began its first charter in 2003 with 44 lower elementary students in grades first, second and third in two portable classrooms. By the spring of 2006, the school had grown to serving just over 100 students in seven portable classrooms. In the fall of 2007, the school completed construction on a state of the art facility in the I'On neighborhood. By 2010, the success of the school kept every seat filled and the demand kept growing. The school is currently set to move into another larger facility with 66,000 square feet and 9 acres of land in Mount Pleasant. The larger facility will allow the school to expand the program offerings to include primary and expand the population to almost 500 students within the next five years. The school will serve 3-4 primary classrooms, 7-8 lower elementary classrooms, 6-7 upper elementary classrooms, and 5-6 middle school classrooms. The Montessori classroom make-up is of one certified teacher and one assistant serving approximately 24 students per 900-1,000 sq ft space. This charter application will serve to charter the school for the next 10 years from 2015-2025.

## 2. Evidence of Need and Support

Established in 2003, East Cooper Montessori Charter School is in its twelfth year as a charter school under sponsorship of Charleston County School District. The school has enjoyed a robust enrollment every year since its inception and, growing exponentially every year, applications have annually exceeded the number of spaces. In 2003, only one other small public Montessori magnet program in Charleston County existed and with the inception of ECMCS one year later, the two public programs thrived laying the foundation for a total of five public

Montessori schools with thirty Montessori classrooms in Charleston County School District and over forty public Montessori schools across the state. The growth of Montessori education over the past ten years has led South Carolina to be ranked number one in public Montessori programs.<sup>3</sup>

The demand for additional spaces and the continuation of East Cooper Montessori Charter School as a top-rated public school of choice in Charleston can be seen in its long waiting lists every year since inception as well as consistently high parent, student and teacher satisfaction ratings.<sup>4</sup>

Table 1. Percent Satisfied with the Learning Environment

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Parents	93.8%	100%	100%	95.2%	100%
Teachers	100%	100%	I/S	100%	100%
Students	90%	78.9%	92.0%	93.3%	90.7%

Additionally, the long history of academic and financial success is demonstrated over time with consistently high rankings and a reputation for excellence. The school has been ranked as a Palmetto Gold Award winner for Achievement for the past five years as well as earning a Grade A (performance substantially exceeds the state's expectations) on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) grading scale.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://public-montessori.org/public-montessori-census-snapshot-2014>

<sup>4</sup> South Carolina Department of Education School Report Card 2008-2014

The success of East Cooper Montessori Charter School is due to many great decisions over the history of the school and the leadership of its board is responsible for making all the decisions that kept the school progressing, reaching for new goals and setting new thresholds every year. The board is made up of very dedicated proponents of Montessori education and currently consists of an architect, Montessori business owner, Montessori leader and expert, instructional technology specialist, policy researcher, occupational therapist, financial securities specialist, and financial analyst. Board members have been selected based on their expertise and, just as importantly, their commitment to the mission of the school. Board members are the support network of the leadership. Without a strong board to support the principal, the growth of the leader and the school cannot happen in a collegial way. While they function as accountability and oversight, they are also the leaders that roll up their sleeves and coordinate projects that build foundations, unite people, and inspire everyone to do their best resulting in a positive and rigorous school culture climate. The committee structure described later in the document is another key to the leadership and success of the school and can be used as an example to lead other organizations.

In 2012, ECMCS developed a partnership with CCSD to support the Montessori programs throughout the district as well as help with the overcrowding of District 2 schools by moving the current program to a larger CCSD-owned facility, creating much needed additional Montessori seats in the quadrant with the fewest Montessori seats. ECMCS stands poised and ready to double its enrollment over the next 3-5 years with the move to the larger facility next school year. ECMCS met with former Town of Mount Pleasant Mayor Billy Swails, Mount Pleasant Mayor Linda Page, Charleston County School District School Board members, Town of

Mount Pleasant City Council members, former Blue Ribbon Committee members, and Constituent Board members to build consensus for a commitment to expanding quality Montessori seats in Mount Pleasant. After careful planning and development of a strategic plan found in Appendix G, the Charleston County School District voted in 2013 to approve a planned partnership and again in 2014 to approve the development of a lease agreement to move to the vacant district building located at 1120 Rifle Range Road. The move in location has been strategic to open the school to greater diversity, additional programming by adding a primary program, and more amenities for students while helping Charleston County School District relieve severe overcrowding in District 2 schools. The new location will be an instrumental vehicle for providing more community visibility as a public school choice located in a more diverse area of Mount Pleasant drawing attendance from a greater population.

The school accepts over 200 new applications annually and in the past has been able to award only a handful of spaces to new students. The demand for Montessori has been demonstrated over the course of our twelve years with the school having a waitlist at every grade level for all twelve years. See the 2013 Annual Report found in Appendix G for more information regarding waitlists and spaces available.

While ECMCS is still categorized as a “start-up” charter school according to the definition as set forth by the South Carolina Department of Education, it is so much more. One of the biggest decisions parents will make is where and how to educate their children. As ECMCS has consistently demonstrated over the past twelve years, there continues to be a demand for Public Montessori and especially East Cooper Montessori Charter School. The school’s success has catapulted it to a top performing school and coveted school of choice

deserving of a place at the public school table.

### 3. Enrollment

The charter school is subject to all federal and state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services, as provided in S.C. Code of Laws § 59-40-40(2)(b). The school's program is designed to attract and benefit parents and students who have an interest in the Montessori educational method and is open to all students regardless of race, religion, sex, national origin, income level, disabling conditions, or proficiency in the English language. ECMCS believes it is the responsibility of the school's Board and Staff to help families make an informed decision when choosing Montessori for their child. Like any successful educational program, the benefits of a Montessori education are most fully realized when parents are involved and committed to the Montessori philosophy. For example, parents who do not encourage their child to be independent at home may not feel comfortable with the Montessori approach to child development and education. Parents who place a high value on the traditional style of teaching as determined by chronology as opposed to academic readiness also may find the Montessori approach does not fit within their personal philosophy. On the other hand, parents who are comfortable with self-reliance and self-discipline being an important part of a child's education would likely find Montessori to be a good match for their family.

The ideal number of students in a Montessori class, according to standards set by the American Montessori Society, is approximately thirty (30), provided there is one Lead Teacher and one non-teaching Assistant. However, ECMCS will aim for a class size between the average

elementary class size in the District (18-25 students) and the ideal for Montessori.

The school will have a baseline of 5 lower elementary classrooms, 4 upper elementary classrooms, and 2 middle school classrooms at the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year.

Within the next five years, the school intends to grow into 3 primary classrooms, 7 lower elementary classrooms, 6-7 upper elementary classrooms, and 4 middle school classrooms for a total population of 480.

ECMCS accepts applications from all Charleston County School District families with the direct goal of reducing the overcrowding of the District 2 constituent area of Mount Pleasant, Isles of Palms and Awendaw. There is no prerequisite for admission to ECMCS. Prior enrollment in a Montessori program is not required and does not grant a child priority in enrollment.

There are a total of five public Montessori school options located in the quadrants of the second largest school district in the state, Charleston County School District. There is a Montessori option within a reasonable distance for every family across the county. The charter school participates in the annual events that showcase the choice schools in the area making the application process transparent and open to all interested families. The dates for applications and all information about the process are located on the school's website and also in the Appendix of this document. The school also holds monthly group informational sessions and opens up additional tour times once the visitor number exceeds 25. The school encourages all families to tour the school before enrolling. Applications are available year round on the school's website. There is an annual open enrollment period to take applications for the following school year. The

applications are received electronically and time-stamped for transparency and fidelity to the application process. Once the number of applications exceeds the number of places for a particular level, a lottery is held as outlined by the lottery order located in the Appendix. The school has held a lottery every year since the doors opened in 2003. The lottery spaces are drawn by age starting with the youngest level. During the lottery selection event, once a space has been given to a student, that student then becomes “currently enrolled” making the student’s sibling able to exercise the right to “sibling preference.” Preference can only be given to siblings of currently enrolled students, children of staff members, and children of the original charter committee, in that order. The school’s full-time staff members have lottery preference at the confirmation of employment. The school’s part-time staff can exercise placement preference in the following lottery after the completion of 10 months of employment. The spaces given to priority categories cannot exceed 20 percent of the enrollment of the charter school. After open enrollment, applications are taken in the order they are received and placed on the waitlist accordingly. A waitlist is maintained throughout the school year and utilized when it is determined there is a space to be filled. The space is offered to the student at the top of the corresponding grade’s waitlist. Effort is placed on making sure the classrooms have a balanced number of age ranges within the classrooms in keeping with the Montessori philosophy. The complete lottery procedure is found in the Appendix as well as in information included in the Bylaws also found in the Appendix.

The charter school can deny admission to students that have been expelled from another school. Appeals for the denial of charter membership for any reason other than the lottery selection can be processed through the sponsoring school district’s appeal process. The decision

of the sponsoring school district is final. The charter school's lottery cannot be appealed to the sponsoring school district's board of appeals.

The school will not accept students that reside outside the school district with the exception of students of staff members. Students of staff members will be treated the same as the sponsoring school district giving a space to the student and the student will be funded by the sponsoring district the same as in district students.

Students with special needs who may qualify as special education students will be admitted to East Cooper Montessori Charter School. Once enrolled, the charter school and CCSD staff will determine the appropriate provision of services as provided for in the CCSD agreements with charter schools.

East Cooper Montessori Charter School strongly supports an inclusive educational philosophy including the endorsement of a diversified student population. Maria Montessori studied children of all races and cultures in many countries around the world, seeing the universality of the laws of human development. As a devoted humanitarian, she was three-times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for her advocacy efforts toward a more peaceful humanity. Montessorians are keenly aware of the absolute importance of the experiences in the environment and their direct connection with the physical development of the brain and therefore, the development of ideals and values both affectively and factually. Providing a public Montessori program with a cultural and racially diverse student body in Charleston, South Carolina has proven more difficult than initially imagined.

Given the number of ECMCS applications, which exceeds almost twenty applications per

every one space at ECMCS, the diversity of enrollment has not proven as diverse as desired and as such the school has implemented a diversity plan included in the Appendix to systematically address areas of diversity. The laws governing charter schools pose unintended challenges related to attracting a diverse community of students. For example, revenue streams usually reserved for classroom instruction in traditionally funded schools are diverted to make up the short fall of unfunded facilities, transportation, maintenance and capital expenses which amounts to approximately 10-15 percent of revenues. As such, the application pool is reduced to families that have the ability to transport their children to and from school. ECMCS will continue to work toward increasing the school's diversity in leadership, teaching staff and ultimately the student application pool. The school has outlined further strategies to help educate the community about the philosophy and educational opportunities afforded through a Montessori education. In addition to the new location outside of a neighborhood and in a more diverse location, the charter school will use a variety of marketing tools to ensure the racial diversity of our student population including public service announcements in the media; outreach through churches, social/civic groups, government agencies, etc.; referrals from community partners, public schools, etc.; flyers and brochures; speaking engagements by parents and faculty; public information meetings; and through the documentation of student success, with the end goal of meeting the racial composition of the school district within 20% or of the Constituent District 2 population that the charter school proposes to serve.

Table 2. Ethnicity Composition of Charleston County School District 2013-2014

Asian	684	1%
Black	20,352	43%
Hispanic	3,557	8%
White	21,248	45%
Other	1,395	3%

Source: [http://www.ccsdschools.com/About\\_Us/documents/CCSDfacts.pdf](http://www.ccsdschools.com/About_Us/documents/CCSDfacts.pdf)

See the Diversity Plan in the Appendix for further information.

#### 4. Educational Program

Montessori educational practices began unlike most other educational theories or practices. Maria Montessori began as Italy’s first female physician, in 1896. During her work as a physician, she began to research work with the University’s psychiatric clinic observing and documenting experiences with mentally ill children. She studied the works of Itard and Sequin who greatly influenced the materials she developed to work with disabled children. While other educational experts were taking note of her accomplishments with disabled children, she turned her focus to understanding why normally developing children were not performing better given their obvious advantage. The second part of her career spanning the next fifty years, shifted to working with cognitively normally developing children testing and developing a new approach to education which had little resemblance to traditional educational practices.

Careful observation of how children learn led Montessori to the conclusion that human development optimally occurs where the process is more important than the product. The inner drive to accomplish is a natural inherent drive and children literally absorb knowledge from their

environments. She developed a Method where carefully prepared environments feed the child's intellect. She replaced furniture with child-sized furniture, classes with open spaces where children could manipulate their own physical spaces, and she began to see independence as the goal of the environment. She also discovered the advantages of the uninterrupted work period giving rise to concentration. She believed the educator's main focus is making the environment meet the needs of the child's interest and ability. While most philosophers' research and practices were built upon carefully designed experiments of their ideas and then testing them on children, Montessori's approach developed by careful observations of children and then developing a Method that fit the natural learning tendencies observed in children.

Providing an authentic Montessori program has always been at the core of all decision-making for the administration and staff of ECMCS that is in keeping with the *Essential Elements of Successful Montessori in the Public Sector* included in Appendix G, an agreed upon document of standards by the three major Montessori organizations in the United States, the American Montessori Internationale, American Montessori Society, and the North American Montessori Teachers Association. The document expressly conveys standards for successful Montessori practices in the areas of administration, curriculum, environment, assessment, professional development and recruitment as well as parent education. ECMCS puts great effort into continually developing its educational program to meet and exceed the federal and state standards while honoring the Montessori Method of delivery and Montessori's research on brain development. Montessori also believed character education and peace education are an integral part of every day and not a purchased kit-type program to be delivered with direct instruction. Teachers, students and parents must model grace and courtesy in every interaction within the school and home environment. ECMCS incorporates related arts of Spanish, physical education,

art, music, technology, guidance, and health as part of the Montessori curriculum without disruption to the uninterrupted work period.

The chart below shows the major differences found in Montessori education programs as opposed to traditional programs.

Table 3. Comparison of Montessori Education with Traditional Education



**Some Comparisons of Montessori Education with Traditional Education**

*A Montessori program is based on self-direction, non-competitive and cooperative activities that help a child develop a strong self-image, high levels of academic and social competence, and the confidence to face challenges with optimism. Encouraged to make decisions from an early age, Montessori educated children are problem-solvers who can make appropriate choices, manage their time, and work well with others. They exchange ideas and discuss work freely. These positive communication skills build the foundation for negotiating new settings.*

<b>Montessori</b>	<b>Traditional</b>
Views the child holistically, valuing cognitive, psychological, social, and spiritual development.	Views the child in terms of competence, skill level, and achievement with an emphasis on core curricula standards and social development.
Child is an active participant in learning; allowed to move about and respectfully explore the classroom environment; teacher is an instructional facilitator and guide.	Child is a more passive participant in learning, teacher has a more dominant, central role in classroom activity.
A carefully prepared learning environment and method encourage development of internal self-discipline and intrinsic motivation.	Teacher acts as a primary enforcer of external discipline promoting extrinsic motivation.
Instruction, both individual and group, adapts to students' learning styles and developmental levels.	Instruction, both individual and group, adapts to core curricula benchmarks.
Three-year span of age grouping, three-year cycles allow teacher, students, and parents to develop supportive, collaborative and trusting relationships.	Same-age and/or skill level grouping; one-year cycles can limit development of strong teacher, student, and parent collaboration.
Grace, courtesy, and conflict resolution are integral parts of daily Montessori peace curriculum.	Conflict resolution is usually taught separately from daily classroom activity.
Values concentration and depth of experience, supplies uninterrupted time for focused work cycle to develop.	Values completion of assignments; time is tightly scheduled.
Child's learning pace is internally determined.	Instructional pace usually set by core-curricula standard expectations, group norm, or teacher
Child allowed to spot own errors through feedback from the materials; errors are viewed as part of the learning process.	Work is usually corrected by the teacher; errors are viewed as mistakes.
Learning is reinforced internally through the child's own repetition of an activity and internal feelings of success.	Learning is reinforced externally by test scores and rewards, competition, and grades.
Care of self and environment are emphasized as integral to the learning experience.	Less emphasis on self-care, spatial awareness, and care of the environment.
Child can work where he/she is comfortable and the child often has choices between working alone or with a group that is highly collaborative among older students.	Child is usually assigned a specific work space; talking among peers discouraged.
Multi-disciplinary, interwoven curriculum.	Curriculum areas usually taught as separate topics.
Child learns to share leadership; egalitarian interaction is encouraged.	Hierarchical classroom structure is more prominent.
Progress is reported through multiple formats: conferences, narrative reports, checklists and portfolio of student's work.	Progress is usually reported through conferences, report cards/grades, and test scores.
Children are encouraged to teach, collaborate, and help each other.	Most teaching is done by the teacher and collaboration is an alternative teaching strategy.
Child is provided opportunities to choose own work from interest and abilities, concepts taught within context of interest.	Curricula organized and structured for child based on core curricula standards.
Goal is to foster a love of learning.	Goal is to master core curricula objectives.

The understanding of the tenets of the Montessori Method of education provides insight

as to why it has been so successful at each level including primary, lower elementary, upper elementary and middle school. Tim Seldin, founder of the Montessori Foundation, outlined the following qualities of an authentic Montessori program in his book, The Montessori Way (2006), all of which ECMCS has supported and even expanded upon in the past twelve years as a successful public Montessori charter school.

**Mixed Age Groupings** - Successful Montessori schools honor the groupings of ages 3-6 primary, 6-9 lower elementary, 9-12 upper elementary and 12-15 middle school. The purpose of the mixed aged group has multiple benefits. The educators of students over multiple years get to know children on a social, emotional, and academic level not reachable for teachers only having interactions with students for a nine month period. In a two-three year cycle, the teacher forms deep understanding of the child's learning style as well as documented accomplishments over time. The educator also forms a different level of investment in the success of the student as well as partnership with the family to meet educational, social, and emotional goals for the child. In addition, the child forms long lasting relationships with children of different ages over a longer period of time, which adds to the sense of community, confidence, security, and collaboration across age levels. It is well documented that expertise is achieved by teaching the subject to another. Students within a Montessori community experience being mentored, rising to being the mentor and friend all at the same time. In addition, the academic needs in a multi-aged classroom are met through the multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary curriculum appropriate for the varied academic levels of any three-year makeup of students. Montessori teachers do not assume children progress through a curriculum based on their chronological age but instead they adjust curriculum based on the specific needs of the individual and across grade levels. The grouping

promotes the highest level of personalized learning and students do not need to repeat unnecessary activities already mastered and will also be given time to complete lessons when more time and work is needed for mastery. An additional benefit of the multi-age classroom is the impact it has on behavior. There are only eight new children in a classroom each year which allows the social structure of the classroom to stay intact from year to year and allows the older children to embrace the new younger children helping them find their way in the new classroom. The same children rise to becoming the mentors as they grow giving everyone an opportunity to learn from others and to teach others.

**Innovative Curriculum Areas** - Montessori curriculum differs in some of the pacing of traditional educational information, but it is the Method of the delivery that really sets it apart. Montessori is more in the how or Method than what is taught. The subjects are integrated across the disciplines. The detailed correlation of Montessori curriculum with state standards can be found in the Appendix, Section G.

**Appropriate Leveled Curriculum** - Montessori programs are particularly skilled at reaching students where they are both socially and academically. High achieving students can go at a pace that works for them and students needing extra assistance have the opportunity to work at their level and pace also. The classroom is equipped with three grade levels of equipment and activities, which lends perfectly to the students on both ends of the learning continuum.

Response to Intervention is a process of providing assistance to students having difficulty learning. Through ongoing and early intervention with research-based applications and practices along with systematic measurement of outcomes, students have a greater chance of catching up with typically progressing peers. Many of the interventions that are typically applied in a

traditional school are things naturally part of the Montessori environment such as close proximity to the teacher, small group setting, peer-to-peer mentoring, and personalized leveled instruction. Montessori teachers give lessons to small groups of students and then assess learning through careful observation, immediate feedback and individualized instruction instead of large groups that rely on written outcomes to demonstrate learning without the benefit of individualized and immediate feedback. Intervention practices in the Montessori environment are naturally occurring events that flow easily to aid child development.

**Optimizing Sensitive Periods** - Montessori recognized there are periods in development when the brain takes in large amounts of information related to a particular skill or topic. The unconscious Absorbent Mind occurs from birth to three, learning the skills to be independent from the adult such as walking, talking, and gaining control of movement. She coined the term the Absorbent Mind and titled one of her books *The Absorbent Mind*, which chronicled the skills acquired from ages three to six years old reflecting the sensitive periods for order, movement and language. One role of the teacher is to optimize the sensitive periods for children. While her research was cutting edge, it has been confirmed over and over by scientists and even popular culture, with Time Magazine calling it “Windows of Opportunity.”

**Purposeful Work** - Maria Montessori observed that children learn through purposeful activities of their own choosing; Montessori schools call all of the children’s activities “work.” Engagement in purposeful work is invigorating and not tiring.

**Hands-on Montessori Didactic Materials** – The hands-on materials aid the student in the progression from the concrete to the abstract. At the younger, primary level the materials

address all the senses so the child takes in information through each sense in addition to the belief the hand - touch feeds the neuro-systems of the brain. Even at the elementary and middle school levels, there is great respect given to a real world and hands-on approach to leaning and constructing knowledge. The didactic materials have a control of error embedded within them so children challenge their success and correct work without the oversight of a teacher. The removal of the approval layer of the adult allows the child to seek and correct mistakes independently. Learning occurs in small groups and independently but rarely in large groups. Learning occurs with a variety of modalities but rarely with textbooks and workbooks. Assessment will be addressed in the next section.

**Prepared Environment** - The Montessori classroom and school environment is an extension of the home, feeling warm, beautiful, and inviting. A tremendous amount of thought and energy is put into the design of the environment. The classroom provides opportunities of care of the self through meal preparation and dressing frames; care of the environment through gardening, window washing, and animal care; care of each other through conflict resolution and development of relationships. Classrooms are set up for inquiry and discovery with science experiments and labs in all areas of the classroom. Classrooms are dynamic and ever-changing to keep up with innovation and research practices. The emphasis is on students learning and teachers teaching.

**Cosmic Education** - Montessori practices provide elementary-level children a “vision of the universe” to help them discover how all parts of the cosmos are interconnected and interdependent. In Montessori schools, children aged 6 – 12, begin by learning about the universe, its galaxies, our galaxy, our solar system, and planet Earth—everything that came

before their birth to make their life possible. As they develop respect for past events, they become aware of their own roles and responsibilities in the global society of today and tomorrow as well as their interconnectedness.

**Uninterrupted Work Period** – The work period of three-hour blocks allows children to invest their mental energy into concentration and development of self without the adult interruption of adult-centered education with adult-set goals. This key feature allows the environment and Method to flourish meeting the goals set by children in collaboration with each other and the educators. The structure allows for more time on task to be achieved and greater academic and social growth to happen spontaneously.

**Education of the Educators** - Montessori teachers are hired and trained to be educators in the area and level of expertise. At ECMCS, our teachers must be state certified, Montessori credentialed and Gifted and Talented endorsed. The education and preparedness of the educator are paramount to the implementation of the ideals as set forth by Dr. Maria Montessori. As such, Montessori teachers are very skilled in multi-leveled assessment with a variety of tools. The educators serve as role models to students and are particularly skilled with communication to parents, students, other educators and stakeholders. Montessori trained administrators work with teachers to set goals, use data to improve instruction and stay on pace. Collaboration is standard practice and decisions are made based on input from many sources as opposed to a top down approach.

Measuring the success of Montessori as a choice by looking only at waiting lists is summed up best by Jim Rex, former South Carolina Superintendent of Education when he said,

“As soon as a Montessori class opens there is a waiting list.” However, evidence of success can also be seen in other research. One large-scale study of public school Montessori by Angeline Lillard (2006) measured academic and social performance of urban minority children enrolled in public Montessori and public non-Montessori Milwaukee schools. The Montessori Kindergarten students demonstrated superior performance in standardized scores of reading and math, more positive social interaction, and more advanced self-regulatory behavior compared to the control group. The Montessori Elementary students wrote more creative essays with more complex sentence structures, selected more positive responses to different social dilemmas, and reported feeling more of a sense of community at their school compared to the control group.<sup>5</sup>

Another study, which assessed student outcome for two public Montessori elementary programs in Milwaukee, found a significant effect for the Math and Science scores with Montessori students outperforming students in the control group. No differences were found, however, for English and Social Studies (Dohrmann, Nishida, Gartner, Lipsky, & Grimm, 2007).

A French study, which evaluated creativity in elementary school students in Paris, found higher levels of creativity from students attending the Montessori school compared to children schooled in more traditional pedagogy (Besancon & Lubarat, 2008).

All of these studies are further supported by the work of University of Virginia professor Dr. Angeline Lillard. A developmental psychologist by training, Dr. Lillard matched the most

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<sup>5</sup> Control group consisted of children who had participated in the lottery to be enrolled in the public Montessori school, but who were not chosen. This is the first study (Gibson) comparing Montessori to non-Montessori which controls for the self-selection factor of the type of parents who desire Montessori for their children, since both the experimental and control group preferred the Montessori school.

important of Montessori's theories and principles to available research in psychology and education. While Dr. Montessori based her theory on observations of children rather than controlled experiments, Dr. Lillard found 100 years later that Dr. Montessori's theories are very well supported by modern science. Lillard's book, Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius, (2005), is a remarkable account and validation of just how right Dr. Montessori was about the way children learn.

Further evidence of the effectiveness of Montessori education in the public school sector is the ongoing success of that very first public Montessori school opened by Nancy Rambusch in the 1970s. Now called Sands Montessori, this elementary school is a prime example of the positive impact a public Montessori school can have on student learning. Students in this historic school demonstrate academic achievement, based on state standardized tests, that is consistently higher than both the state (Ohio) and district (Hamilton County) averages. For example, according to the Sands Montessori Elementary School (SMES) report card for the 2007-2008 school year, the percentages of third grade students scoring at and above proficient level were 86.7% and 91.5%, respectively, compared to 63.9% and 62.1% in their district (Hamilton County) and 77.4% and 79.3% in the state of Ohio. Similarly, the percentages of SMES 6th grade students scoring at and above proficient level in reading and math were 83.3% and 78.8%, compared to 62.3% and 60.8% district wide, and 79.7% and 76.6% for the state.

These higher percentages of students scoring proficient and above hold true even when considering students from lower income families separately. Specifically, higher percentages of students at SMES identified as economically disadvantaged demonstrated proficient or above in

reading and math, 65% and 60%, respectively, compared to all students in the district (58% and 54%).

The Montessori model fits a variety of learners whether coming from a lower socio-economic background, struggling with a disability or qualifying for the gifted and talented program as set by state or district standards. In fact, most students do not have a homogeneous profile and more likely have a variety of learning characteristics and may be gifted in one area but yet struggle with a documented disability in another area. Montessori is a particularly useful model in approaching learning with a varied profile. A study of gifted learners performed in 2005 stated that the curriculum components necessary for gifted learners include a “stated philosophy, explicitly planned environment, focus on interpersonal interactions that facilitate optimal learning, a developmentally appropriate curriculum plan, instructional strategies that successfully challenge the individual learning needs of each student, systematic assessment using a variety of methods and research that provides accountability for the approach and the justification for its use (Gibson)” which are all inherent in the Montessori approach to education. ECMCS serves almost double the population of gifted students compared to other District 2 schools and also a higher population of students with disabilities.

East Cooper Montessori Charter School has spent the last twelve years perfecting its craft and putting into practice the components described in this document, in the research of the Montessori Method, and current brain research. Each explicitly maintains that what is required is not one set of curricula but instead a set of skills or talents, most of which are not informationally driven, that are adaptable to a variety of situations. Reading is a great example of this concept.

There are literally thousands of reading programs on the market but not one that encompasses all the same components or pieces of material as another. As long as the student is learning to read a variety of genre and to read for enjoyment as well as critically then the goal has been met.

Science concepts of learning how to problem solve with new engineering standards being released next year is another example. The standards require students to understand the problem solving wheel and apply it to a variety of situations in solving a math problem, during conflict resolution with a friend, or completing a social studies exercise requiring a model to describe a particular era in time. The talented and creative ECMCS educators use the hands-on materials created by Maria Montessori over 100 years ago and other Montessori vendors, in addition to curriculum components developed for a variety of classroom settings. The Hands on Equations material used in Gifted and Talented programs are also part of the classroom materials included in our lower and upper elementary classrooms. Related arts are an important part of the core curriculum embraced by our school's core values. Our students participate in weekly experiences in the areas of technology, art, music, Spanish, physical education and health/guidance. The music program encompasses instruments and performance in the middle school level, World Drumming at the upper elementary level, and Orff components at the lower elementary level. A second language is also important. Our students take Spanish starting in lower elementary and can leave our school with a Carnegie unit for high school in Spanish. Technology begins in lower elementary with direct instruction on using the many platforms available such as iPads, Chromebooks, and even Macintosh products. Students learn how to use the creative apps to create iMovies, Popplets for mind-mapping, Drive for saving electronic portfolios, and iBooks for creating books that upper students can write and record for lower elementary students.

A recent example of the creativity of Montessori teachers extending a related arts lesson to the Montessori classroom involved the Ecosystem Foss kit. The kit requires students in whole groups to plant, hypothesize about growth factors, and then record data as it grows based on the established factors. The ECMCS Montessori teachers developed a series of lab experiments to go with the kit instead of delivery as Foss wrote it. The students were immersed in the reading of material related to the ecosystems, journal topics and daily mathematic exploration related to the ecosystem for the level (measurement of growth, proportions, algebraic equations and other level appropriate math work) followed by making their kit based on the Foss directions (reading directions is a scientific skill) in their individual lab group as time permits for the small group. Students also used iPads to take daily pictures of the growth of their ecosystem and then used an app to compile the pictures over time into a time-lapsed movie. As the students explore curriculum across disciplines, learning is enhanced by engagement in their own time with the uninterrupted work-time, mixed-age groupings to explore ideas, appropriate leveled curriculum explorations, use of innovative technology, purposeful work that is meaningful as opposed to manufactured experiences that do not relate to students. Assessment is delivered as evidence of learning in a portfolio format containing the time-lapsed movie of growth, adjustments made with the engineering problem solving wheel, and the conclusion of the student interview that discusses the scientific process, factors influencing outcomes including enhancements to the model, and the result.

ECMCS has a strong program for economic understanding and students at each level gain the understanding of running a business. The lower elementary students design and sell shirts for events, the upper elementary students run a sub sandwich business, homemade soap

business as well as a free-trade coffee business called Carpool Café, and the middle school students run a pizza business. The skills learned from entrepreneurialism and the study of business are invaluable.

Maria Montessori wrote extensively in her late years about the adolescent years and the need for large body movement and purposeful work in planting the gardens and working the land while living in cooperative groups among peers and referred to it as the Erdkinder. In her words, *"My vision of the future is no longer of people taking exams and proceeding on that verification from that secondary school to the university, but of individuals passing from one stage of independence to a higher [one], by means of their own activity, through their own effort or will, which constitutes the inner evolution of the individual."* While there is not a possibility of our students to live together or work the land, ECMCS has transformed this idea into an approach to include the entrepreneur. After extensive studies in economics and business development, our students go on a one-week internship within a company outside the school environment where the adolescent can really explore their interests and make a difference in the community. The internship experience is often noted as one of the directional changes for student interest in post-high school academic or work experiences. The skills learned from running a business through their time at ECMCS are invaluable.

ECMCS students also participate in year-long peace projects donating time but not money to local non-profit organizations. The school has developed a program that honors the efforts of students' hands and their work as opposed to the ability of little people to talk adults out of their money. The projects begin at first grade and continue at each level of the school. In

the younger years, students are encouraged to find a project they want to invest their time into and as they progress in age. Students include in their presentation the measurements, assessments and value added to their interactions with local organizations. The peace-project aspect of our program has been extraordinary and life changing for students. Understanding that everyone wants to have a key to a home, one student group developed a non-profit organization with proceeds supporting an organization for the homeless after several years of making and selling decorated keys. Other activities have including shoveling oyster shells to refurbish oyster beds, clean-up projects, making dog toys from old towels, collecting hotel products and making toiletry bags for the homeless, and visiting the elderly that need the company of young people.

It is difficult to encompass the Montessori education into a few pages while including the standards for each grade level both for state standards, as they exist currently, and also the Montessori curriculum in its all encompassing completeness. Both state standards and Montessori objectives are outlined both separately as well as correlated with each other in accordance with the Common Core Curriculum, which is in place at the time of this application but scheduled for replacement within the first year of this application, in Appendix G. In every grade level and for each subject, the Montessori curriculum will meet and exceed the state's academic standards.

ECMCS has many educational components that make it so successful including the academic rigor as well as the social-emotional components of being part of a community, staying with a teacher for three years, developing peer relationships that last multiple years and valuing skills outside traditional components of education. The investment of time and energy to

continue to raise the bar on the part of educators, students, and parents sets it apart from other educational entities. ECMCS provides its experiences with less taxpayer money than any other traditional school and as such should be recognized for the contribution to the families of Charleston County School District. The selection of a school for the education of a child is by far the hardest decision a parent must make in today's educational landscape. ECMCS makes it a bit easier to choose an educational entity that values the whole child and thus the whole family.

#### 5. Goals and Objectives

Like all schools in the Charleston County School District, ECMCS aims to provide an excellent educational experience that will enable students to meet academic standards set by the state, and which will prepare our youth to become responsible citizens and lifelong learners. By definition, however, charter schools must bring something new and innovative to the district in which they wish to operate. In order to justify taxpayer support, charter schools must demonstrate that they provide new opportunities for student achievement, which do not already exist in the District. Charter schools, in essence, are the government's way of stimulating and investing in new ideas in the education marketplace. Charter schools that demonstrate success can then be replicated, while those that fail to meet their mission are not allowed to continue operating. Bill Lewis, former Chief Operating Officer for Capital Programs with the Charleston County School District, recently referred to ECMCS as the "yeast in Montessori bread here in Charleston County School District," pointing out our influence in replicating public Montessori programs as part of the heralded Zone Concept that has made Montessori available and easily accessible to every parent across the 1,000 square miles that make up CCSD.

In accordance with the South Carolina Charter School Act of 2005, ECMCS uses the

innovative approach of the Montessori Method to target several key areas of student learning which are particularly important to our children's success. Specifically, ECMCS has become an educational asset to the Charleston County School District and the broader community by maintaining high academic achievement, maintaining organizational viability and a faithfulness to the charter school providing an innovative educational experience for students.

As stated in Section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the Elementary Schools Education Act (ESEA), the school must make adequate, yearly progress toward the established goals of all public schools. Specifically, the South Carolina Department of Education will use multiple factors beyond ELA and math to determine a letter grade A-F for each school and district to recognize progress schools and districts make towards proficiency. The new accountability standard known as ESEA replaces No Child Left Behind's all or nothing based system of measuring objectives for each school or district with a more clear and understandable rating system. Starting with a base of PASS scores from 2011-2012, realistic Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for elementary, middle and high schools were developed using the current mean scores. In 2012-2013 and beyond, the increase of AMOs will increase by 3-5 points annually based on the empirical data. Given the data described, during the 2010-2011 school year, only about 27 percent of elementary and middle schools would have made AYP. ECMCS was one of the 27 percent of schools meeting the challenge.

See chart below from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/eseaflex/approved-requests/sc-amendment.pdf>

Table 4. Annual Measureable Objectives for SC

<b>Annual Measureable Objectives for South Carolina Mean Student Scores on State Standards Assessments and End-Of-Course Examinations</b>						
	<b>ELA</b>			<b>Math</b>		
	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>High</b>
2011–12	630	624	223	630	624	220
2012–13	635	628	226	635	628	223
2013–14	640	632	229	640	632	226
2014–15	645	636	232	645	636	230
2015–16	650	640	235	650	640	233
2016–17	655	644	238	655	644	236
2017–18	660	648	241	660	648	241
	<b>Science</b>			<b>Social Studies</b>		
	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>High</b>
2011–12	630	624	76	630	624	71
2012–13	635	628	77	635	628	73
2013–14	640	632	78	640	632	75
2014–15	645	636	79	645	636	77
2015–16	650	640	80	650	640	79
2016–17	655	644	81	655	644	81
2017–18	660	648	82	660	648	82

Elementary school AMOs are an annual increase of 5 points based on Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS).  
 Middle school AMOs are an annual increase of 4 points based on Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS).  
 High school AMOs for ELA and math are an annual increase of 3-to-4 points based on the High School Assessment Program (HSAP).  
 High school AMO for science (biology) is an annual increase of 1 point and the AMO for social studies (US History) is an annual increase of 1-to-2 points; both AMOs are based on End-Of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP).

ECMCS has been in business for twelve consecutive years and even when the school was made up of 44 students being educated in one portable classroom building where one test score could make a huge difference in the overall average of the school, the school has not missed the

mark even once on making adequate and annual progress as set by the Department of Education through No Child Left Behind or ESEA as of 2012.

***Goal 1: Academic Achievement***

While we can neither predetermine nor specifically characterize each student's full scholarly or personal potential, we can expect to see evidence of it through attainment of a well-designed curriculum and assessment system. The ECMCS Assessment Toolset combines the Montessori scope and sequence with the South Carolina Curriculum Standards, and provides Montessori integrated learning objectives for each of the planes of development served by the school.

***Outcomes***

We expect at least 80% of our students to meet or exceed the documented learning objectives for each of the four levels (Primary, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Middle School) in each of the following areas:

- 1.1 Mathematics
- 1.2 Language Arts
- 1.3 Cultural (science and the humanities)
- 1.4 Critical Thinking
- 1.5 Creative Problem Solving
- 1.6 Personal and Social Development

1.6.1 Self-Motivation

1.6.2 Self-Reliance

1.6.3 Respect for the Prepared Environment (exhibiting appropriate behaviors so that every student can focus on learning; respect for the learning environment and materials, respect for others, and completion of the work cycle)

1.6.4 Community Service

### ***Measurement***

East Cooper Montessori employs a broad spectrum of assessment methods, both internally developed tools (the ECMCS Assessment Toolset) and external assessments.

### **Internal**

The Toolset is a comprehensive system that relies heavily on existing Montessori practices of highly detailed and frequent observation and recording on the part of the teachers; student self-assessment; and a set of learning objectives that the East Cooper Montessori faculty has developed based on a correlated Montessori/South Carolina Standards curriculum. It consists of the following elements:

Guidelines for teachers in observing student work

- Tools for recording progress
- Tools for setting student goals
- Portfolio development, both process and best-work, with exhibitions before graduation
- Report cards

The teacher uses the collective evidence provided by observations, student work samples, and progress reports to determine whether a student has met or exceeded the learning objectives. The learning objectives are documented and available for review for audit purposes.

**External**

*Standardized Tests*

East Cooper Montessori administers the PASS as required by the State of South Carolina. It also administers the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) test two times per year to every student. Because test scores do not constitute outcomes in and of themselves, we do not have specific goals for test results beyond what is stated in the school charter. Rather, we use test results as an analytical tool to aid in setting future goals with the child. These results are also monitored over time to see the child's progress and to determine appropriate instructional strategies.

**School Report Card**

*Standardized Tests*

- Test at met or exemplary level in Grades 3-8 on yearly testing
- Maintain a grade of A or B as measured by ESEA
- Meet or exceed District or State attendance rate, whichever is higher (currently State = 94.5% and District = 95.91%)
- Maintain student withdrawal rate to below 10%

***Goal 2: Organizational Viability***

East Cooper Montessori strives to provide a strong and reliable infrastructure to support the school's learning community in both the short and long term.

***Outcomes***

We expect to attain the following outcomes:

**Finance**

2.1 Sound financial management

2.2 Progress toward financial independence from economic and political climates

**Measurement:**

- Consistent demonstration of sound fiscal practices through annual independent financial audits with no material findings.
- Meeting or exceeding annual development goals
- Consistently balanced annual budgets that demonstrate careful management of resources

**Staffing**

2.3 Long-term retention of highly qualified faculty and administration

2.4 Professional development opportunities for faculty and administration to meet the needs of the school

**Measurement:**

- Minimum 75% per year retention of administration (Principal, Assistant Principal, Guidance Director, and Financial Director) and faculty.

- Minimum 75% of faculty and administration meeting their individual professional development goals each year, with documentation thereof on file.
- Documentation of professional development goals presented with budget each year.
- Minimum 90% of head teachers Montessori trained for the level they are teaching.

**Enrollment**

2.5 Wait list adequate to meet the school enrollment objective

2.6 High rate of returning students

2.7 Encourage diversity

**Measurement:**

- Minimum of two applications per opening each year
- At least 85% of non-graduating students returning each year

2.8 Attendance Rate

**Measurement:**

- Documented efforts to increase diversity toward a goal of 20%
- Meet or exceed District attendance rate of 95.91%

**Governance**

2.9 Board of trustees that provides appropriate stewardship of the school

**Measurement:**

- Achievement of all goals as set during annual board retreat
- Bi-annual external audit of board operations
- Low intra-term trustee turnover (less than 25%)

**Dissemination of Best Practices**

2.10 Continue to foster East Cooper Montessori Charter School as a model for public Montessori programs.

**Measurement:**

- Present papers at regional and national conferences when financially possible and appropriate
- Document indicators of external program dissemination, including to local and regional public school districts

**Family Participation**

2.11 High levels of family participation at all levels of school life

2.12 High percentage of families contributing financially to the school

**Measurement:**

- Minimum 80% of families contributing volunteer hours
- Minimum 60% of families meeting 40-hour requirement
- Minimum 50% of families contributing money to the annual giving program

***Goal 3: Faithfulness to the Unique Aspects of the Charter***

East Cooper Montessori's mission is to provide an authentic and complete Montessori program within the public sphere. It is also to integrate regional history, culture, and ecology into the learning process, so that students become aware of both the larger world beyond school and their places in it. This, in turn, is key to the last part of the school mission, which is preparedness

for future schools, careers, and civic life.

***Outcomes***

- 3.1 Meet nationally recognized standards for high-quality Montessori education.
- 3.2 Acquire and maintain community partners for both curriculum and service in our surrounding region. East Cooper Montessori teachers will individually cultivate curriculum partners, as well as create opportunities for community service.
- 3.3 Provide unique extra curricular activity opportunities that support school culture.

**Measurement**

- Commission a bi-annual audit by an independent Montessori educator to assess our status and progress via a vis the “Essential Elements of Successful Montessori Schools in the Public Sector,” a checklist endorsed by major Montessori accrediting organizations and by the East Cooper Montessori Board of Trustees. A majority of positive findings from this audit will constitute evidence that we are meeting the expectation for an authentic and complete Montessori program.
- Maintain membership affiliation with the American Montessori Society (AMS).
- School records will reflect the involvement of the school, individual peace projects, community service, and the development of curriculum partners.
- School records will reflect an array of opportunities available to the community-at-large as well as ECMCS students.

## 6. Evaluating Pupil Performance

Accountability is a key activity at East Cooper Montessori Charter School, encompassing every level of our organization: students, parents, faculty, administration, and the board of trustees. Montessori education has rightfully gained an outstanding reputation over the last 100 years, and there is a growing body of research to document its effectiveness. By demonstrating our success empirically, East Cooper Montessori reinforces Montessori as a public school model. It is a powerful incentive for ECMCS to continue to show as clearly as possible how we do what we do.

The absence of weekly quizzes and incessant chapter testing is not indicative of the absence of assessment. The Montessori teacher is very skilled at assessing every day in every lesson while making notes, using checklists or developing portfolios. A cornerstone of Montessori education is keen observation of each child as he/she pursues his/her work as well as the expectation of students to take responsibility for their own learning and goals. ECMCS uses a series of internal assessments to monitor individual progress, including teacher created tests, daily observation, individual learning plans, portfolios, and report cards to ensure student success. Many of these techniques have been used in Montessori schools for decades; not simply for monitoring and the mechanism for understanding where each child is in his/her learning but also to provide students with feedback they need to progress towards mastery. In this way, Montessori educators are assessing how the curriculum and content resonates with students, assessing students' own interest level and progress toward self discovery as well as other more

appropriate ways content can be explored to meet learning differences.

Montessori teachers are also skilled at using the summative approaches to assessment to guide student goal setting as well as professional development goals. A single form of assessment is never the foundation of a full assessment or outlook on the mastery level of a student's development.

The child and parent play central roles in assessment. As each child matures, he/she plays an increasingly integral role in setting his/her own goals, assessing his/her own work, and tracking his/her own progress. Parents participate formally two times a year in conferences, with more frequent interaction and support at home strongly encouraged.

A key Montessori tenet underlying our approach to student assessment is that we follow and support the child, providing materials, settings, and lessons appropriate for each successive developmental stage. It is well understood that children learn at different rates as they grow. While we cannot expect all children of a given age to be ready to learn the same curriculum at the same pace within a given year (especially if we give them latitude to fully explore their interests), we can set reasonable expectations for a cohort over a three-year cycle. Maria Montessori defined the planes of development not in annual terms but in multi-year spans (0-6, 6-12, and 12-14), because she understood that the latter was a more accurate way of capturing the reality of human development. Thus, we define our program in terms of *levels* (Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Middle School), rather than one-year *grades*. Likewise, we assess readiness to move up in the same increments. Each child receives a detailed report card

four times per year, along with two parent conferences, to assure the child is making progress toward mastery within the defined levels. Student assessment and progress is communicated through the CCSD-produced report cards and the ECMCS Annual Report.

### Report Cards

Students receive report cards quarterly to show academic progress in all subject areas. Core subject scores of English language arts, math, social studies and science are calculated using measures from in-class work, homework, projects, and assessments. Students will also receive feedback on patterns of learning consistent with the Montessori classroom standards. Special areas scores will include measures of content knowledge and effort/conduct. Students receiving credit for high school courses will have final grades indicated on report cards for the successive school.

### Academic Instruction Assessments

#### **MAP – Measures of Academic Progress**

All students take this computer-adaptive assessment in the Fall and Spring each year. MAP results help teachers guide individualized instruction according to the RIT scale results for each student. MAP assessments are also used to measure growth of every student over time regardless of performance level.

#### **CogAt – Cognitive Abilities Test**

All second grade students will be screened for gifted potential through the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAt). This assessment tests students' abilities in reasoning and problem solving using verbal, quantitative and nonverbal (spatial) symbols. Students identified as having gifted potential will receive differentiated instruction in the classroom with their Gifted and Talented endorsed lead teacher. Students not identified in second grade will have the opportunity to take the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade CogAt test.

### **OLSAT – Otis Lennon School Ability Test**

Students not identified for gifted potential in second grade will have the opportunity to take the Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) in grades 4-8. The OLSAT is a test of abstract thinking and reasoning ability. It includes questions in the areas of verbal, quantitative, and spatial reasoning ability.

### State Mandated Assessments

#### **SCPASS – South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards**

Students in grades 4 – 8 take this summative assessment in science and social studies.

Assessments are based on grade-level state standards of content knowledge and skills.

#### **SC State Summative Assessment**

At the time of writing this charter, the South Carolina Department of Education is in contractual negotiations for a new summative assessment in the content areas of writing, English language

arts and math. ECMCS, as a public charter school sponsored by the Charleston County School District, will participate in the determined assessment beginning in the spring of 2015.

Data analysis of State Mandated assessments are used to identify weaknesses in programmatic decisions and work toward implementing innovative strategies to increase student growth and achievement.

### Pupil Performance

Procedures for addressing pupil performance that falls below achievement goals will begin with identifying students who score below the 25 percentile on assessments including reading screenings and MAP Math and Reading tests. Both classroom and pullout interventions will be implemented with progress monitoring toward performance goals. Students will continue with interventions until adequate progress has been made. Interventions may be added or modified if a student's growth is not sufficient. Classroom teachers and Special Education personnel will be responsible for implementing interventions and monitoring progress consistently.

**Table 5. Summary Table of ECMCS Assessments by Grade Level**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Montessori Student Self-Assessment</b>	<b>Montessori Teacher Assessment</b>	<b>Standardized Assessment</b>
<b>Kindergarten</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-correcting materials</li> <li>• Weekly work plans</li> <li>• Repetition &amp; Mastery</li> <li>• Peers as sources of feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing teacher observation</li> <li>• Mastery checklists/MRX</li> <li>• Review of completed work</li> <li>• Portfolio assessment</li> <li>• Quarterly report card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circle</li> </ul>
<b>One</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-correcting materials</li> <li>• Weekly work plans</li> <li>• Repetition &amp; Mastery</li> <li>• Peers as sources of feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing teacher observation</li> <li>• Mastery checklists/MRX</li> <li>• Review of completed work</li> <li>• Portfolio assessment</li> <li>• Quarterly report card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAP</li> </ul>
<b>Two</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-correcting materials</li> <li>• Weekly work plans</li> <li>• Repetition &amp; Mastery</li> <li>• Peers as sources of feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing teacher observation</li> <li>• Mastery checklists/MRX</li> <li>• Review of completed work</li> <li>• Portfolio assessment</li> <li>• Quarterly report card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAP</li> <li>• GT Screening assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Three</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-correcting materials</li> <li>• Weekly work plans</li> <li>• Repetition &amp; Mastery</li> <li>• Peers as sources of feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing teacher observation</li> <li>• Mastery checklists/MRX</li> <li>• Review of completed work</li> <li>• Portfolio assessment</li> <li>• Quarterly report card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAP</li> <li>• PASS - writing, ELA, math, ss, science</li> <li>• Nominated GT assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Four</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-correcting materials</li> <li>• Weekly work plans</li> <li>• Repetition &amp; Mastery</li> <li>• Peers as sources of feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing teacher observation</li> <li>• Mastery checklists/MRX</li> <li>• Review of completed work</li> <li>• Portfolio assessment</li> <li>• Quarterly report card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAP</li> <li>• PASS - writing, ELA, math, ss, science</li> <li>• Nominated GT assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Five</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-correcting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAP</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>materials</li> <li>• Weekly work plans</li> <li>• Repetition &amp; Mastery</li> <li>• Peers as sources of feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>observation</li> <li>• Mastery checklists/MRX</li> <li>• Review of completed work</li> <li>• Portfolio assessment</li> <li>• Quarterly report card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PASS - writing, ELA, math, ss, science</li> <li>• Nominated GT assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Six</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-correcting materials</li> <li>• Weekly work plans</li> <li>• Repetition &amp; Mastery</li> <li>• Peers as sources of feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing teacher observation</li> <li>• Mastery checklists/MRX</li> <li>• Review of completed work</li> <li>• Portfolio assessment</li> <li>• Quarterly report card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAP</li> <li>• PASS – writing, ELA, math, ss, science</li> <li>• Nominated GT assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Seven</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-correcting materials</li> <li>• Weekly work plans</li> <li>• Repetition &amp; Mastery</li> <li>• Peers as sources of feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing teacher observation</li> <li>• Mastery checklists/MRX</li> <li>• Review of completed work</li> <li>• Portfolio assessment</li> <li>• Quarterly report card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAP</li> <li>• PASS - writing, ELA, math, ss, science</li> <li>• EOC for high school credit courses</li> </ul>
<b>Eight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-correcting materials</li> <li>• Weekly work plans</li> <li>• Repetition &amp; Mastery</li> <li>• Peers as sources of feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing teacher observation</li> <li>• Mastery checklists/MRX</li> <li>• Review of completed work</li> <li>• Portfolio assessment</li> <li>• Quarterly report card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAP</li> <li>• PASS - writing, ELA, math, ss, science</li> <li>• EOC for high school credit courses</li> </ul>

## 7. Serving Students with Special Needs

As mandated by federal and state laws, Charleston County School District, along with Charter Schools, must adhere to policies and procedures for providing instructional and support services for students within the general education setting and students who require special education services. Charleston County School District is responsible for ensuring that all exceptional children, including those in Charter Schools, are receiving a free and appropriate

public education (FAPE) in their least restrictive environment (LRE). The Department of Exceptional Children Services will monitor and supervise the Charter School's compliance with IDEA and other special education procedures and regulations based on guidelines from the state and federal regulations. East Cooper Montessori Charter School will not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services. Our special needs students will be given access to a free and appropriate public education and related educational services – including transportation where necessary. Federal Public Law 94-142 and Chapter 33 of Code of Law of South Carolina 1976: Title 59 (Sections 59-33-10 through 59-33-110) will govern. The student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will specify any special circumstances (equipment, supervision, vehicle type, etc.) that will be provided to meet the student's needs. East Cooper Montessori Charter School serves approximately a 10-15% population of disabled students. Currently, the school employs one full-time Special Education Resource Teacher and one Special Education Coordinator/service provider. The school outsources the psychological testing services and has established a long partnership with Life Management for those services. The school also has a long-standing relationship with a contracted speech and language pathologist for the past 10 years as well as a contracted occupational therapist. The school based Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) consisting of the LEA, parents, special education teacher, regular education teacher, school psychologist and related services representatives are all responsible for the assessment of special education services as well as the development and implementation of IEPs in accordance with state and federal guidelines following Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement

Act (IDEA) of 2004, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and or Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). East Cooper Montessori Charter School supports an inclusion model of Special Education services. Montessori philosophy allows for each child to work and develop according to his/her own pattern of development and multi-age classrooms allow for an environment inherently suited for diverse learners. As students demonstrate need for academic support beyond all that is provided within the regular classroom, a certified school psychologist conducts an evaluation. The Multidisciplinary Team Meeting is held to identify and understand eligibility for Special Education services. An Individualized Education Plan meeting is then held to create specific annual goals based on a child's present levels of performance. These goals remain a point of focus throughout the child's next year as the Special Education team works with the regular education teachers, related arts teachers, resource teachers, as well as the principal, to help each child not only realize IEP goals but also to be a successful member within their classroom community. ECMCS contracts with a Speech and Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist and Physical Therapist in order to provide necessary services identified during the MDT meeting. The entire ECMCS community, including our students with special needs, benefits from an inclusive approach learning about diversity, respect, creativity and peace in all academic and non-academic areas.

#### 8. Student Discipline, Suspension, and Expulsion

ECMCS strives to provide a safe learning environment for all students. ECMCS adopts the Charleston County School District Code of Code Conduct with the exception that appeals are

made to the ECMCS Governing Board as opposed to the CCSD Board of Trustees. The ECMCS Student Code of Code is updated annually and the current approved established set of guidelines is contained in Appendix I of this document. The ECMCS Code of Conduct clearly states levels of disciplinary infractions and actions that may be taken as a result. The charter school complies with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-63-235, which provides for the expulsion of any student who brings a firearm to school, and with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232). The students and parents of every ECMCS student will be given and acknowledge receipt of the explanation of the policies with regard to student conduct, rights, and responsibilities at the beginning of the school year.

Under IDEA of 2004, the continued provision of FAPE for a student with a disability who is expelled from a public school remains with the LEA. The sponsor may have a policy or agreement with the charter schools within the LEA that puts the obligation on the school to ensure the continued provisions of a FAPE for expelled students. The SCDE, however, is required to hold the LEA responsible for the education of that student.

## 9. Governance and Operation

ECMCS is organized as a non-profit corporation. A copy of the ECMCS Articles of Incorporation and proof of South Carolina non-profit corporation status are included in Appendix K. A copy of the newly revised Bylaws is included in Appendix J.

East Cooper Montessori Charter School assumes the liability for the activities of the

charter school and agrees to hold harmless the school district, its servants, agents, and employees from any and all liability, damage, expense, causes of actions, suits, claims, or judgments arising from injury to persons or property or otherwise that arises out of the act, failure to act, or negligence of the charter school, its agents and employees, in connection with or arising out of the activity of the charter school.

The governing board and the staff of ECMCS will comply with the Freedom of Information Act, which protects student and family information from being revealed or released to non-authorized parties. The ECMCS Governing Board will consult legal counsel in any instance in which a Freedom of Information Act requirement appears to conflict with a FERPA requirement.

In compliance with the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-50 (B)(9), the ECMCS Governing Board will consist of seven members. The ECMCS Bylaws state the exact make-up and responsibilities of the board. Board elections will take place in the spring for duties to begin July 1st and end with two-year terms on June 30<sup>th</sup>. The governing Board will meet monthly and the meeting will be posted in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. The sponsoring district will also be notified of meeting place and times. Four members will be parents of currently enrolled students at the time of the term year of the position and three will be community members and non-parents or relatives of currently enrolled parents. Relatives of staff members present a conflict of interest in serving as parent or community members. The school's principal and financial director will serve as ex-officio members and a teacher member

will be elected by one vote of each staff member. Positions will be two-year terms and can be elected for one additional term before having one year off the board before applying for another two-year term with an additional elected term. The Governing Board will participate in annual board training to fulfill leadership duties of a public school and the laws that govern their position.

Fifty percent of the members of the board, as specified by the bylaws, must be individuals who have a background in K–12 education or in business. The bylaws of the charter school also provide for the manner of selection of these members. Parents or guardians of currently enrolled students at the time of the election shall have one vote for each student enrolled in the charter school and employees shall have one vote each. All members must be residents of the state of South Carolina. A person who has been convicted of a felony must not be elected to the board of directors.

The board committees will be comprised of one chair and one vice chair on each committee. The committees include: Education, Finance, Development, Community Relations, Administration, Facilities, and Diversity/Enrollment. Each committee presents updates on goals as set by the strategic plan at each monthly meeting. The meeting structure is held in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

The ability of a charter school to carry out its mission successfully depends upon the strength of its governing board. An effective board provides strategic direction for the school, chooses and nurtures a strong school leader, and ensures the school's financial and legal health. For a charter school to succeed, it must form a board that is committed to the school's mission,

possesses substantial leadership skills and expertise, sets policy that guides the school's work, and evaluates both the school and itself with an eye toward continuous improvement.

**Boards promote the charter school's mission.** In addition to fulfilling legal requirements, a charter school needs a board of directors composed of individuals who support the school's mission of providing a Montessori curriculum and seek to promote it. Board members advocate for their school by promoting its mission and goals within the community and in the wider education reform arena. It is the expectation of the Governing Board that an authentic and progressive Montessori curriculum will be implemented. The Governing Board will support and promote the implementation of this curriculum.

**Boards hire and supervise the charter school administrator.** One of the most important roles of the board is recruiting and supporting a dynamic administrator who can provide vision and leadership to the charter school. The administrator acts as the bridge between the board and the staff of the organization and is designated to act on behalf of the board to implement its policies. When looking for an administrator, the board must assess the charter school's specific needs, then seek a qualified individual who has the skills and experience to guide the charter school in meeting those needs. The board should also periodically evaluate the performance of the administrator in carrying out the decisions of the board and other assigned responsibilities.

**Boards have the ultimate responsibility for all employees hiring and termination.** The Board delegates this responsibility to the Principal who makes submissions to the Board for

their final approval. The board will hear appeals of termination appeals.

**Boards set important policies.** As stewards of the charter school, the board takes leadership in the overall policy development and implementation process. The board makes major financial and operation policies for the school, such as setting policies which impact whether or not the school makes progress toward meeting the student achievement and other objectives agreed to in the charter contract.

**Boards help to raise funds.** The ability to raise funds is an important measure of a board's effectiveness in serving a charter school. Building a group of regular financial donors will make it easier for the charter school to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals.

**The Board shall sign a Charter School Contract,** ensure compliance with all of the requirements for a charter school provided by the South Carolina Charter School Law, employ and contract with teachers and non-teaching employees, contract for other services, develop pay scales, performance criteria, and discharge policies for the Charter School employees.

**The Board is responsible for the Fiscal Year and Audit.** The Treasurer of the Corporation shall be required periodically and no less than once a year to employ a certified public accountant to audit the accounts of the Corporation.

**The Board is responsible for the approval of the operational school budget.** The day-to-day operation and management of the school shall be the sole responsibility of the Administration under the oversight of the Governing Board. The Administration initially shall consist of the Principal, Assistant Principal, and Financial Director. The Principal must also

serve ex officio on the charter school governing board and coordinate its efforts. The Administration will be responsible for maintaining accurate school/student records; making and following school policies; evaluating, training, hiring and promoting members of the faculty; administering entrance applications; and all other functions pertaining to the operations and maintenance of the school.

The Principal is responsible for the overall efficient business administration of the school and must be Montessori certified or in the process of receiving Montessori credentials. The Principal must remain in compliance with State standards as well as AMS guidelines, maintain all records on staff and children, coordinate enrollment, and plan fiscal year budgeting in cooperation with the Governing Board. In addition, the Principal is responsible for maintaining the physical, social-emotional, cognitive and health safety of enrolled students; directing and supervising the daily performance of staff; addressing programmatic issues (curriculum, calendar, afterschool program, etc.); keeping adequate resources in the building, maintaining and repairing the school; evaluating staff and providing professional growth and training as needed; purchasing supplies; and communicating with parents. The Principal will coordinate these efforts with other members of the faculty and administration team and will coordinate with the Officers of the Corporation on matters pertaining to the fiscal budget and any other needs to facilitate the successful operation of the school.

## 10. Parent and Community Involvement

The preponderance of research on parental involvement in children's education shows that students with more actively involved parents are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs; have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school; and graduate and go on to postsecondary education. At ECMCS, there are many ways that parents and the community are involved in and positively affect the governance and operation of the school.

Parents, teachers and staff, and students are given the opportunity to weigh in on the school's operation and governance by completing an annual survey. Survey results are compiled and analyzed by administrative staff and the board and are used to help guide policy and set goals in the school's strategic plan. Teacher conferences are offered to parents twice each year and are heavily attended. Teachers and staff also have a chance to make their voice heard in weekly staff meetings with the principal and teachers are encouraged to engage the Montessori and education communities by presenting at conferences and other education venues. A Parent Teacher Network (PTN) is headed up by parent volunteers and meets once a month to keep parents apprised of school issues and to provide educational presentations on topics such as the Montessori Method, brain science, cyber bullying, and how to talk to their children. The PTN is focused on increasing and improving communication between the school and parents by providing relevant information and giving parents an opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns.

Parents are required to contribute 25 volunteer hours per year and the school logs about 5,000 hours annually. With board members acting as a liaison between the volunteers and the board, parent volunteers plan and execute fundraisers for the school including an annual Auction and, beginning this year, a Fall Festival. Parent volunteers are in the school on a regular basis acting as reading buddies, drill sergeants (math skills), spelling partners, lunch buddies, and field trip chaperones. Parents also help to keep the classrooms stocked with Montessori materials by producing miles of laminated materials that must be cut out and organized for use by the students.

All students are required to complete 24 hours of community service, the peace project, each year. Students can develop their own personal peace project or take part in monthly school-wide activities that are organized by parent volunteers. Students are out in the community helping at animal shelters, conducting beach sweeps, participating in walks to support medical research, decorating a local senior living center for the holidays, monitoring local water quality, collecting books for children in the hospital, and raising money for a local homeless shelter by selling handcrafted keys. The 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the Adolescent program take part in a week-long internship each year at a local business where they contribute their time and talent at veterinary and medical offices; marketing, insurance, real estate and engineering firms; museums; dance and karate studios; food establishments, etc.

We are fortunate to have strong ties with the community that are evident in our securing sponsorships of our annual Auction and Montessori Model United Nations program from community members such as Piggly Wiggly, McCay Kiddy & Associates, and Trident

Construction. Members of the Mount Pleasant Fire Department also volunteer their time as reading buddies and drill sergeants.

The administrative staff works closely with the Charleston County School District in advancing its plan to expand public Montessori education in the district, is active in the Public South Carolina Charter School Alliance and the South Carolina Montessori Alliance Board.

Efforts to reach a diverse student population include the following: maintaining the school website with information about the application process and providing information on the Montessori method, offering monthly school tours, advertising the lottery and providing access to computers to complete the application process, and participating in the District's annual School Choice Fair. Strategies under development include educating District 2 principals on the Montessori option, producing informational pamphlets and videos, and the Principal getting out in the community on a regular basis to network with groups such as Rotary Clubs and ethnically diverse churches and head start programs. A Diversity Committee has recently formed with parent volunteers to increase outreach with the community and it is hoped that the greater visibility and accessibility of the Rifle Range campus will result in an increasingly diverse applicant pool as well.

#### 11. Budget and Finance

ECMCS has twelve years of fiscally sound and conservative practices backing its strength as a viable business operation. As a school that began with the humble beginnings of a total budget of \$200,000 to the exponential growth of today's budget equaling \$2 million, the school has always exercised the utmost care in being stewards of taxpayer dollars. When the school opened its doors,

which included exactly four doors into only two portable classrooms, the school utilized parent volunteers to complete the cleaning care of the classrooms in order to keep the educational dollars in the classroom. Additionally, there was one part-time administrator paid only \$5,000 for an annual salary and while the charter school sponsored the Montessori training of teachers, they were paid significantly less than district teachers. The staff benefits available also paled in comparison to district staff with access to medical insurance but not as many personal days nor access to the state retirement program. But, significantly, the portable classrooms were stocked with the latest Montessori materials and learning tools for the benefit of staff and students. ECMCS teachers and students were among the first to receive laptops in every classroom, wireless Internet throughout the school environment, and even piloted the first SMART Board in 2006 long before SMART technology had gone mainstream. With each year since the inception of the school, the business has built a foundation upon which to add financial strength and additional benefits and tools. To date, the school has a benefits package that matches the school district's including access to the state retirement program, which is highly unusual for a charter school to be able to afford while also paying for facilities out of academic funds. The upfront investment in quality academic tools and furniture over time, while also utilizing collective bargaining where possible, has contributed to the increasing financial viability of ECMCS over time.

The process for fulfilling the lofty but attainable fiscal goals ECMCS sets annually begins with careful assessment of goals and growth projections for the upcoming school year with 5-year enrollment projections. The budget document relies heavily on the accuracy of the data input to each category. The process begins with the assumptions page, which outlines the number of classrooms,

number of students in each classroom, and the weighting calculations including any inflation factors. Next, the staffing page is updated with new staff positions and estimated increases followed by the revenue sheet, which calculates the revenue based on the calculations from the assumptions page. Lastly, the budget page draws formulas from the various sheets to calculate expenses and revenues for a final bottom line that feeds the Profit Loss statement that is used as part of the oversight at the board level. In addition, the Financial Director also compiles a dashboard for the board's monthly review that tracks expenses, revenue, student attrition, staff attrition, cash balance, budget to actual and headcount by level. The treasurer of the board also reviews each expense and bank statements along with reconciliations. There are multiple layers of oversight which also lend to the successful fiscal practices of ECMCS.

#### Budgeting Process

October – assess the expected revenues and expenses for current school year in line with projections from the spring.

November – Project growth for upcoming school year in preparation for the lottery.

December – Conduct lottery and grant placements based on space available.

January – Conduct surveys of staff, parents and students. Analyze professional development and curriculum needs for new school year based on data including surveys and assessments.

February - First Reading of budget.

March – Second Reading of budget.

April – Finalize budget, issue contracts and begin allocations for next school year.

May – Continue allocations and planning for upcoming school year.

The school is fortunate to have a strong base of supporters that contribute both financially and with their time and talent to make our events successful. The charter brings in approximately \$75,000 annually in fundraisers with the annual auction and Annual Giving Campaign. Grants do not make up a large portion of contributions due to the school's small, low-socio –economically challenged population. The school used a capital campaign program in 2006 to raise \$250,000 over the course of three years to fund the new construction of the building at 250 Ponsbury Road. The parental and community financial support has been key in allowing the school to annually reach new heights not supported by state per-pupil funding.

The financial practices of the school allow it to function as a completely self-sustaining business. All financial and human resources matters are conducted in-house and very little is outsourced or contracted out. Currently, the school is charged a fee for processing the medical and retirement paperwork. The school does not access food services, custodial services, maintenance, curriculum, library and media services, or warehousing from district personnel. The school district has graciously made available a list of services available and contract rates should they be necessary. The district charter services contract is included in Appendix P.

The Professional Certified Staff System (PCS) accounting is submitted twice annually as requested by CCSD. The PCS data is verified for correctness by the ECMCS principal and the financial director before submission. The PCS data is used for funding and special revenue calculations.

The pupil accounting system complies with the principles included in the *South Carolina*

*Pupil Accounting Manual* and the *South Carolina Student Accountability Manual*, published by the SCDE at <http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/cfo/finance/Financial-Services/ManualsandGuidelines.cfm>. ECMCS uses the Power School Pupil Accounting System to classify students for the purpose of AFA funding. The Individual Education Plan, Speech Participation Forms, and Applications for Homebound Instruction are kept on file for all students receiving services in special programs. ECMCS also protects the confidentiality of student information within the PowerSchool system.

“In accordance with the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-40-50(B)(3), a charter school must adhere to the same financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as are applied to public schools. Also, in accordance with Section 59-40-230(E)(10), a charter school must procure an outside annual certified financial audit on funds and submit it to the SCDE as required. As a charter school is a component unit of the sponsor, the audit report is required to be submitted to the sponsor to incorporate the school’s audit report in the sponsor’s audit report” (South Carolina Department of Education). ECMCS annually contracts with a reputable auditor to perform an independent and thorough audit of ECMCS financial practices. The resulting audit is submitted to CCSD and compiled as part of the large district audit for the South Carolina Department of Education. Annually, East Cooper Montessori Charter School’s management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal controls relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from

material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. The auditor conducts our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that the auditor plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement. An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements. The school has not received any material findings in all of its twelve years and has continually implemented additional controls as the school has grown its business practices. The school disseminates the financial statements annually with a presentation by the auditor at a full and public board meeting. The financial statements are also subject to the Freedom of Information Act, are public information, and available to anyone upon request.

## 12. Employees

ECMCS maintains an effective recruitment program designed to attract, secure, and maintain the most qualified persons for all positions. The school adopted the procedures for the employment and dismissal of teachers outlined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-410 *et seq.* (2004). The school has a unique teaching faculty each chosen for their unique talents and contributions

to the educational goals of the school and its mission. As charter schools are, by statute, public schools, employees of charter schools are public employees. ECMCS employees have access to the medical benefits, SC State Retirement System and other benefits as approved by the ECMCS Governing Board. ECMCS employees have access to other benefits available to other public school employees in the state of South Carolina as defined and expressly granted in the statute.

ECMCS will continue to work within the expectations of the evaluation program for teachers and principals that meet the requirements of the SCDE's ESEA Flexibility Waiver (see <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/lpa/ESEAFlexibility.cfm>).

The Principal shall construct and implement procedures for attracting and employing teachers and other ECMCS employees. The school currently uses the district's website, the ECMCS website, online media avenues, conference sponsorships, job boards at the colleges and other available means for the advertising of available positions. The Board reserves the right to hire employees at will and may also consider contract employees.

The ECMCS Governing Board recognizes that the implementation of policies designed to provide quality educational programs is highly dependent upon the full and effective utilization of qualified individuals regardless of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, handicap, marital status, national origin, creed, political affiliation, ancestry, sex or age; except where sex or age is a bona fide occupational qualification. A criminal record history check on all new employees will be conducted through the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) as well as Raptor National registry checks or comparable vendor upon their recommendations for employment.

Newly hired employees are required to submit to a federal and local background check, submit the results of a TB test, attendance at the school district orientation, benefits sign up, submission of picture ID, submission of biography for the website, written sample required for employment in addition to paperwork as determined by the HR Director or Financial Director.

ECMCS recognizes that much of the success of a charter school hinges on the flexibility in administrative decisions. The ECMCS Governing Board also recognizes that the South Carolina System for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT) is the most appropriate method of teacher evaluation at this time; however, charter school law provides flexibility in utilizing an evaluation system. Charter law also allows the hiring of noncertified teachers, not to exceed 25 percent of its faculty. Teachers of a core academic area (English/language arts, mathematics, science, music, art, or social studies) must be certified in that area or must hold a baccalaureate or graduate degree in that subject and meet the Highly Qualified requirements of ESEA. A noncertified teacher must be appropriately qualified for the subject matter taught, must have completed at least one year of study at an accredited college or university, and must meet the qualifications outlined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-115. Elementary certified teachers may teach in any academic area and in any grades allowable by the status of their certification.

ECMCS understands that the adoption of the ADEPT program does not necessitate that all employees have contracts. ECMCS reserves the right to hire at will employees where necessary

in accordance with employment laws.

The ECMCS Governing Board approves the employee handbook outlining policies and procedures. The handbook will be given to all employees and revised annually. Employees will sign a statement indicating their receipt of the handbook and willful acceptance of the policies and procedures contained within. All policies and procedures in the handbook will comply with South Carolina and US federal laws.

The ECMCS Governing Board recognizes the need to provide an orderly means for the expeditious resolution of disputes concerning differences among employees and between employees and administrators. A grievance is defined as “a disagreement involving the work situation in which an individual or group of individuals believes that an injustice has been done, an unfair policy, or the misapplication or misinterpretation of policy. Issues related to salary, benefits and insurance are not grievances and are not covered by this procedure.”

The ECMCS Governing Board encourages employees to discuss their concerns or complaints informally with their supervisor(s). If, at any time, an employee feels that a formal mechanism for raising his/her concern or problem is needed, he/she should follow the procedure outlined in the Employee Handbook.

The school’s structure of staffing is not as traditional as found in most school settings. The Principal or CEO of the organization must be Montessori certified and in the case of the

founder and current leader also certified as a SC teacher as well as a certified Elementary School Principal. The principal of a South Carolina charter school must be certified or have a least one year of experience in administration. The principal facilitates all layers of business practices including tracking revenue streams and all financial practices, development practices, HR functions of hiring, evaluating and termination, instructional leadership and professional development, assessment and accountability, planning with Governing Board and parent organizations, plant and facility operations, as well as coordinating events and activities. The principal delegates the day-to-day operations of those activities to other administrators, teachers, the financial director and out-sourced vendors. The HR duties of the charter leader continue to be the most time-consuming and complicated parts of the position. Ultimately, the principal is responsible for HR practices and policies at all levels of the school with the Governing Board as oversight.

Assistant Principal is the primary daily operational figure implementing and following through with organizational goals listed above. Currently, the assistant principal role and the guidance director are one staff member.

The Guidance Director sets the tone for children in today's educational landscape. The guidance person works with assessment and accountability to support teachers, students and administration in making curriculum decisions, set goals for students, develop strategies for peer support, set transitional plans, meet with whole groups and small groups for support, help with

crisis intervention, professional development, program management, and leadership development. The guidance director is a third pillar of the administrative team.

Director of Curriculum and Professional Development is a position the school will be able to fully utilize upon reaching full capacity. As the teachers are now in the leadership phase of being Montessori educators, a position of curriculum facilitator and professional development will be added in the next few years to enable our teachers to keep their practices on the cutting edge with the latest tools and research while addressing the many needs of children in the classroom. For the past twelve years, ECMCS has funded the training of new Montessori teachers as well as professional development through gifted and talented conferences, Montessori conferences both locally and nationally as well as other program development opportunities through the GOF funding streams as well as fundraising. The school has invested over \$100,000 in the development of our teachers over the past ten years and their leadership in the Montessori community is a direct result of investment in quality programs.

Special education teachers and the special education coordinator also must follow the South Carolina Certification requirements. Any teachers hired or contracted to meet the needs of exceptional children must meet qualifications that are in alignment with the South Carolina Charter Schools Act, the No Child Left Behind Act, and changes to IDEA requiring that special education teachers meet the “highly qualified” standards. Therefore, ECMCS teachers of exceptional children must meet the following minimum criteria:(1) minimum of a Bachelor’s degree; (2) content knowledge demonstrated by achieving a passing score on state approved

certification examinations, and (3) valid South Carolina Teaching Certificate in the area of disability with no waivers of any requirements. Special education teachers needing additional certification to better assist students with special needs will be given one year to take coursework necessary to gain this certification. While they are becoming certified in necessary areas, ECMCS will contract with other agencies in order to provide the full range of necessary services for any and all children with special needs.

Montessori Lead Teachers and Teacher Assistants are hired in accordance with Montessori principles and state guidelines. East Cooper Montessori Charter School requires its lead teachers to be state certified in the area they teach, in addition to Montessori certified at the level they teach, and also have an endorsement for Gifted and Talented added to their state certificate. East Cooper Montessori Charter School will employ primary teachers certified in Early Childhood and holding a certificate for Primary Montessori. Lower Elementary Teachers are state certified in Early Childhood or Elementary as well as holding a certificate in Montessori Lower Elementary. Upper Elementary Teachers are state certified in Elementary and Montessori certified at the Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary levels. Middle school teachers are certified in the two core content areas as well as Montessori certified at the Adolescent (12-15) level. With recent legislation concerning the certification of primary, lower, and upper level Montessori teachers in South Carolina, teaching certificates may be obtained one of two ways. First, a teacher may have a South Carolina teaching certificate as a result of graduating from an

Education program and meeting all other requirements for state certification. Second, a Montessori teacher with a four-year degree (which does not have to be in Education) may receive his/her South Carolina teaching certificate by passing the PRAXIS. Teachers who receive their South Carolina teaching certificate through this newly created avenue will only be eligible to teach at Montessori public schools; their certification will not be accepted at public schools which are not Montessori. Job Descriptions for each position are located in Appendix S.

### 13. Insurance Coverage

ECMCS will continue to maintain adequate levels of insurance coverage to insulate the school. Appendix T contains a summary of all current policies including type of insurance, carrier, limits, cost, coverage dates and copies of the policy documents. Insurance policies and the limits will be adjusted accordingly with the projected future enrollment. Where applicable, the Charleston County School District will be named as an additional insured.

- i. Workers Compensation Insurance – The State Accident Fund is providing the school’s workers compensation insurance based on current payroll at an annual premium of \$8,694, coverage dates running through August 6, 2015 and limits of \$100,000/\$100,000/\$500,000.
- ii. Liability Insurance – The school’s general liability policy with Philadelphia Insurance provides liability coverage which exceeds the limits set forth by the South Carolina Tort Claims Acts with a limit of \$2,000,000, coverage running through August 15, 2015, and an annual cost of \$1,417.

- iii. Property Insurance – The South Carolina Budget & Control Board’s Insurance Reserve Fund (IRF) provides building replacement coverage totaling \$2,968,000 and a contents/fire coverage limit of \$925,000. The IRF policy has an annual premium of \$19,990 with coverage running through August 6, 2015.
- iv. Indemnity Insurance – The IRF policy provides general tort and professional liability for our ECMCS board, officers, executives and teachers with a limit of \$1,000,000. The policy has an annual premium of \$7,355 with coverage running through August 6, 2015.
- v. Automobile Insurance – The school does not own or plan on purchasing any vehicles but has obtained a quote for automobile insurance from the South Carolina School Boards Trust (SCSBIT) with a limit of \$1,000,000. The SCSBIT insurance quote is attached to Appendix T.
- vi. Other Insurance – The Western Heritage general liability policy covers the school’s playgrounds with a \$2,000,000 limit and coverage thru March 28, 2015 at an annual cost of \$768. The IRF policy also has a separate professional liability line for the school nurse with a limit of \$600,000 with an annual cost of \$80. The Philadelphia general liability provides Sexual/Physical Abuse coverage, which has a limit of \$500,000, with an annual cost of \$350.

#### 14. Transportation

Requiring families to drive students to school and pick them up at school limits East Cooper Montessori Charter School’s student diversity. The charter school looks to a financial stability that allows for the school to contract bus services either through the school district or an outside vendor that is within the means of the charter school. Currently, the school contracts bus services through the school district vendor for field trips and other bussing needs. The cost for

trips and other bussing expenses are passed on to the parent in the form of trip expenses. The school has also begun the process of collecting address and neighborhood information to aid parents in developing a carpool plan.

### 15. Facilities

Every part of Montessori education is designed to inspire the child and the environment is no exception. In Linking Architecture and Education: Sustainable Design for Learning Environments, Anne Taylor and George Vlastos developed a theory regarding the relationship between environment and design within the classroom. They referred to the physical environment of the classroom as the “silent curriculum” and hold strongly to the belief that understanding the physical environment is essential to the education of children. Maria Montessori also developed her theory around the environment and its significance for learning and its design being much more like a home than a classroom. In addition, plants and animals have an impact on children’s achievement levels and behavior. Children spend a great amount of time in their classrooms and they deserve a comfortable, beautiful, well-designed space to grow. The outdoor space should be an extension of the classroom and a place to meditate, walk a labyrinth, experience gardening, enjoy a natural play space with hills and water features, care for animals, design structures or sit with a friend. There are many wonderful architects well versed on Montessori environments to help design the perfect space.

In addition to world class educators, the Montessori-designed space has at least 1,000 square feet of space per classroom along with multi-use spaces for a workshop where students can create and envision designs, a technology lab with laptops and tablets for design ideas, a cafeteria where students can prepare meals and break bread, and garden space to grow and experiment.

East Cooper Montessori Charter School has proven that great education can happen almost anywhere or more importantly, Montessori-inspired spaces can be designed even in portable classrooms with the additional exterior structures that extend the interior space to the outdoor environment. The school began in a modest portable classroom in the beautiful walking neighborhood of I'On. After the first year, it moved to a civic-zoned, rental lot in I'On where it expanded from one portable unit to three portable units with six classroom spaces. After five years of operation and careful planning, the developer of I'On worked with ECMCS to donate a double lot property putting the school in a position to secure financing and build a permanent structure to serve its students. Two years after building the building, it became clear leadership would need to secure more space to realize the school's full potential. In the fall of 2012, ECMCS began discussions with CCSD to find additional space. Charleston County School district voted to approve ECMCS' use of 1120 Rifle Range Road starting in the fall of 2014. CCSD has agreed to renovate their building for life safety and program requirements while ECMCS will provide Montessori services, training and support to CCSD as part and parcel of the agreement. ECMCS will sell its current property in I'On and permanently move the full program

into the fully renovated Rifle Range property occupying the entire campus starting in the fall of 2015. The school district personnel along with ECMCS will work with the Office of School Facilities at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/os/School-Facilities/> to secure permitting for renovations in a timely manner and within the guidelines. ECMCS and CCSD understand the requirements of the Office of School Facilities and the timeline necessary for all renovations. Drawings are in Appendix V. The lease agreement is included as part of Appendix W. Budgets reflecting the move to Rifle Range Road are part of the charter agreement contained in this document. ECMCS also understands the school and district must comply with the 2014 Construction and Planning Guide. See the ECMCS Partnership Proposal approved by Charleston County School District as part of the plan for the Rifle Range property.

16. School Management Contracts

No management contracts.

## **D. Required Application Forms**

### 1. Signature Certification Form

Print the Signature Certification Form (page 33) and obtain the appropriate signatures from the chair of the charter committee and the sponsor’s authorized representative. Note: this form includes certification of the South Carolina public charter school program statement of assurances. Retain the copy of the statement of assurances included in this RFP (pages 31–32) for your records and ensure that each signatory has a copy of the document. By signing the Signature Certification Page, the signatories assure that they will comply with all the assurances for the charter schools program.

Once completed, scan the form into a PDF file and include both a hard copy and electronic file copy in the application per the instructions on pages 4–5. Applications that do not include the signed Signature Certification Page will not be reviewed or considered for approval.

### 2. Student Enrollment Projections for 10 Year Charter

Access the form at <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/se/School-Transformation/Charter-Special-Focus>; a sample is presented on page 34. Save the form as a PDF file. Include both a hard copy and electronic file copy in the application per the instructions on pages 4–5. Applications that do not include this form will not be reviewed or considered for approval.

## **E. Application Appendices**

Include a table of contents as the first page of the appendices.

For the electronic submission copy (see pages 4–5), save each appendix item applicable to the application by the proposed charter school name and appendix item letter as follows: “[Name of Charter School] Appendix [letter].pdf.” For example, appendix G, saved in PDF format for the proposed charter school “All Hands Charter” would be saved with the file name “AllHandsCharterAppendixG.pdf.”

All appendices must be saved as separate files; Appendix N, Five-Year Budget, may be saved as either a Microsoft Excel file or a PDF. All other appendices must be saved as PDF documents. Save each appendix file into a folder titled “[Name of Charter School] Appendices” and include this folder in the electronic copy.

The following table presents the appendix items that correspond to specific sections of the application. Applicants are encouraged to use this table to ensure that their application includes all required appendix items.

<b>Narrative Section</b>	<b>Appendix Corresponding to Narrative Section</b>
1. Mission Statement and Executive Summary	No appendix items required.
2. Evidence of Need and Support	Appendix A. Charter Committee Appendix B. Evidence of Support Appendix C. (if applicable) Conversion School Support
3. Enrollment	Appendix D. Letter(s) from Sponsoring District regarding Desegregation Order
4. Educational Program	Appendix E. School Calendar and Daily Schedule for the Academic Year Appendix F. (if applicable) Virtual School List of Courses Appendix G. Supporting documents for the described Educational Program
5. Goals and Objectives	No appendix items required.
6. Evaluating Pupil Performance	No appendix items required.
7. Serving Students with Special Needs	Appendix H. (if applicable) Agreement with Sponsoring District for Special Education Services
8. Student Discipline, Expulsion, or Suspension	Appendix I. (if available) Student Handbook
9. Governance and Operation	Appendix J. Bylaws Appendix K. Articles of Incorporation Appendix L. Organizational Chart (school administration, employees, and relationship to district)
10. Parent and Community Involvement	No appendix items required.
11. Budget and Finance	Appendix M. School Enrollment Projection Form Appendix N. Five-Year Budget (Excel spreadsheet or PDF) Appendix O. Ten-Year Budget Plan Appendix P. (if applicable) Memorandums of Agreement for Negotiated Services (sponsor or any third party)
12. Employees	Appendix Q. Letter of Agreement from Sponsor regarding Compliance with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-410 <i>et. seq.</i> (2004) Appendix R. Sample Job Descriptions Appendix S. Key Employee Policies
13. Insurance Coverage	Appendix T. Insurance Documents (include all applicable)
14. Transportation	Appendix U. (if applicable) Transportation Services Contract
15. Facilities	Appendix V. (if applicable) Floor Plan of Identified Facility Appendix W. (if applicable) Proposed Lease or Rental Agreement Appendix X. (if applicable) Documentation from the SCDE's Office of School Facilities
16. School Management Contracts	Appendix Y. (if applicable) Proposed EMO Contract Appendix Z. (if applicable) Evidence EMO Can Do Business in South Carolina



**Statement of Assurances**

*For informational purposes only.*

*The applicant certifies to abide by these assurances by signing and submitting the Signature Certification Page. Keep a file copy of both documents.*

As the authorized representative of the applicant group, I hereby certify under the penalties of perjury that the information submitted in this application for EAST COOPER MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and further, I understand that, if awarded a charter, the school and its governing board

- A. Will comply with all federal and state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services.
- B. Will not charge tuition or other charges of any kind except as may be allowed by the sponsor and is comparable to the charges of the local school district in which the charter school is located.
- C. Will adhere to the same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements as are applied to other public schools operating in the same school district or, in the case of the South Carolina Public Charter School District (SCPCSD) or a public or independent institution of higher learning, the local school district in which the charter school is located.
- D. Will meet, but may exceed, the same minimum student attendance requirements as are applied to public schools.
- E. Will adhere to the same financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as are applied to public schools.
- F. Will report to its sponsor and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) documentation of the appropriate use of federal funds the Charter School may receive.
- G. Will use the same pupil accounting system as required of public schools and districts.
- H. Will employ noncertified teachers in a ratio of up to 25 percent of its entire teaching staff (10 percent for conversion schools). All teachers in core academic areas will be highly qualified as defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).
- I. Will employ one administrative staff member who is certified or experienced in the field of school administration.

- J. Will be secular in its curriculum, programs, governance, and all other operations.
- K. Will comply with the Freedom of Information Act.
- L. Will comply with the ESEA legislation and applicable provisions of the SCDE's ESEA waiver.



- M. Will adhere to all provisions of reporting student truancy, discipline incidents, and persistently dangerous situations as required by ESEA.
- N. Will assume liability for the activities of the charter school and will indemnify and hold harmless the school district, its servants, agents, and employees from any and all liability, damage, expense, causes of action, suits, claims, or judgments arising from injury to persons or property or otherwise which arises out of the act, failure to act, or negligence of the charter school, its agents and employees, in connection with or arising out of the activity of the charter school.
- O. Will report to its sponsor and the SCDE any changes to information provided under its application in a timely manner.
- P. Will report at least annually to its sponsor and the SCDE all information required by the sponsor and by the SCDE, including, at a minimum, the number of students enrolled in the charter school, the success of students in achieving the specific educational goals for which the charter school was established, and the identity and certification status of the teaching staff.
- Q. Will adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students with disabilities, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 that are applicable.
- R. Will adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students who are limited English proficient (LEP), including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974.
- S. Will comply with S.C. Code Ann. § 59-63-235 (2004), which provides for the expulsion of any student who brings a firearm to school.
- T. Will comply with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232).
- U. Will comply with any school district desegregation plan or order in effect.
- V. Will adhere to all requirements of the Office of School Facilities as detailed in the Charter School Facilities Approval Form.
- W. Understand that, as a charter, we gain autonomy to make decisions in exchange for accountability to our authorizer.



**Signature Certification Page**

Name of Proposed School: East Cooper Montessori Charter School  
1120 Rifle Range Road

Mailing Address (if known):  
Mount Pleasant, South Carolina 29464

City, State, Zip Code:  
East Cooper Montessori Charter School Governing Board

Name of Applicant Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor (local school district board, SCPCSD, or institution of higher education/technical college) Name:  
Charleston County School District

**Certification:** I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the information and data contained in this application are true and correct. The applicant’s governing body has duly authorized this application and documentation, and the applicant will comply with the South Carolina Public Charter School Statement of Assurances if the charter school is approved.

**Kim Durst**  
Signature of Charter School Governing Board Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Authorization:** We hereby certify that the sponsor listed above has duly authorized this charter application. This authorization indicates that the terms of this application constitute a contractual agreement between the two organizations represented below pursuant to Section 59-40-60 of the South Carolina Charter School Act (1996). According to state and federal guidelines, charter schools must provide evidence of improved student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Sponsors must use increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the ESEA as the most important factor when determining to renew or revoke a school’s charter. Each sponsor and charter school must enter a contractual agreement stating that student performance of all students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v) of the ESEA is the most important factor when determining to renew or revoke a school’s charter.

Charter School Governing Board Chair Name:  
**Kim Durst**  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor Representative Name:

**Cindy Bohn Coats**

Signature

Date



**Student Enrollment Projections for 10 Year  
 Charter**

Name East Cooper Montessori Charter School

GRADE	2015– 2016	2016– 2017	2017– 2018	2018– 2019	2019– 2020	2020– 2021	2021– 2022	2022– 2023	2023– 2024	2024– 2025
Pre- Kindergarten	8	16	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
Kindergarten	8	16	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
First	48	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
Second	41	48	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
Third	35	41	48	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
Fourth	38	35	41	48	56	56	56	56	56	56
Fifth	38	38	35	41	48	56	56	56	56	56
Sixth	29	38	38	35	41	48	56	56	56	56
Seventh	29	29	38	38	35	41	48	56	56	56
Eighth	26	29	29	38	38	35	41	48	56	56
Ninth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tenth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Eleventh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Twelfth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	300	346	389	416	434	452	473	488	496	496

## Procedures and Standards for Review of Charter School Applications

**Title of Regulation:**  
**PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS FOR**  
**REVIEW CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATIONS**

**Regulation No.: R 43-601**  
**Effective Date: 06/28/13**

### **Constitutional and Statutory Provisions:**

Section(s):

Section 59-5-60.	General powers of [State] Board.
Section 59-40-10, et seq.	Charter Schools.

Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976.  
P.L. 111-117 Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010  
U.S. Code Ann.

### **State Board Regulation:**

Procedures and Standards for Review of Charter School Applications.

#### I. DEFINITIONS

(A) A “charter school” means a public, nonreligious, non-home-based, nonprofit corporation forming a school that operates by sponsorship of a public school district, the South Carolina Public Charter School District, or a public or independent institution of higher learning, but is accountable to the board of trustees, or in the case of technical colleges, the area commission, of the sponsor which grants its charter. Nothing in this chapter prohibits charter schools from offering virtual services pursuant to state law and subsequent regulations defining virtual schools.

(B) “Applicant” means the person who or nonprofit corporate entity that desires to form a charter school and files the necessary application with the South Carolina Public Charter School District Board of Trustees, the local school board of trustees in which the charter school is to be located, or the board of trustees or area commission of a public or independent institution of higher learning. The applicant also must be the person who or the nonprofit corporate entity that applies to the Secretary of State to organize the charter school as a nonprofit corporation.

(C) “Sponsor” means the South Carolina Public Charter School District Board of Trustees; the local school board of trustees in which the charter school is to be located, as provided by law; a public institution of higher learning, as defined in Section 59-103-5; or an independent institution of higher learning, as defined in Section 59-113-50, from which the charter school applicant requested its charter and which granted approval for the charter school’s existence. Only those

public or independent institutions of higher learning, as defined in this subsection, who register with the South Carolina Department of Education may serve as charter school sponsors, and the department shall maintain a directory of those institutions. The sponsor of a charter school is the charter school's local education agency (LEA) and a charter school is a school within that LEA. The sponsor retains responsibility for special education and shall ensure that students enrolled in its charter schools are served in a manner consistent with LEA obligations under applicable federal, state, and local law.

(D) "Charter committee" means the governing body of a charter school formed by the applicant to govern through the application process and until the election of a board of directors is held. After the

election, the board of directors of the corporation must be organized as the governing body and the charter committee is dissolved.

(E) "Certified teacher" means a person currently certified by the State of South Carolina to teach in a public elementary or secondary school or who currently meets the qualifications outlined in Sections 59-27-10 and 59-25-115.

(F) "Noncertified teacher" means an individual considered appropriately qualified for the subject matter taught and who has completed at least one year of study at an accredited college or university and meets the qualifications outlined in Section 59-25-115.

(G) "Charter school contract" means a fixed term, renewable contract between a charter school and a sponsor that outlines the roles, powers, responsibilities, and performance expectations for each party to the contract.

(H) "Resident public school" means the school, other than a charter school, within whose attendance boundaries the charter school student's custodial parent or legal guardian resides."

(I) "Local school district" means any school district in the state except the South Carolina Public Charter School District and does not include special school districts.

(J) "Scholastic year" means the year that begins on the first day of July of each year and ends on the thirtieth day of June following.

## II. APPLICATIONS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE CHARTER SCHOOL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

(A) Review of Applications

All charter school applications must be reviewed by the Charter School Advisory Committee to determine compliance with the standards established below. The applications submitted to the Advisory Committee must demonstrate compliance with each standard. If the Advisory Committee determines that the application meets the standards set forth in this regulation, it must forward the application to the school district or institution of higher education from which the applicant is seeking sponsorship. The Advisory Committee must make a recommendation to the school district or institution of higher education, to either approve or deny the charter.

#### (B) Application Timeline

Applications must be submitted to the Advisory Committee on or before July 1 to ensure completion of the review process by December 1 of the year preceding the opening of the charter school. If a charter, to include a conditional charter, is not issued by December 1, the opening will be delayed one scholastic year. Charter applications must propose school openings that are consistent with South Carolina's definition of a scholastic year. The applicant must submit the application to their selected sponsor on or before the date that the application is submitted to the CSAC for review. Evidence of this act must accompany the application to the CSAC.

#### (C) Proposed Contract

A contract between the charter school and the sponsor must be executed and must reflect all provisions outlined in the application as well as the roles, powers, responsibilities, and performance

expectations for each party to the contract. A contract must include the proposed enrollment procedures and dates of the enrollment period of the charter school. All agreements regarding the release of the charter school from school district policies must be contained in the contract. The Department of Education shall develop a contract template to be used by charter schools and the sponsor. The template must serve as a foundation for the development of a contract between the charter school and the sponsor.

#### (D) Requests for Additional Information

If the Advisory Committee determines that an application does not meet one or more of the standards, it may request clarification or additional information from the applicant or the district. The Advisory Committee has the authority to incorporate this additional information into the application.

### III. CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION STANDARDS

(A) Mission Statement

The charter school application must include a mission statement that must be clear and must support the intent of the Charter Schools Act:

- (1) The purpose of the charter school must be clearly stated.
- (2) The purpose of the charter school must be consistent with the intent of the Charter Schools Act:

(a) S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-40-20 (Supp. 2007):

This chapter is enacted to:

- (i) improve student learning;
- (ii) increase learning opportunities for students;
- (iii) encourage the use of a variety of productive teaching methods;
- (iv) establish new forms of accountability for schools;
- (v) create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site; and
- (vi) assist South Carolina in reaching academic excellence.
- (vii) create new, innovative, and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system, with the goal of closing achievement gaps between low-performing student groups and high-performing student groups.”

(b) S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-40-30 (Supp. 2007):

The purpose of the Charter Schools Act is to create a legitimate avenue for parents, teachers, and community members to take responsible risks and create new, innovative, and more flexible ways of educating all children within the public school system.

(B) Admissions Policies and Procedures

The application must include a description of the charter school’s admission policies and procedures:

(1) The admission policies and procedures must reflect compliance with all federal and state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services.

(2) The admission policies and procedures must provide that, subject to space limitations, the charter school admits all children who are eligible to attend public school in the school district where the charter school is operating, except in the case of an application to create single-gender schools. For schools within the South Carolina Public Charter School District, or institutions of higher education, the enrollment is open to all children who are eligible to attend public school in the state. If the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building, lot, as specified in federal or state guidance, must accept students. There is no appeal to the local school board of trustees.

(3) The policies and procedures must not limit or deny admission or show preference to any individual group except in the case of an application to create single-gender schools; however, priority, which may not exceed twenty percent of the enrollment of the charter school for the categories in (b) and (c) below, may be given to

(a) a sibling of a pupil currently enrolled or attending, or who within the last six years attended the school for at least one complete academic year,

(b) children of charter school employees, and

(c) children of the charter school committee.

(4) Admission priority must be given to all students enrolled in a school undergoing a conversion.

(5) The policies and procedures must include provisions to grant or deny permission for students to attend the charter school if they reside in a school district other than the one where the charter school is located. This section is not applicable to schools authorized by the South Carolina Public Charter School District or institutions of higher education.

(a) In-district students will be given priority.

(b) Out-of-district student enrollment must not exceed 20 percent of the total enrollment of the charter school without the approval of the receiving district board of trustees. The sending district must be notified immediately of the transferring students. Out-of-district students must be considered on the basis of the order in which their applications are received.

(c) If the 20 percent of the out-of-district students are from one school district, then the sending district must concur with any additional students' transferring from that district to attend the charter school.

(6) If a charter school denies admission to a student for reasons other than the results of a lottery, the student may appeal the denial to the sponsor. The decision will be binding on the student and the charter school.

#### (C) Support for Formation of a Charter School

The application must include evidence that an adequate number of parents, teachers, pupils, or any combination of them support the formation of the charter school:

(1) The charter committee must include at least one teacher.

(2) The application must include documentation of support of parents, teachers, pupils, or any combination of them that demonstrates that the school would likely meet enrollment expectations. A list of prospective or tentatively enrolled students or prospective employees is not required. The application must set forth the anticipated enrollment for the school at each grade level.

(3) Evidence of the interest level of parents, teachers, pupils, or any combination of them must be provided in the application and may include, but not be limited to, documentation of attendance and support at community meetings and survey results.

(4) If the social situation of the proposed school's targeted population precludes establishing parental support, evidence should demonstrate support from community groups and agencies, including letters from these entities that specify the level of their commitment to the school.

(5) In the case of a proposal to convert a school, the application must also include evidence that two-thirds of the faculty and instructional staff voted to support the filing of the application and evidence that two-thirds of the voting parents or legal guardians voted to support the filing of the application. Parents or guardians shall have one vote for each of their children enrolled in the school (i.e., each student may be represented by only one vote). All parents or legal guardians of students enrolled in the school must be given the opportunity to vote.

#### (D) Educational Program, Goals, Objectives, Pupil Achievement Standards, and Curriculum

The charter school's educational program, goals, objectives, pupil achievement standards, and curriculum must be clearly described in the application and must meet or exceed any student

academic standards adopted by the school district in which the charter school is located. The application must demonstrate that the educational program is designed to enable each student to achieve these standards.

- (1) The goals and objectives must be clearly stated and must provide enough detail to indicate specific outcomes.
- (2) The student population must be identified by grade level, unique educational needs, and projected enrollment. A converted charter school must offer the same grades, or nongraded education appropriate for the same ages and education levels of pupils, as offered by the school immediately before conversion and may also provide additional grades and further educational offerings.
- (3) The educational goals must reflect the school's mission statement.
- (4) Strategies to accomplish the educational goals must be included.
- (5) The school calendar must be at least 180 instructional days.
- (6) Academic standards must identify what students will achieve at each grade level and must meet or exceed the South Carolina curriculum standards, as adopted by the State Board of Education. A correlation or other documentation must be included or process identified to ensure that the school will provide an instructional program that meets or exceeds the academic standards.
- (7) If the charter school plans to offer the South Carolina State High School Diploma, the application must set forth the method for meeting the state requirements for the High School Diploma, including, but not limited to, course unit requirements, seat time for Carnegie Units, as applicable, and passage of the required examinations.
- (8) Provisions must be included for determining if all students are achieving or attaining the standards, including the methods by which student performance information will be gathered and monitored.
- (9) The application must include an explanation as to how the school will comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

#### (E) Student Assessment

The application must include a description of the charter school's plan for evaluating pupil achievement and progress toward accomplishment of the school's achievement standards. The school's evaluation plan must include state-mandated assessments and other assessments as well as the timeline for meeting these standards and the procedures to be taken if pupil achievement falls below the standards.

(1) Methods for evaluating pupil achievement at each grade level must be specified. These methods must include but should not be limited to the state assessments.

(2) The timeline must identify the expected yearly progress toward meeting the school's long-term performance goals. The expected yearly progress must meet or exceed the expectation of the federal accountability system recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

(3) Provisions must be included to address the needs of students who do not perform at acceptable levels of proficiency in the statewide assessment program.

#### (F) Budget and Accounting System

The application must include a plan for the charter school that is economically sound and in compliance with state and federal requirements:

(1) A budget for the term of the charter must be included. The charter school must use the same budget codes as are required of school districts. The budget must be based on documented State Department of Education estimated revenues in accordance with the allocations in S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-40-140(A)-(C). If the budget includes funds acquired through grants, the application must present evidence that the funds, including federal public charter school start-up grants, are likely to be received, and the terms of the projected grants must be explained. Anticipated expenditures must include all costs associated with initial implementation and continued operation, including but not limited to instructional and support costs for:

(a) salaries,

(b) employee benefits,

(c) purchased services (includes insurance and transportation),

(d) supplies and materials (includes noncapital equipment), and

(e) capital outlay.

(2) The application must include a description of the annual audit of the financial and administrative operations of the charter school, including evidence that the charter school will adhere to the accounting, auditing, and reporting procedures and requirements that are applied to public schools operating in South Carolina. Accounting, auditing, and reporting requirements must be in compliance with the principles set forth in the following publications, published annually by the Office of Finance:

(a) Single Audit Guide,

(b) Financial Accounting Handbook, and

(c) Funding Manual.

(3) The application must include documentation regarding the pupil accounting system, including evidence that the charter school will adhere to the procedures and regulations that are applied to public schools operating in South Carolina. Pupil accounting and reporting requirements must be in compliance with the S.C. Pupil Accounting Manual and the S.C. Student Accountability Manual, published by the State Department of Education.

(4) The application must include documentation of any negotiated services provided by the school district, including but not limited to financial accounting, payroll services, food services, custodial services, maintenance, curriculum, library and media services, and warehousing.

(G) Governance and Operation

The application must include a description of the governance and operation of the charter school:

(1) The charter school must be organized as a South Carolina non-profit corporation and the application must include a copy of the non-profit corporation's articles of incorporation and bylaws.

(2) The board of directors must consist of seven or more individuals with the exact number specified in or fixed in accordance with the bylaws. Members of a board of directors may serve a term of two years, and may serve additional terms. A choice of the membership of the board must take place every two years. Fifty percent of the members of the board as specified by the bylaws must be individuals who have a background in K–12 education or in business, and the bylaws of the charter school also must provide for the manner of selection of these members. In addition, at least 50 percent of the members of the board as specified by the bylaws must be elected by the employees and the parents or guardians of students enrolled in the charter school.

Parents or guardians shall have one vote for each student enrolled in the charter school. All members must be residents of the State of South Carolina. A person who has been convicted of a felony must not be elected to a board of directors. If the board of directors consists of an odd number of members, the extra member must be an individual who has a background in K–12 education or in business;

(3) The board of directors must assume the following responsibilities:

(a) Employing and contracting with teachers and nonteaching employees;

(b) Ensuring that teachers, whether certified or noncertified, undergo the background checks and other investigations required for certified teachers, as provided by law, before they may teach in the charter school;

(c) Contracting for other services;

(d) Developing pay scales, performance criteria, and discharging policies for its employees;

(e) Deciding all other matters related to the operation of the charter school, including budgeting, curriculum, and operating procedures; and

(f) Ensuring that the charter school will adhere to the same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements as are applied to all public schools operating in the same school district;

(4) The application must include a description of the administrative structure of the charter school, including the roles and responsibilities of each administrative staff member.

(5) Evidence of the nature and extent of parental, community, and professional educator involvement in the governance and operation of the school must be provided.

(6) Evidence must be provided that the charter school and its governing body will comply with the Freedom of Information Act. Such evidence may include the bylaws of the nonprofit corporation, which must be established prior to application.

(H) Administrative and Teaching Staff

The charter school must employ administrators and teachers in a manner consistent with the Charter Schools Act:

(1) Part-time noncertified teachers must be considered pro rata in calculating staff percentages based on the hours, which they are expected to teach.

(2) A noncertified teacher must be appropriately qualified for the subject matter taught, must have completed at least one year of study at an accredited college or university, and must meet the qualifications outlined in S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-25-115.

(3) A certified teacher must hold current certification by the State of South Carolina to teach in a public elementary, middle, or secondary school.

(I) Racial composition

The application must describe how the charter school intends to ensure that the enrollment of the school is similar to the racial composition of the school district or to the targeted student population the charter school proposes to serve and must also provide assurance that the school complies with any school district desegregation plan or order in effect:

(1) The application must demonstrate timely, fair, and realistic policies and procedures for recruiting, registering, and admitting students that reflect the racial composition of the school district or the targeted school population.

(2) The proposed procedures and policies must reflect an understanding of the racial composition of the district and the targeted student population.

(3) To ensure compliance with a desegregation plan or order, the charter school applicant should take the following steps and provide documentation that these steps were taken in its application:

(a) Request and receive a letter from the district indicating whether the school will be subject to any desegregation plan or order;

(b) Secure a copy of the desegregation plan or order if the school is subject to such;

(c) Determine and demonstrate that the charter school's policies and procedures are in compliance with the desegregation plan or order;

(d) Request and receive a letter from the district that indicates whether the charter school's proposed policies and procedures are in compliance with any desegregation plan or order in effect in the district or whether clarification must be received from the Office for Civil Rights.

(J) Transportation

The application must include a description of how the charter school intends to meet the transportation needs of its pupils:

- (1) If the charter school will provide transportation by school bus, the application must include a plan that complies with the state requirements for drivers and training and the state safety requirements for school buses.
- (2) If the lack of transportation is preventing a child from attending school, the charter school must provide or facilitate transportation for that student.
- (3) If the charter school intends to contract with the district or a third party for transportation services, a description of those services and a proposed contract must be provided in the application.
- (4) A charter school is not required to provide or facilitate transportation for out-of-district students.

#### (K) Facilities and Equipment

The application must include a description of the building, facilities, and equipment and an explanation as to how they will be obtained:

##### (1) Facilities Identified in Application

(a) If a facility suitable for use by the charter school is identified at the time of application, the application must provide the following information with regard to the facility that the charter school intends to occupy:

- (i) The address of the facility;
- (ii) A description of the facility;
- (iii) A floor plan of the facility, including a notation of its size in square footage;
- (iv) The name and address of the owner of the facility; and
- (v) A copy of the proposed lease or rental agreement if the facility will be leased or rented.

(b) If the facility that the charter school will occupy is being used as a public school at the time of application, the application must specify the name and location of that school and must

include documentation setting forth the specific days and times during which the charter school is authorized to use that facility.

(c) The application must either demonstrate that the proposed facility is in compliance with requirements set forth in the South Carolina School Facility Planning and Construction Guide for charter school occupancy or must provide a description of that facility and must demonstrate that it will meet the requirements:

(i) A certificate of occupancy or a letter from the Office of School Facilities stating that the facility meets the appropriate codes is adequate to show compliance with this standard with regard to school facilities.

(ii) If a certificate of occupancy is not issued or cannot be obtained at the time of application, the application must provide evidence that the charter school committee is working with an architect and/or the Office of School Facilities to correct any deficiencies in the facility.

## (2) Facilities Not Identified in Application

If the charter school has not identified a suitable facility, the application must specify a plan for obtaining such a facility and must include

(a) A description of the facility needs,

(b) A statement as to whether an existing facility will be remodeled or a new facility will be built, and

(c) A schedule for completing or obtaining a suitable facility and, if applicable, a description of and timeline for any plan to raise funds for completing or obtaining the facility.

(3) The application must include a description of the equipment that will be used to support the proposed curriculum and an explanation as to how the equipment will be obtained.

## (L) Employee Relations

The application must explain the relationship that will exist between the charter school and its employees, including evaluation procedures:

(1) The application must include a description of the process that will be used to advertise for, select, and employ instructional staff and other employees.

(2) The procedure for the evaluation of teachers of the charter school must be outlined in the application.

(a) The charter school may choose to use the ADEPT (Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching) program. If ADEPT is to be used, the school must meet all requirements of the program.

(b) If the charter school selects another method of evaluation, that method must be explained with adequate detail. Teachers with Initial Teaching Certificates in those schools can advance to a renewable Limited Professional Teaching Certificate but cannot advance to a full Professional Teaching Certificate.

(3) The application must explain how the terms and conditions of employment will be addressed with affected employees.

#### (M) Grievance and Termination Procedures

The charter school must have a reasonable grievance and termination procedure for its employees:

(1) The charter school may, with agreement from the sponsor, adopt the procedures for the employment and dismissal of teachers outlined in S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-25-410 et seq. (1990).

(2) If the charter school does not adopt procedures for the employment and dismissal of teachers outlined in S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-25-410 et seq. (1990), the charter school must establish employment and termination procedures that provide for notice and a right to a hearing before the governing board.

(3) The charter school application must include grievance or termination procedures for paraprofessionals and other staff.

(4) Teachers and other staff members who are employed at a public school that converts and who desire to continue to teach or work at the converted school may do so but will remain employees of the local school district with the same compensation and benefits including any future increases.

#### (N) Student Conduct, Rights, and Responsibilities

The charter school application must include a policy governing student conduct, student rights and responsibilities, and student discipline standards and procedures:

- (1) The charter school may adopt the district's policy on student conduct and discipline.
- (2) If the charter school does not adopt the district's policy on student conduct and discipline, the charter school application must include a policy that sets forth clear expectations for student conduct.
- (3) The policy must set forth disciplinary actions to be taken by the administration for breaches of the student conduct policy.
- (4) The application must set forth an appeal process for students recommended for expulsion that includes a right to appeal a decision to the charter school board.
- (5) The application must set forth an assurance that the charter school will comply with S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-63-235 (Supp. 2001), which provides for the expulsion of any student who brings a firearm to school.
- (6) The application must include an assurance that the charter school will comply with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. Section 1232).
- (7) The application must contain the explanation of the policies with regard to student conduct, rights, and responsibilities that will be given to parents and students at the beginning of the school year.

(O) Indemnification

The charter school must assume the liability for the activities of the charter school and must agree to indemnify and hold harmless the school district, its servants, agents, and employees from any and all liability, damage, expense, causes of action, suits, claims, or judgments arising from injury to persons or property or otherwise that arises out of the act, failure to act, or negligence of the charter school, its agents and employees, in connection with or arising out of the activity of the charter school.

(P) Insurance

The application must include a description of the types and amounts of insurance coverage to be obtained by the charter school. The application must address, but is not limited to, the following types of insurance: workers' compensation, liability, property, indemnity, and automotive.

(1) The application must include a description of workers' compensation insurance and amounts and a statement from a South Carolina licensed insurance company or the state insurance reserve fund setting out the charter school applicant's ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance.

(2) The application must include a description of liability insurance and the amounts to be obtained by the charter school and a statement from a South Carolina licensed insurance company or the state insurance reserve fund setting out the charter school applicant's ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance. The minimum policy must cover the limits of the South Carolina Tort Claims Act (S.C. Code Ann. Section 15-78-120 (Supp. 2001)).

(3) The application must include a description of the insurance to cover loss to the school building and contents for fire and theft and a statement from a South Carolina licensed insurance company or the state insurance reserve fund setting out the charter school applicant's ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance.

(4) The application must include a description of indemnity insurance against civil and criminal liability for the charter school to protect the sponsor, the members of the board of the sponsor, and the employees of a sponsor acting in their official capacity with respect to all activities related to the charter school. A statement from a South Carolina licensed insurance company or the state insurance reserve fund setting out the charter school applicant's ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance must also be included.

(5) The application must include a description of automobile insurance, both property and liability insurance, and a statement from a South Carolina licensed insurance company or the state insurance reserve fund setting out the charter school applicant's ability to secure the insurance and an estimate of the cost of the insurance.

## **Charter School Facilities Approval Process**

Effective January 1, 2014

All charter schools must construct and maintain facilities that meet all the requirements of the latest edition of the *South Carolina School Facilities Planning and Construction Guide (Guide)*. The OSF cannot waive requirements of building, fire, or other applicable codes and regulations.

In accordance with state statute and regulation, all schools must contract with South Carolina–licensed designed professionals to provide construction documents, code, zoning and land-use analysis, transportation analysis, and other professional services as needed. Additionally, accessory buildings considered Assembly Occupancies by the codes, such as auditoriums and gymnasiums, require the services of licensed design professionals.

The charter school is responsible for all roadway improvements required by the SCDOT, including, but not limited to, road widening, intersection realignment, creation of turn lanes, and signaling. Traffic studies at the expense of the school may be required to determine requirement, and traffic improvements may extend to intersections beyond the actual school site. The charter school is responsible for any additional property and cost required for roadway improvements to the property.

### **Responsibilities of the Charter School:**

1. Contact the Office of School Facilities for information to set up a school account to include school name, contact information, and proposed opening date.
2. Contact the Office of School Facilities to schedule a site evaluation visit for your proposed school site.

### **Submittal Process by the Architect:**

1. The architect must submit plans in accordance with the process in the *Guide*.
2. All local ordinances and regulations, including zoning ordinances, must be met in addition to state regulations, such as SCDHEC Food Services requirements. Approval of plans by permitting authority is required prior to final plan approval by the OSF. Consult the *Guide* for additional information on permitting.
3. Bidding cannot begin until the charter school has received final approval on the construction documents. This approval will serve as the building permit for the project.

### **Construction Process:**

1. All projects will require inspections by independent, third-party vendors in addition to the inspections performed by the OSF. Consult the *Guide* for this procedure.
2. **Occupancy of the charter school cannot occur until OSF has issued a Certificate of Occupancy. This includes teachers setting up classrooms and student orientation.**

Questions and submissions to the OSF concerning charter schools should be directed to:

**Pat Hinson**  
Office of School Facilities

SC Department of Education  
1429 Senate Street, Suite 1114  
Columbia, SC 29204  
Tel: 803-734-4836  
Fax: 803-734-4857  
E-mail: [phinson@ed.sc.gov](mailto:phinson@ed.sc.gov)

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