

Florida Charter Schools

Standard Application Format



**FULLY REVISED FOR
2004-2005**

Latest Revision: Monday July 21, 2003

Requirements in this revision apply to all charter applications (new or renewal) filed or pending on or after September 1, 2003

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2004 Charter School Application -- Standard Format

These requirements apply to all charter applications (new or renewal) filed or pending on or after September 1, 2003

Please answer the following questions in the sequence in which they appear. Following each question is a brief description of the standards that may be used to review your application. These review standards are not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive, but rather, should serve as a helpful guide to formulate your responses.

All items marked with “” are required by law to be included.**

I. ACADEMIC DESIGN

1) Guiding Principles, Purpose, & Mission:

A. Describe the core philosophy or underlying purpose of the proposed school.

****B.** Describe how the school will utilize the Guiding Principles found in s. 1002.33(2) (a).

The Guiding Principles are:

1. Meet high standards of student achievement while providing parents flexibility to choose among diverse educational opportunities within the state’s public school system.
2. Promote enhanced academic success and financial efficiency by aligning responsibility with accountability.
3. Provide parents with sufficient information on whether their child is reading at grade level and whether the child gains at least a year’s worth of learning for every year spent in the charter school.

****C.** Describe how the school will meet the Prescribed Purposes of a charter school found in s.1002.33(2)(b).

The Prescribed Purposes are:

1. Improve student learning and academic achievement.
2. Increase learning opportunities for all students, with special emphasis on low-performing students and reading.

3. Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including ownership of the learning program at the school site.
 4. Encourage the use of innovative learning methods.
 5. Require the measurement of learning outcomes.
- D. If applicable, describe how the charter school will fulfill the Optional Purposes of charter schools found in s. 1002.33(2)(c).
- The Optional Purposes are:
1. Create innovative measurement tools.
 2. Provide rigorous competition within the public school district to stimulate continual improvement in all public schools.
 3. Expand the capacity of the public school system.
- E. Describe the target student population to be served, including student ages and grade levels at the school. If applicable, define target populations permitted in section 1002.33 (10) (d), Florida Statutes.

What reviewers will look for:

- *Clear statements with reference to items in section 1002.33 (2)(a)(b)(c), Florida Statutes:*
 - ** (a) Guiding Principles*
 - ** (b) Purposes that must be fulfilled*
 - (c) Purposes which may be fulfilled*
- *Clearly articulated vision for an innovative public school that will lead to improved educational outcomes and greater community ownership of the local school*
- *Clear indicators that the educational program will support the mission of the charter school*

2) Educational Program:

- **A.** Describe the educational program of the school, providing an overview of curriculum objectives and content of the main subject areas. The curriculum plan must be detailed and clearly illustrate how students will be provided those educational services necessary for them to attain the Sunshine State Standards.
- **B.** Describe the school's reading curriculum. Reading is a critical portion of Florida's education system and the law requires it be a "primary focus" of all school

curricula. All charter applications must contain a curriculum and strategy set for students reading at grade level or higher and a separate curriculum and strategy set for students who are reading below grade level. **Please Note:** Any reading curriculum proposed for use by the school **must** be consistent with effective teaching strategies and be grounded in scientifically based reading research.

To Get Help: Information on reading requirements may be accessed at:

http://www.justreadflorida.com/docs/reading_program.pdf

- **C. The Goals and Objectives to be used for improving student learning. These Goals and Objectives must indicate how much academic improvement students are expected to show each year, and the specific results to be obtained through instruction that ensures each child is receiving a year's worth of learning for each year spent in school.
- D. Briefly outline the instructional methods to be used, including any distinctive instructional techniques to be employed. How will this pedagogy enhance student learning?
- E. Describe how your school will meet the needs of Exceptional Education students.
- F. Describe how your school will meet the needs of limited English proficient students.

What reviewers will look for:

- ***Detailed Description of the school's curriculum highlighting the Goals and Objectives to be used to ensure each child receives a year's worth of learning for each year spent in school.*
- ***The differentiated reading curricula. **Please Note:** Sponsors are required to deny a charter if the school proposes a reading curriculum that is not consistent with effective teaching strategies that are grounded in scientifically based reading research.*
- *Innovative teaching methods and curriculum approaches*
- *Evidence that the educational program enhances the mission of the school*
- *Consistency between the mission, curriculum, and student population to be served*
- *Compliance with applicable regulations to meet the needs of limited English proficient and/or special needs students in the school program*
- *Identification and acquisition of appropriate technologies needed to improve educational and administrative performance; including a means for promoting safe, ethical, and appropriate uses of technology which comply with legal and professional standards*

3) Student Assessment:

- **A. Describe what Goals and Objectives will be used to measure student improvement, together with information on how student success in meeting the Goals and Objectives will be measured.
- B. Describe your plan to assess student performance in the core academic areas, including your plan to obtain student performance data for each of the students coming from the district school system. Please include the current baseline standard of achievement, the outcomes to be achieved and the method(s) of measurement to be used.
- C. Describe the methods used to identify the educational strengths and needs of students and the extent to which educational goals and performance standards are being met.
- D. To the extent possible, describe how students' rates of academic progress will be evaluated and compared with the rates of progress of comparable student populations.
- E. Describe how students will, at a minimum, participate in the statewide assessment program.
- F. For secondary charter schools, describe the method for determining that a student has satisfied the requirements for graduation in section 1003.43, Florida Statutes.

What reviewers will look for:

- *Commitment to high academic standards for all students*
- *Well-developed assessment mechanisms relying on stated Goals and Objectives*
- *Understanding of the state assessment requirements*
- *Means for ensuring accountability to the constituents of the charter school*

II. GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

1) Profile of the application group and management team:

- A. Describe the group submitting this application and other management team members including each person's or entity's name, background, professional or other relevant experience, and references.
- B. Provide information on which members of the founding group will continue as members of the governing board, or serve as operating officers, once the school is approved and in operation. Also, describe the relationship between the members of the governing board and the operational officers including information on any overlapping memberships and/or authority held by individuals in these two classes.

- C. Detail the relevant expertise of retained consultants or professionals (e.g. accounting, finance, educational management services, risk management, human resources).
- D. Identify any management or professional expertise that must be acquired and how that task will be achieved.
- E. Discuss any business arrangements or partnerships with existing schools, educational programs, businesses, or non-profit organizations.

What reviewers will look for:

- *A well-balanced group that collectively represents the skills required to start-up and operate a charter school*
- *Continuity between the founding group and the eventual members of the governing board and operating officers of the school.*
- *Résumés of key management personnel with permissions to perform financial background checks*
- *Dun & Bradstreet statement or other bank references on involved parties or entities*

2) School Governance:

- A. Describe the legal entity that will organize and/or operate the school.
- B. Outline the school's governance and management structure. Include clearly delineated responsibilities, policies, and practices needed to effectively manage the school.
- C. Will the school elect to be a public or private employer? If the school seeks to participate in the Florida Retirement Program, detail the process leading to such participation.
- D. How will the school's governing board be selected both initially and in the future?
- E. Describe the governing board's roles and responsibilities including how it will exercise continuing oversight over school operations.
- F. Propose a method for resolving disputes between the charter school and the sponsor.
- G. Describe anticipated parental involvement including:
 - input, comment, and/or participation in the school's operations or governance.
 - lines of communication between the school's governing board or management team and parents.

- methods for handling disputes between parents and the school.
- H. How will the school comply with Florida statutes relating to public records and public meetings. (Chapter 119, Florida Statutes and Section. 286.011, Florida Statutes)?

What reviewers will look for:

- *A stable, effective, and comprehensive school governance model with clearly defined roles and responsibilities*

3) Length of Charter and Implementation Timetable:

- A. State the requested charter term. If the applicant is eligible for and requests an initial charter term exceeding 5-years, outline the reasons supporting that request.
- B. Present a timetable for the school's start-up.

What reviewers look for:

- *A thoughtful and realistic implementation plan that covers major operational items and provides flexibility for addressing unanticipated events*

4) Recruiting & Marketing Plan:

- A. Demonstrate how you will publicize the school to attract a sufficient pool of applicants.
- B. What steps will be taken to reach students representative of the racial and socioeconomic diversity in the community, including typically "harder to reach" families?

What reviewers will look for:

- *A solid plan to attract sufficient students in order to operate a school*
- *Effort to publicize the school to a broad audience in order to foster a student body representative of the local community*
- *Recruitment efforts which seek to ensure a match between the school program and applicants' educational and personal needs*

III. FINANCE, FACILITIES & RISK MANAGEMENT

1) **Facilities:**

- A. Describe the facilities to be used and their location, or a plan to locate facilities.
- B. Demonstrate how the proposed site would be a suitable facility for the school to include any plans to renovate and bring the facility into compliance with all applicable local building codes.
- C. If applicable, discuss any progress, partnership developments, or other future steps towards the acquisition of a facility.
- D. Describe the financing or leasing plans for facilities.

What reviewers will look for:

- *Progress toward identifying and acquiring an adequate school facility*

2) **Finance:**

- **A. An annual financial plan for each year requested by the charter for operation of the school up to a maximum of 5 years. Each annual plan must contain:
 - 1. Anticipated fund balances based on revenue projections that take into account all expected sources and amounts of income including income derived from projected student enrollments and from community support.
 - 2. A spending plan based on projected revenues and expenses. The expense projection shall include a full accounting of the costs of operation, including start-up costs.
 - 3. A description of what controls will be employed to safeguard finances and projected enrollment trends.
- B. Describe the financial management and internal accounting procedures of the school.
- C. Present the format in which accounting records shall be maintained (“Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting for Florida Schools” or “not-for-profit”).
- D. Discuss the projected enrollment for a 3-year period needed to generate sufficient funds to support planned expenditures.
- E. Explain the plans for obtaining an annual audit of financial statements from an independent certified public account firm.

- F. Describe how the school will address the storage of student and financial records in a protected environment.
- G. Discuss the format and frequency of financial reporting to the sponsor (balance sheet, income statement, bank reconciliation, etc.).

What reviewers will look for:

- *Evidence of sound financial planning including:*
 - *Historical Balance Sheet and P & L Statement (if applicable)*
 - *Projected Balance Sheet and P & L Statement*
 - *Historical Cash Flow Data (if applicable)*
 - *Projected Cash Flow Data*
 - *Debt & Lease Options*
 - *Data on Contingent Liability*
- *Short term and long term fiscal viability of the school*

3) Risk Management:

- A. Describe procedures that identify various risks and provide for a comprehensive approach to reduce the impact of losses.
- B. Discuss plans to ensure the safety and security of students and staff.
- C. Describe plans that identify, minimize and protect others from violent or disruptive student behavior.
- D. Describe your school's insurance coverage plans, including applicable health, worker's compensation, general liability, property insurance and directors and officers liability coverage.
- E. Detail emergency plans to include or including fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, building evacuation, and child safety issues.

What reviewers will look for:

- *Adequate measures and coverage are in place to minimize risks for all parties*

IV. OPERATIONS

1) Admissions & Registration Plan:

- A. Describe the admissions procedures you will use. If students are articulating from one charter school to another, describe the process of articulation.
- B. Describe the timetable to be used for registering & admitting students, including a plan for the admission lottery if the number of applicants exceeds the program capacity.
- C. Describe the ways in which the school will endeavor to achieve a racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community it serves.
- D. In the case of an existing school being converted to charter status, suggest alternative arrangements for current students who choose not to attend the charter school.

What reviewers will look for:

- *Consistency with the mission of the school*
- *A non-discriminatory admissions process*
- *Timely and realistic procedures for admitting students*
- *Compliance with charter school legislation*
- *If applicable, a description of eligibility standards per section 1002.33(10), F.S.*

2) Class Size Requirements

Describe the methods the school will use to ensure compliance with Florida's constitutional class size provisions. This voter approved constitutional provision has been placed in law by the Florida Legislature during 2003 via SB30A: "The Quality Education Act" which establishes limits on the number of students in core curriculum classes by grade level. The standards of compliance begin in the 2003-2004 school year, and grow progressively more strict through the 2010-2011 school year when the amendment will be in full force and effect. All school districts have been notified how they will be expected to ensure compliance, and as student subscription rates vary from district to district all charter applicants should consult with their respective district officials regarding how best to design the class size section of their charter application.

What reviewers will look for:

- *A workable plan tied to enrollment projections that allows the school to meet its constitutional class size obligations.*

3) Student Code of Conduct, Discipline & Dismissal Procedures:

- A. Describe the Code of Conduct to be implemented in the charter school.
- B. Describe the discipline and dismissal procedures to be implemented in the charter school.
- C. Describe plans to ensure the safety and security of students and staff, as well as plans to identify, minimize, and protect others from violent or disruptive student behavior.

What reviewers will look for:

- *Evidence that the Code of Conduct outlines the charter school's commitment to safety for all its community members*

4) Human Resource Information:

- A. Describe the standards and potential strategies that will be used to recruit, hire, train, and retain qualified staff.
- B. Describe your human resource plan that will govern: salaries, contracts, hiring & dismissal, and benefit packages.
- C. Describe how the qualifications of the teachers will be described to parents considering the charter school for their children, as required in the charter statute s. 1002.33, F.S..
- D. What is the targeted staff size, staffing plan, and projected student-to-teacher ratio?

What reviewers will look for:

- *High professional standards for teachers and other staff*
- *Commitment to professional development and training of staff*
- *Working conditions and compensation packages which will attract and retain quality staff*

5) Transportation:

- A. Discuss the plans for transporting students to and from school. What arrangements, if any, will be made with the local school district, private providers, or with parents?
- B. Charter schools are responsible for providing transportation for students residing within a "reasonable distance" of the charter school. How has that reasonable distance been

defined in your charter transportation plan? What factors helped form the basis for this distance determination?

- C. Describe the policies that will help ensure that transportation is not a barrier to equal access for all students.
- D. If the school district is under court-ordered desegregation, describe how that has been taken into account in the transportation plan.

What reviewers will look for:

- *A workable, fair, non-discriminatory and cost-effective arrangement for safely transporting students to and from school*

V. FINAL DOCUMENTATION

After the charter is executed, the school's start-up may be conditioned upon the performance of (or upon providing a reasonable timetable for the performance of) duties such as:

1) Facilities:

- A. Documentation of the school's property interest in its facility.
- B. Inspections by relevant building and fire inspectors.
- C. Certificate of occupancy.
- D. Compliance with other applicable federal and state health and safety laws and regulations.

2) Governance Documents:

- A. Documentation evidencing the school's organization such as articles of incorporation, bylaws, and other agreed documentation.
- B. Updated governing board members' names, addresses, phone numbers, résumés, and evidence of required fingerprinting.

3) Certificates of Insurance and Other Agreed Items:

- A. Certificates of insurance and/or fidelity bonds for coverages outlined in the charter.

B. Other items agreed upon in the charter.

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