

Charter Petition Review for:

**Cobb County School District
Petition Evaluation Forms**

The following tools will assist the Charter Petition Review Team with the assessment of the charter school applications. The tools are based on Cobb County School District Board of Education (CCSD BOE) Policy and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) Charter School Petition Application process.

- Part I: The Initial Compliance Checklist – completed by the Assistant Superintendent of Accountability, Research & Grants. These items ensure the minimum application components have been submitted. Petitions, which do not demonstrate minimum compliance, will not be considered and withdrawn from the process.
- Part II: Initial Feedback – completed by the individual reviewers. The seven components of the charter school are assessed. Reviewers are encouraged to give feedback to the petitioner on each of the petition areas. This feedback is shared with the petitioner. The petitioner is encouraged to make changes to the petition after reviewing the feedback.
- Part III: Governing Board Interviews – completed by the Charter Petition Review Team. The Governing Board of the petitioning school will interview with the Charter Petition Review Team to ascertain the Board's capacity. Additionally, petitioners may ask the Charter Petition Review Team members to clarify feedback from the initial review of the petition.
- Part IV: Review of Revised Petition. The petitioners will have the opportunity to make revisions to their application based on the feedback received from the Charter Petition Review Team's initial review of the application. The Charter Petition Review Team will read through the revised petition and use the Final Evaluation Rubric to make comments regarding the revisions.
- Part V: Final Evaluation Rubric – completed by the Charter Petition Review Team. The Charter Petition Review Team will meet to review the petitioner's final petition submittal and make a recommendation to the Superintendent for approval or denial of the petition.

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Part I: INITIAL COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

- Application Package includes an original and two copies of the following items:**
- APPLICATION COVER SHEET** (use the form on page 8; the form may not be altered in any way).
- CHARTER APPLICATION** (Your answers to the questions posed on pages 9-18). The Application is limited to 75 double-spaced pages using 11 point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins with a header showing the school's name and a footer showing consecutive page numbers. (The GaDOE application is limited to 75 double-spaced pages). The original must be signed in blue ink. Stamped signatures will not be accepted.
- ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET** (Use the Assurances Form and Signature Page below on pages 22-24; the Form and the Page may not be altered in any way). The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted. Electronic copy of assurances must be signed. Blank copies will not be accepted.
- DOCUMENTATION OF VOTE – FOR CONVERSION ONLY** (Use the form on page 25) The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted.
- EXHIBITS** (See list of required Exhibits below on page 19). Required Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible. All Exhibits must be tabbed.
- CCSD Financial & Facility Plan Assurances Form** (Use the Form and Signature Sheet on pages 26-28; the Form and the Sheet may not be altered in any way). The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted. Electronic copy of assurances must be signed. Blank copies will not be accepted.
- Your Application Package must be enclosed in a notebook/binder with dividers for sections, exhibits, and appendices. Provide ten (10) notebooks/binders.
- Your Application Package must also include 10 USB drives that includes a:
 - Microsoft Word version of your Application Cover Sheet
 - Microsoft Word version of your Application and Exhibits
 - PDF Version of your Application Packet in the following order: Cover Sheet, Application, signed Assurances Form, and Exhibits
 - PDF version of your Locally-Approved Charter School Partners Roles and Responsibilities chart
 - Excel version of your completed Budget Templates

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Part I. Continued - Required Exhibits

- Attach an official copy of the certificate of incorporation for the required Georgia nonprofit corporation from the Georgia Secretary of State. Please note that all charter school contracts – including those of start-up and renewal conversion charter schools – must be held by a Georgia nonprofit corporation.
- Attach a copy of the by-laws for the nonprofit corporation.
- Attach a copy of the governing board's Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Attach a copy of the governing board's Conflict of Interest Form.
- Attach a copy of the governing board's Governance Training Plan using the governance training memo available on GaDOE's website.
- Attach a completed Locally-Approved Charter School Partners Roles and Responsibilities chart. This chart shows the balance of authority between the charter school's board and management, as well as the required independence of the charter school from the district.
- Attach a copy of any admissions (pre-lottery) application the charter school proposes to use. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066 and SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.05, the admissions application must conform to the open enrollment requirement. Therefore, admissions applications should be limited to a student's name, contact information, home address for the purpose of verifying the student's residence within the school's attendance zone, grade level, and information required for any enrollment preference, such as identifying a sibling already enrolled at the charter school. If the charter school proposes to utilize a weighted lottery for educationally disadvantaged students, the admissions application may also include questions tailored to the subgroup(s) the school will offer an increased chance of admission according to the weighted lottery guidance available on GaDOE's website.
- Attach a copy of the policy setting annual enrollment, re-enrollment, and lottery deadlines, including a description of the lottery procedures detailing how enrollment priorities will be applied and an assurance of complete transparency in its procedures.
- Attach the charter school's proposed annual calendar and a draft of the charter school's daily school schedule.
- Attach a copy of a sample scope and sequence for a proposed course/grade level.
- Attach a copy of the charter school's Student Code of Conduct.
- Attach a copy of the charter school's Student Discipline Policy and Procedures, including any Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS).
- Attach a copy of the rules and procedures concerning how the school will address grievances and complaints from students, parents, and teachers. Include the role the governing board will play in resolving such grievances and complaints. If this included in another response, please indicate that.
- Attach a copy of the charter school's Employee Policies and Procedures.
- Attach proof of the school's insurance coverage, including the terms, conditions, and coverage amounts.
- Attach a copy of any intended education service provider contracts or arrangements for the provision of education management or support services, including with any EMO, CMO, ESO, etc. Such contracts shall describe the specific services for which the contracting organization is responsible. Such contracts should clearly delineate the respective roles and responsibilities of the management organization and the governing board in the management and operation of the charter school. Such contracts must also include the fee structure.
- Attach a copy of any agreements with your local school district or Board of Education.

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- Attach a copy of any Letters of Intent and/or agreements detailing any proposed partnerships, including agreements with other local schools/systems for the charter school students' participation in extracurricular activities such as interscholastic sports and clubs.
- Attach a copy of any MOU/lease/proof of ownership for a proposed facility.
- Attach a copy of the school's Certificate of Occupancy.
- Attach a copy of the facility's Emergency Safety Plan.
- Complete and attach the start-up budget template located on the Charter Schools Division's website. Please note that the budget template includes:
 - A monthly cash flow projection detailing revenues and expenditures for the charter school's first two (2) years of operation based on 100% of the projected students enrollment;
 - An alternative monthly cash flow projection detailing revenues and expenditures for the first two (2) years of operation with the assumption of one-half (1/2) of the projected student enrollment; and
 - A spreadsheet projecting cash flow, revenue estimates, budgets, and expenditures on an annual basis for each of the five (5) years of the initial charter term.
 - Back-up documentation proving the legal reality of additional sources of revenue included in the budget template, including any funds other than state and local funding, including bank statements and/or signed grant award letters.
- Attach the résumé for the charter school's Chief Financial Officer.
- Attach the charter school's signed Assurances Form and Signature Sheet (page 22).
- Attach the charter school's signed and notarized O.C.G.A. § 50-36-1(e)(2) Affidavit (page 21).
- Attach the charter school's signed Local Board of Education Resolution approving the charter school's application.
- Attach the charter school's signed Governing Board Resolution approving the charter school's application. This will serve as the formal petition to the SBOE.
- For conversion schools only, attach the charter school's Confirmation of Teacher and Parent Vote.
- Attach the charter school's signed Local Form for Financial and Facility Plan Assurances (page 26).

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INITIAL FEEDBACK FORM

Overview:

The expertise of the subject matter experts who comprise the Charter Petition Review Team is valued by the district and the petitioner.

Using their knowledge and experiences, the Charter Review Team will provide the following to the petitioners:

1. Whether the concepts presented are within the federal and state laws;
2. Whether the concept is strong as presented or if there are additional changes that could be made to improve the overall petition.

The purpose of this feedback is to provide the petitioner with suggestions for improvement and/or indications of serious concerns. The intent is to assist the petitioner in creating the best possible petition for consideration by the Cobb County School District's administration. The petitioner may revise the petition in light of this feedback. Petitioners are not obligated to follow the suggestions of the Charter Petition Review Team.

Feedback forms are provided to the Charter Petition Review Team by the Office of Accountability. The team members' feedback shall be typed within the proper field of the form.

The Assistant Superintendent and his team will vet responses, compile the results and share the feedback with the petitioner.

Petitioners may decide to follow the Charter Petition Review Team's suggestions completely, or ignore the suggestions.

The petitioner can:

1. Respond to each feedback item in writing using the response form supplied by the Office of Accountability.
2. Make the necessary changes to the petition as suggested by the Charter Petitioner Review Team and re-submit the charter petition to the Assistant Superintendent.

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Rating and Criteria Overview

Charter Petition Review Team evaluators will use the following criteria to rate applicant responses within the charter application. Within each section, specific criteria define the expectations for a strong response that “Meets Standards.” Evaluators will rate responses by applying the following guidance:

Meets Standards:

The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant’s capacity to carry out the plan effectively.

Partially Meets the Standard:

The response meets the criteria in some respects, but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.

Does Not Meet the Standard:

The response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; is unsuited to the mission of the authorizer or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant’s ability to carry it out.

Recommendations from the Charter Petition Review Team will be based on evaluation of the written application (narrative and attachments), independent due diligence, and the applicant interview. (In addition to meeting the criteria that are specific to that section, each part of the proposal should align with the petitioner’s overall mission and vision, educational program, and operations and financial plans.)

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Instructions to Charter Petition Review Team:

Charter Review Team members should use objective language and complete sentences in their comments on strengths and weaknesses of each section of the petition. Please remember that all documents, including your individual review, may at some time be made available to the public, pursuant to a future Open Records Request.

Suggestions for comments that are appropriate:

Strengths of the academic plan

- “The plan aligns with the overall mission and vision because...”
- “The chosen curriculum is research based and proven effective with the targeted population of students because...”

Weaknesses of the academic plan

- “The curriculum and daily schedule do not align with the mission and vision because...”
- “The discipline plan does not include provisions for students with disabilities.”

Strengths of the operations plan

- “The governing body is diverse and will be able to support the school effectively.”
- “The plan to recruit school leaders and teachers is robust and aligns with the mission of the school.”

Weaknesses of the operations plan

- “The governing board is comprised of only two people who lack credentials to support school leadership.”
- “The staffing projections do not align with the number of students or the stated mission of the school.”

Strengths of the financial plan

- “The financial plan is sound and the assumptions are consistent with the mission and vision of the proposed school.”
- “The budget assumptions include contingencies for high-dollar special needs students and funds are allocated in the budget document for such contingencies.”

Weaknesses of the financial plan

- “The budget assumptions include a line of credit from XYZ Bank, but there is no proof that such an agreement exists, and no plan to repay the line of credit when it is accessed.”
- “The proposed school assumes two buses in the first year, but there is no accompanying line item in the budget that allocates funds for purchasing buses nor is there any indication of salary and training for bus drivers.”

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Section 1: Academic Program

A strong Academic Program design is coherent overall and aligned internally with the school’s mission and vision, operations plan, and financial plan.

A strong description of the Academic Program will have the following characteristics:

- Framework for a rigorous, quality instructional design that reflects the needs of the school’s target population and will ensure all students meet or exceed the expectations of the Georgia Curriculum Standards.
- Comprehensive, quality curriculum overview that includes a sample course scope and sequence for one subject for one grade for each division (elementary, middle, high school) the school would serve, and demonstrates alignment of course outcomes with applicable standards. It should also include sound curricular choices, by subject, including reasonable evidence that the curriculum will be appropriate and effective for the targeted students.
- Sound instructional strategies and explanation of why they are well suited for the targeted student population, including effective methods and systems for providing differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Evidence that the proposed educational program has a sound base in research, theory, and/or experience, and has been or is likely to be rigorous, engaging, and effective for the anticipated student population.

For High School Only:

- Sound plan for meeting state and authorizer graduation requirements (including credits, GPA calculation, transcripts, electives) and compelling explanation of any additional requirements beyond the state authorizer’s requirements.
- Clear, persuasive explanation of how the school’s graduation requirements will ensure student readiness for college or post-secondary opportunities (trade school, military service, or entering the workforce).
- Effective systems and structures for students at risk of dropping out or not meeting graduation requirements.

Initial Application Review Rubric

Meets Standards Partially Meets Standards Does Not Meet Standards

Strengths

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Section 2: State- and Federally-Mandated Services

The component should demonstrate understanding of and the capacity to fulfill state and federal obligations and requirements pertaining to students with disabilities (including appropriate discipline procedures for students with disabilities), students identified as intellectually gifted, and English Language Learners (ELLs).

A strong description of the State- and Federally-Mandated Services will have the following characteristics:

- Sound explanation of evidence from which projection of anticipated special populations was derived.
- Comprehensive and compelling plan for appropriate identification of students who are performing below grade level or at risk of academic failure or dropping out and a detailed plan for providing services to such students.
- Comprehensive and compelling plan for appropriate identification of students with special needs and to ensure they are served in the least restrictive environment possible, have appropriate access to the general education curriculum and school-wide educational, extra-curricular, and culture-building activities in ways that support their development, receive required and appropriate support services as outlined in the student’s Individual Education Plan and 504 Plan, and participate in standardized testing.
- Comprehensive and compelling plan for providing services to ELLs, including methods for appropriate identification of ELLs, specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to ensure academic success and equitable access to the general education curriculum and core academic program for these students, plans for monitoring and evaluating student progress and success of ELLs and for exiting them from services, and plan for including ELLs in standardized testing and school-wide educational, extra-curricular, and culture-building activities.
- Plans describe evidence-based instructional programs and practices, effective design or adaptation of the educational program, qualified staffing, and support strategies and resources.

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Meets Standards
 Partially Meets Standards
 Does Not Meet Standards

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Section 3: Assessment Methods & Academic Goals and Objectives

The component should clearly align with meaningful mission specific educational goals and targets which are measurable or demonstrated by externally credible measures and assessments.

A strong description of Assessment Methods will have the following characteristics:

- Quality interim assessments that are aligned with (each) school’s curriculum, performance goals, and state standards.
- Effective plan (including qualified personnel) and system for measuring and evaluating academic progress of individual students, student cohorts, each school, and the networks as a whole throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the charter term.
- Comprehensive effective plan (including qualified personnel) and system for collecting and analyzing student academic achievement data, using the data to refine and improve instruction, including providing training and support to school leadership and teachers, and reporting the data to the school community.
- Thoughtful, appropriate corrective actions the school will take if they fall short of the charter contract goals at any level, including explanation of what would trigger such actions and who would implement them.

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Section 4: School Governance & Organizational Goals

The component should clearly explain how the Charter Governing Board would function as a legal public entity using CCSD’s taxpayer monies and serving Cobb County students, families and communities.

A strong description of School Governance and Organizational Goals will have the following characteristics:

- Proposed school’s legal status and structure are in compliance with state law.
- Governing bylaws, policies, and procedures are comprehensive and sound.
- Well-planned Board(s) size, powers, duties, and current and desired composition (including diverse expertise and effective representation) that will foster school success.
- Clear, appropriate plans for the Board(s) to evaluate the success of the school(s) and school leader(s).
- Proposed Board members who demonstrate (as documented by resumes and bios for all currently identified proposed members): (a) will, capacity and commitment to govern the school effectively; and (b) shared vision, purposes and expectations for the school.
- Evidence that the proposed Board members will contribute the wide range of knowledge, skills, and commitment needed to oversee a successful charter school including educational, financial, legal, and community experience and expertise.
- Other effective governance procedures, including planned frequency of meetings and standing committees.
- Appropriate proposed Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest policy/procedures that will minimize real or perceived conflicts.
- Sound plan and timeline for Board recruitment, expansion, orientation of new members, and ongoing training for members. Plan should include a thoughtful identification of desired experience and capacities.
- Clear roles, duties, and composition of any advisory bodies/councils and effective relationships to the school governing board and leadership.
- Fair, accessible grievance process for parents, students and personnel.

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Section 5: Fiscal Feasibility And Controls & Financial Sustainability

The component should clearly explain how this charter school would function financially in order to be sustainable and supply the resources required to fully implement the organization and academic plans.

A strong Financial Plan is coherent overall and aligned internally with the school’s mission and vision, Academic Program and Organizational Plan:

- Draft financial procedures policy or other reasonable assurance that the operator will have sound systems, policies and processes for financial planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll, including a description of how it will establish and maintain strong internal controls, ensure compliance with all financial reporting requirements, and conduct independent annual financial and administrative audits.
- Evidence that the school’s leadership has a strong understanding of the appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities among the administration and governing board regarding school finance.
- Evidence that the school will ensure financial transparency, including plans for public adoption of the school’s budget and public dissemination of its annual audit and an annual report.
- Sound criteria and procedures for selecting contractors for any administrative services and the acquisition of liability insurance.
- Complete, realistic, and viable start-up budget (if applicable) and five-year operating budgets.
- Detailed budget narrative that clearly explains reasonable, well-supported revenue and cost assumptions, including grant/fundraising assumptions, including identifying the amount and sources of all anticipated funds, property, or other resources (noting which are secured vs. anticipated, and including evidence of firm commitments where applicable).
- Sound contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated.
- Individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Financial Plan successfully, including capacity in areas such as financial management, fundraising and development, accounting, and internal controls.

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Meets Standards

Partially Meets Standards

Does Not Meet Standards

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Section 6: School Operations & Contracts With Charter Partners/Educational Service Providers

The component should clearly explain how this charter school would perform the basic functions of a public school (effective school culture, a safe learning environment, additional supports that might be needed by this particular student population, etc.).

A strong description of the capacity to implement the School Operations will have the following characteristics:

- Enrollment Policy complies with state and federal laws and ensures the school will be open to all eligible students.
- Sound and thoughtful student recruitment and marketing plan, timeline, and Enrollment Policy that will provide equal access to all interested students and families, including those in poverty, academically low-achieving students, students with disabilities, and other youth at risk of academic failure.
- Student discipline policy that provides appropriate and effective strategies to support a safe, orderly school climate and fulfillment of educational goals, promoting a strong school culture while respecting student rights. Legally sound policies for student discipline, suspension and expulsion, as well as appeals, including proper processes for students with disabilities.
- Sensible staffing rollout plan for the school aligned with the educational program and conducive to school success.
- Effective structure and strategies for managing the administration-staff relationship.
- Compensation packages, system, and strategy that are likely to attract and retain strong staff.
- Recruitment and hiring strategy, criteria, timeline, and procedures that are likely to result in a strong staff that are well suited to the school.
- Plan for supporting, developing, and annually evaluating school leadership and teachers that are likely to produce and retain a successful staff.
- Effective planning for unsatisfactory leadership/teacher performance and turnover.
- Detailed start-up (if applicable) and five-year plan specifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals, which aligns with sound start-up budget (if applicable) and five-year operating budgets.
- *(If any school will provide transportation)* Sound plan for student transportation, including both daily and special education transportation.
- Sound plans for school and student safety and security, including security personnel, technology, equipment, and policies.
- Plan to secure comprehensive and adequate insurance coverage, including workers’ compensation, liability, property, indemnity, directors and officers, automobile, and other.

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Section 7: Facilities

The component should clearly explain the proposed or existing facility.	
A strong description of the Facilities Plan will have the following characteristics:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sound plan and timeline for identifying, financing, renovating, ensuring code compliance, and compliance with state and Georgia Department of Education guidelines for a facility that will meet the requirements of the educational program and anticipated student population.	
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<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Standards <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets Standards <input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standards	
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