

Maryland Charter School Founder's Manual

Developed by Joni Berman and Jeffrey Lischin

Third Edition





Maryland Charter School Network

Expanding Excellence in Education

March 11, 2009

Dear Readers:

In 2005, the Maryland Charter School Network (MCSN) first published the *Maryland Charter School Founder's Manual* to provide potential charter school developers with practical advice for the essential phases of planning, designing, and operating a Maryland charter school. Two years ago, it was updated to provide a new chapter on Student Assessment. Four years later, we are proud to bring you the third edition, which has been updated and expanded to include a very important chapter on "High-Quality Charter Schools: Creating and Operating an Excellent School".

The manual is complemented by MCSN's nine-part Charter School Application Development workshop series. Each workshop in the series addresses fundamental understanding of the charter school development principles captured in this manual. Check the MCSN Website for dates and times of the next workshop. Most of them are now offered via Webinar technology, you need only a computer, access to the Internet, and a telephone line for the audio portion to participate.

As the only statewide organization dedicated to the Maryland charter school movement, MCSN promotes charter schools by serving as their public voice, through networking, education, advocacy, and public relations. Most importantly, MCSN offers a wide range of technical assistance both to help charter school organizers with planning and proposal development and to support operators with running exceptional public schools.

Since its formation in 2001, MCSN has focused its efforts on ensuring that charter schools are supported with the necessary resources to be successful. As of March 2009, 34 charters are operating, serving an estimated 9,500 students in seven districts. Three more schools are due to open in fall 2009, one in the fall of 2010, and additional groups are negotiating contracts or seeking approval. ***We are moving at a fast pace – which indicates the growing opportunity for expanding excellence in education in Maryland through public charter schools.***

We wish to thank the Maryland State Department of Education for making publication of the *Maryland Charter School Founder's Manual* possible. The manual has become an indispensable, reference tool for individuals and organizations as they prepare for the exciting, yet challenging, task of opening a public charter school in Maryland.

We rededicate *Maryland Charter School Founder's Manual* to all parents, educators, and concerned community members whose efforts have advanced the charter school movement in Maryland and throughout the nation. We are grateful to you for your vision and courage.

Sincerely,
Dave Miller, Director
Maryland Charter School Network

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Preface

Please note that the scope of this manual is limited and is in no way intended to be definitive. We have provided helpful information, perspective, pointers, etc. You are strongly advised to spend sufficient time conducting research on best practices for creating and operating a charter school and to use this manual as a starting point. To that end, we have included an extensive annotated bibliography of resources available online. Finally, selected resources, including Maryland's SB 75, Public Charter School Act of 2003, are attached as appendices.

This manual was revised using grant funds awarded under the Federal Public Charter School Program as authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.) as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. It is intended to provide guidance in regard to the subject matter covered. The manual is not issued by the Maryland State Department of Education. It is distributed with the understanding that the Maryland Charter School Network is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, tax, or other professional services. Due to the complex and rapidly evolving nature of charter school development and operations, the Maryland Charter School Network strongly recommends consultation with expert, professional counsel, as well as the Maryland State Department of Education.

Acknowledgments

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The **Maryland Charter School Founder's Manual** draws heavily from the excellent materials created by other charter advocates and support organizations around the United States, including:

- New Jersey Charter School Resource Center
- Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (Portland)
- US Charter Schools
- The Foundation Center
- The Massachusetts Charter School Handbook
- Illinois Charter School Developers' Handbook
- Alliance for NonProfit Management
- Internet Nonprofit Center Document Library (Evergreen State Society, Seattle)

In addition, thanks to:

- Jennifer Ciavarella, Principal of Patterson Park Public Charter School (PPPCS) who provided the "Got Science ?" photograph of PPPCS students for the front cover

We would like to extend a special thanks to Heather Ngoma for her generosity in allowing us to use New Jersey Charter School Resource Center material in the making of this manual.

- Heather Ngoma, (hngoma@rci.rutgers.edu, <http://www.njcharterschools.org/>, 732-564-9087), Director of New Jersey Charter School Resource Center

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The developers of the **Maryland Charter School Founder's Manual** would appreciate a citation, if you do copy or excerpt information presented herein.

Chapter One

Introduction to Charter Schools

What is a Charter School?¹

Charter schools are public schools, financed with public dollars. They must accept students on a nondiscriminatory basis and are fully accountable to public oversight. In fact, they are more accountable than traditional public schools. Charter schools are examined through financial audits and academic monitoring. If they fail to meet their stated goals, they can be closed.

Charter schools allow their creators and staff to be highly innovative with their curriculum and educational design. The essential philosophy driving the charter school movement is that there is a tradeoff in creating a charter school – specifically, in exchange for greater freedom, the charter school agrees to greater accountability.

Under current Maryland law (see Appendix A), “a county board shall disburse to a public charter school, an amount of county, state, and federal money for elementary, middle, and secondary students that is commensurate with the amount disbursed to other public schools in the local jurisdiction.”² Facilities funding is central to one of the most serious barriers faced by charter schools founders – finding and renovating a suitable facility – a challenge discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven, Facilities.

A charter school operates under a contract—the “charter”—with an educational or government entity. In Maryland, that entity is the Local Board of Education. The local board is responsible for fiscal and academic oversight of the school. The contract spells

¹ The appendices at the back of this manual contain useful information on charter schools including legislation, sample mission and vision statements, and non-regulatory guidance.

² SB 75

out the school's academic performance goals and other areas of operation. It is a full education and business plan.

Charter schools have three distinguishing characteristics:

1. They are public schools, funded with public dollars and fully accountable to public oversight.
2. They are created by the staff of a public school, a parent or guardian of a student who attends a public school in the county; a nonsectarian nonprofit entity; a nonsectarian institution of higher education in the state; or any combination of persons specified above.
3. They foster competition, which may improve education for all children.

To gain and maintain charter renewal, the schools must prove that their students have achieved the educational skills specified in the contract. Students are required to take all mandated state and local tests and are required to meet the higher standards that are currently being implemented.

The charter concept invites innovation while demanding results.

“The intention of most charter school legislation is to: ³

- Increase opportunities for learning and access to quality education for all students
- Create choice for parents and students within the public school system
- Provide a system of accountability for results in public education
- Encourage innovative teaching practices
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers
- Encourage community and parent involvement in public education
- Leverage improved public education broadly—“Funds received by charter public schools are taxpayer dollars that support students who are residents of local school districts. These funds are expended regardless of whether the students attend charter public schools or traditional public schools.” ⁴

³ <http://www.uscharterschools.org/>

⁴ <http://www.uscharterschools.org/>

A frequently heard concept among charter school leaders is the issue of choice. Charter schools are often described as being part of the “school choice movement.” There is a degree of controversy as to how this is described and what it stands for. This manual takes no position on the debate, other than the belief that all children are entitled to a high quality education, and that it is our intent to assist public educators who strive to provide it. This manual seeks not to debate the virtues of charter schools versus traditional public schools, magnet schools, private schools, etc. Instead, it seeks to be a resource for those who see the pathway to academic achievement passing through the doors of a charter school.

The Maryland Charter School Network⁵

The mission of the Maryland Charter School Network (MCSN) is to promote and serve the Maryland charter school movement. No other organization in the state is committed to this singular focus.

MCSN supports educational reform and innovation by helping charter school organizers work through the challenges of designing and operating a public charter school. At every stage of school development—planning, proposal, approval, and operation—MCSN provides information, resources, and technical assistance. Through workshops, statewide conferences, and site visits, MCSN assists charter school planners and operators, introduces regional participants to experienced educational leaders, and highlights exemplary schools.

MCSN Programs Help from Planning to Startup

The Maryland Charter School Network (MCSN) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit statewide organization whose mission is to promote and serve the Maryland charter school movement. MCSN offers the following:

1. Administers a clearinghouse of charter school information and resources;

⁵ <http://mdcharternetwork.org/>

2. Supports the development of these new public schools; and
3. Functions as the public voice for the Maryland charter school community.

The only statewide organization serving the Maryland charter school community, MCSN provides information and assistance to all stakeholders of public education, including families, educators, policy makers, authorizers, community leaders, businesses, and the media.

MCSN nurtures potential charter school founders with resources and ideas, connecting them to other charter school educators across the state and around the country. As founders develop their charter schools, they will find essential technical assistance through MCSN. Since state-enabling legislation was signed in May, 2003, MCSN has been working with chartering authorities to facilitate implementation of the law.

MCSN promotes Maryland charter schools by serving as their public voice, through networking, education, advocacy, and public relations. All of MCSN's efforts are aimed at ensuring that charter schools are supported with the necessary resources to be successful. As charter schools succeed, they offer our best opportunity to reform the delivery of all public education in Maryland.

Maryland children deserve the best – we must provide our children with an excellent education. We need to raise expectations so that Maryland public education exceeds minimum standards as we educate our children. Charter schools provide the best means of providing an excellent education immediately.

How to Decide if You Should Create a Charter School

“People establish charter schools for a variety of reasons. The founders generally fall into three groups: grassroots organizations or parents, teachers and community members; entrepreneurs; or existing schools converting to charter status. According to the

first-year report of the National Study of Charter Schools, the six reasons charter schools are created are:⁶

- To advance an educational vision
- To have more autonomy over organizational, personnel, or governance matters
- Serve a special population
- For financial reasons
- To engender parent involvement and ownership
- To attract students and parents.”

There are many types of founders and founding groups in the charter school movement. Some are parents seeking a better education for their children. Some are educators seeking to realize a dream of more effective education, a superior learning environment, a vision for educational innovation, and/or a better place of employment. Some are community leaders seeking better education for the community's children, community economic development, or hope for distressed neighborhoods. Some are organizations such as colleges, museums, Community Development Corporations, or social service organizations seeking to build on their missions/visions by creating new and improved educational institutions. Many are combinations of these groups. This list is clearly not all-inclusive.

Founders Start with a Dream

If you are considering your role as a founder, here are some of the roles ahead of you.

Founders:

- Are a small committed group who move the charter school from a shared educational dream to a shared educational reality
- Work together to plan for the charter school and complete the charter school application

⁶ <http://www.uscharterschools.org/>

- May become staff or board members of the charter school once it is in operation. Staff members are paid employees and should not be voting board members. Some staff may be ex officio (non-voting) board members.
- Need to be willing to offer or learn needed expertise (beyond sharing a common educational vision for their schools) including, but not limited to:
 - Reading and understanding the state charter school law;
 - Following and/or developing the charter application;
 - Writing the charter application;
 - Educational law and legal issues;
 - Marketing and recruiting a constituency;
 - Dealing with the media, and community relations;
 - Identifying and obtaining human and financial resources;
 - Real estate and facilities planning and management;
 - Educational assessment and evaluation;
 - Leadership, governance, and management issues;
 - Public communication and media relations;
 - Other areas as they apply to the school's situation.

At the heart of the founders' dream is often an underlying theme that serves as the backbone of their educational vision. Charter school themes have been art-infused, environmentally-focused, character-education grounded, back-to-basics, progressive education focused, Afro-centric, or about special populations. Some themes follow proven models such as KIPP Academies and Job Corps. Other charter schools seek to offer mainstream best practices finding their uniqueness in a small highly personalized learning community. MCSN takes no position on which themes or models are best. Experience has shown that there are many pathways to educational excellence. What is most critical is that the founding group achieves clarity on its desires and purposes, and then implements them in a highly effective manner.

Founders' First Step – The Core Questions

A critical first step for ALL founders is to ask yourselves:

- Who are we?
- Why are we considering starting a charter school?
- What might our school's mission look like?
- What is our vision for what our school will look like in 5 Years? In 10 Years?

We talked about the “**Who**” question in the previous section about Founders and their dream. Indeed, founders must also ask themselves a lot of “**What, When, Where and How**” questions – and perhaps most critically “**Why.**”

Most founders have truly idealistic answers to the Why question and many have some very pragmatic answers. Creating a charter school is one of the most inspiring and rewarding activities one can work toward. There are few activities more meaningful than taking responsibility for the education and personal development of children— ***Our Children are Our Destiny.***

The process for defining Mission and Vision will be discussed in detail later in this manual. However, we think it is never too soon for you to start thinking about your mission and vision.

Mission is a broad concept. Mission is described by a mission statement and includes three major concepts: the purpose, the "business" an organization engages in to achieve this purpose, and a statement of values guiding the accomplishment of the mission.

Vision is the most global concept. A vision is literally a mental image of the successful accomplishment of the mission, and thus the purpose of the charter school.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "I have a dream," and what followed was a vision that changed a nation. That famous speech is a dramatic example of the power that can be generated by a person who communicates a compelling vision of the future.

The following questions may help you think about the choices you are making.

- Does your local district offer any programs similar to the one you are interested in developing? Have you tried to implement your ideas through other channels?
- What are you interested in? Why is that your focus? Who else is doing it? How would creating a charter school allow you to achieve your goals?

- Is your school design plan consistent with the Maryland Charter School Law and related statutes? Are there any legal, operational, or process barriers to pursuing the charter route? How might you address these?
- Can you foresee any disadvantages to the charter route? What compromises might you have to make as a charter school to actualize your educational vision and design as a charter school?
- What factors will make your school innovative and successful?
- If you are a parent, do you want to start this new school for your own children?
 - How much time and energy are you willing to commit to this project?
 - Do you realize that in addition to the education part, you need to learn to prepare and stick to a budget, fund-raise, do payroll, buy insurance, deal with a landlord, and numerous other non-pedagogical issues?
 - Are you prepared to be a fund-raiser, even at the very beginning?

Now take a moment to consider your answers. We said that we are seeking to help you think realistically. Here are some answers to the Why question which suggest that you might need to try another approach to reach your educational vision.

Some inappropriate answers include:

- If you want total ownership of the school, forget it – a charter school is a PUBLIC school governed by a board and answerable to the state. A founder can become the board president or the school's lead administrator, but not both.
- If you are looking to make a lot of money, forget it – as a PUBLIC school there is no potential for monetary "profit," salaries must be commensurate with prevailing standards, and subcontracting is subject to statutory regulation.
- If you think that creating a charter school is going to be easy, forget it – creating an educational institution is a daunting task requiring a great deal of resources, dedication, and hard work. It is NOT for the faint of heart.

A Critical Second Step is to Examine Capacity⁷

You probably picked up this manual with a full set of ideas about your dreams for a charter school. By now, we hope that you are beginning to get a sense of the responsibility ahead of you. In putting your team together, you will need to have the capacity to address many different skills.

Educational Capacity: A charter school needs to be a place for education with a trained, supervised, certified educational staff. It needs to have a curriculum that is aligned with the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum. It needs a pedagogical approach that is compatible with its mission, vision, students, and community.

Governance Capacity: A charter school needs to create a *board* with all its procedures and a *partnership* among board, staff, parents, students, and community.

Business Capacity: This is to be understood both as creating a fiscal system and as operating an entrepreneurial entity. As a business, if the school does not achieve fiscal stability it will close, regardless of how good a job it does of educating its students.

As a business, it will close if it

- Fails to market its product—educating students;
- Fails to meet its sales targets—enrollment;
- Fails to produce a quality product—educational outcomes; and
- If it fails to satisfy its customers—parents and students.

Talent Capacity: Leadership, skills in education, governance, fiscal management, marketing, legal issues, real estate, organizing, marketing, fund raising, and strategic planning, as well as the ability to find, acquire and organize all this talent.

Real Estate Capacity: A major reason why approved charter schools fail to open is the inability to secure and prepare a proper facility.

Leadership Capacity: Leadership is a somewhat nebulous concept. We all use the term, but frequently mean different things. Some lead through example or inspiration,

⁷ Each of the following will be discussed in greater detail later in this manual.

others through their authority, others as facilitators. Regardless of approach, there can be easy agreement that in starting a charter school founders must have, or acquire, effective leadership. Leadership must work on multiple levels – organizing, administering, accomplishing – and must evolve over time as the school matures from a concept/dream into an applicant, a startup process, a functioning school, and a growing/thriving school. Leadership must exist among founders, board, staff, and stakeholders. Ultimately, it is the quality of a charter school's leadership that will most determine its success.

Elements of Charter School Failure and Success

An examination of **why charter schools fail** after opening will reveal three critical reasons:

1. Poor fiscal management.
2. Poor educational outcomes.
3. Dissatisfied parents leads to lack of enrollment.

Charter schools that succeed:

1. Achieve positive educational outcomes,
2. Provide competent fiscal management, and
4. Build a strong bond with their stakeholders.

They do this in large part because of excellence in **leadership** – leadership among founders, board, and staff. They do this because they did their homework, defined a strong mission/vision, and had a quality plan for developing and implementing their school. They build community support, identify sufficient resources, and work very, very hard.

You may question why this section includes as much dissuasion as it has encouragement. Sadly, many people who come to MCSN with a hope and a dream of starting a charter school do NOT have the capacity, realistic vision, or appropriate purposes to actualize that dream. This manual seeks to encourage realistic thinking.

Starting a charter school is a truly daunting task. If you read this manual and see correctness of fit between yourself (selves) and becoming a founder(s), then MCSN seeks to join you on your journey as allies, partners, and resources. If not, then perhaps you can join other founders, work for a charter school, volunteer with a charter school.

There is a place for all of us in our children's education. We need to find that place and embrace it. Most of the experts writing this manual are NOT themselves directly operating charter schools. We are technical assistance providers, consultants, educators, former founders, former board members, former staff of authorizers, etc. We have found our place in providing assistance, guidance, and resources to those who create and operate charter schools. An honest self-appraisal will help you find your ideal role.

Whether you are a parent, child, or founder, it is our wish to be of assistance, and we offer our heartfelt congratulations on taking the time to pursue this most noble of undertakings.

“Parents and teachers choose charter schools primarily for educational reasons – high academic standards, small class size, innovative approaches, or educational philosophies in line with their own. Some also have chosen charter schools for their small size and associated safety (charter schools serve an average of 250 students).”⁸

⁸ <http://www.uscharterschools.org>

Chapter One – Lessons Learned

The Illinois Charter School Developers' Handbook describes the following founders' "To Do List" for starting a charter school:

- Familiarize yourself with Charter Schools Law (see Appendix) and begin to think about the items that must be addressed in your charter school proposal according to the law.
- Build a team of like-minded individuals who can work with you to found the school.
- Write a mission statement.
- Financial planning
- Identify a suitable facility and a backup plan.
- Identify short-term sources of revenue for consultants, lawyers, and realtors.
- Build a stable, effective governance structure.
- Recruit a committed Board of Directors with diverse expertise. You may want representatives from community organizations, businesses, the local district, higher education, and future staff, parents, and students. Board members should have expertise in one or more of the following areas:
 - Curriculum and instruction
 - Standards and assessment
 - Special education
 - Management and leadership
 - Financial management
 - Legal issues
 - Community/public relations
 - Parent relations
 - Staffing and personnel
 - Organization and board development
 - Facilities and real estate
 - Fundraising
- Develop a plan for ongoing participation of parents, teachers, and the broader community.
- Write and submit the application.
 - Ensure that your draft accountability plan is clear and meaningful, and that it will serve as a road map for operations and evaluation of your school.
 - Make sure the budgeting and accounting sections of your application are clear and realistic.
 - Develop comprehensive startup and five-year projected operating budgets based on anticipated enrollment.
 - Develop financial management systems and internal accounting procedures.
- Schedule ongoing committee work.
- Continue community outreach and marketing efforts.
- Identify and cultivate potential community partners and other resources for the school.

Chapter Two

Introduction to the Strategic Planning Approach⁹

What is Strategic Planning?¹⁰

Strategic planning is essential in designing, applying for, starting and operating a charter school. Say it again. Strategic planning is essential. In the chapters that follow, all of our advice is filtered through a perspective of strategic planning. The process of writing your charter school application is best undertaken as a strategic planning process.

The best frame of mind for proper planning includes an appreciation of the need to achieve “wholeness” in your process. That is, see every aspect of your application and implementation process in the context of how they come together to achieve a comprehensive entity. Beware the danger of viewing plan sections in isolation. Remember that a school is a living, breathing organism that only lives if all its parts function together.

Strategic planning is a management tool used to help you do a better job—to focus your energy, to ensure that stakeholders are working toward the same goals, and to assess and adjust the charter school's direction in response to a changing environment. It is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what a charter school is, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future. If you have a strategic plan, you have a strong framework for making decisions. Strategic planning, as described in this chapter, focuses on the needs of a founding group. The methods can be readily modified to be repeated continuously as the charter school opens for students and matures over time. The need for planning never ends – it does, however, evolve with changing circumstances.

¹⁰ Alliance for NonProfit Management with material adapted from “Bryson's Strategic Planning in Public and Nonprofit Organizations.”

Why Bother?

The world is constantly changing. Our communities change over time in terms of who lives there. Topics and question of vital interest to members of the community include:

- What is the mix of homeowners and renters?
- Is the population getting older; are there new immigrants, etc.?
- Are people most concerned about road conditions, schools or the proposed Wal-Mart coming to town?

**All these items, and more, have a potential impact
on the future of your charter school.**

The strategic planning process helps you prepare the best way to respond to the charter school's environment, which is dynamic and can even be hostile. Being strategic means being clear about the charter school's objectives, being aware of the charter school's resources, and incorporating both into being consciously responsive to the external community.

Characteristics of the Planning Process

The process is about planning—

It involves intentionally setting goals (i.e., choosing a desired future) and developing an approach to achieving those goals.

The process is disciplined—

It calls for a certain order and pattern to keep it focused and productive. It raises questions that help you examine experience, test assumptions, gather and incorporate information about the present; and anticipate the environment in which the charter school will operate in the future.

Finally, the process is about fundamental decisions and actions—

You will make choices to answer the questions mentioned before. It is ultimately no more, and no less, than a set of decisions about what to do, why to do it, and how to do it.

Because it is impossible to do everything that needs to be done, strategic planning prioritizes decisions and actions—

Indeed, much of the strategy lies in making tough decisions.

Strategic planning can be complex, challenging, and even messy. This is because you are working with real people who care deeply about their objective. So, prepare yourself for an investment that takes time, intentionality, and resolve.

- **Time:** the organization must ensure that the plan is truly an informed document, not just a guess or gut reaction.
- **Intentionality:** planning for the sake of planning is a waste of time. Plan in order to implement new ideas and change the course of events.
- **Resolve:** no strategic plan can succeed without the future investment of resources, both people and money. You cannot just hope that things will turn out a certain way; you must also add the right ingredients to pave the way.

Do We Have to Do It All?

The information that follows assumes a commitment to a full planning process. There is no question that start up organizations will find this difficult. At minimum, commit to take some planning steps, even if baby steps. Work to create a planning culture in your charter school, not to get it precisely right the first time. Some planning is better than none at all. In the end, “enough planning” is when the founders understand and have consensus about a clear direction.

Preparing the Team for a Successful Planning Process

We are spending a lot of time on the what and the why of strategic planning—before we get to the how—because we truly believe that planning is critical to success. Getting your team ready for planning is as important as the actual plan and will help smooth the way to a successful result.

1. Get agreement among founders (and later include staff and board) that strategic planning is an ongoing process. It has no ending point – you will be either gathering input/data, setting priorities, implementing priorities, or monitoring

- progress on goals forever. This mindset gets rid of the notion that planning is a temporary nuisance. It is an ongoing part of good governance and good management.
2. Decide whether you will go it alone or get outside help from a planning consultant. Either method is acceptable but carries different significance for the school. Going it alone means you will need to be vigilant that you don't stay too long on any one part of the process. Going it alone requires a strong and active strategic planning group made up of board and staff. Make deadlines stick as much as possible.
 3. Clarify the roles early in the process.
 4. Make your planning mission focused. Test every idea against the mission to ensure it fits.
 5. Set priorities – the road to a successful charter school is exhausting. Commit to achieve what is necessary for success. Reserve the right to build upon a strong foundation. Avoid over committing and letting your enthusiasm run away with you . You have a school to create and limited time/resources.
 6. Do not limit data gathering only from sources that are familiar. Talk to other founders, existing schools, educators, and community leaders – to everyone with something to add to the discussion. Find out your weaknesses before they ruin any strategic future you choose.

Strategic Thinking and Strategic Management

At the beginning, good management will be determined by “did we make it through today with no new or unsolvable crises?” Startup charter schools require a get-it-done, get-it-fixed attitude toward management. Management is always “the art of muddling through.” There are never perfect answers to difficult questions. There is no

crystal ball that spells out the future – there is only the ability to make the best of what is currently available including picking the best of several less-than-ideal solutions.

That's today. Tomorrow you will be up and running at full speed. Tomorrow the stakes will be higher and more people will be counting on the organization to change lives in a meaningful way. Some level of anticipating and responding to future needs will be essential to long-term success. Good managers tolerate mistakes, great managers encourage taking risks and learning from the experience. Strategic planning is a form of risk taking. At its best, it is an informed and inclusive tool that shares the burden and shares the benefits. You will still be “muddling through” but there will be a focus and direction that makes it worth the effort. Winging it will no longer be an option, so start investing in some level of strategic planning today.

Strategic planning supports strategic thinking and leads to strategic management. Strategic thinking means asking, "are we doing the right thing?" and using three key requirements: a definite purpose; an understanding of the environment, particularly of the forces that affect or impede the fulfillment of that purpose; and creativity in developing effective responses to those forces.

Strategic management is the application of strategic thinking to the job of leading a charter school. Dr. Jagdish Sheth, a respected authority on marketing and strategic planning, provides the following framework for understanding strategic management:

- Formulation of the charter school's mission in light of changing external factors such as regulation, competition, technology, and customers;
- Development of a strategy to achieve the mission;
- Creation of an organizational structure that will deploy resources to successfully carry out its strategy.

Strategic management is adaptive and keeps a charter school relevant. Strategic planning is not a substitute for the exercise of judgment by leadership. Strategic planning does not flow smoothly from one step to the next. It is a creative, dynamic process.

The Support Centers of America has adopted the following guiding principles to support its consulting practice in strategic planning. Successful strategic planning:

- Leads to action;
- Builds a shared vision that is values-based;
- Is an inclusive, participatory process in which founders, board and staff take ownership;
- Accepts accountability to the community;
- Is externally focused and sensitive to the charter school's environment;
- Is based on quality data;
- Requires an openness to questioning the status quo;
- Is a key part of effective management.

Managing the Process

The planning process needs to be managed. It is important to make sure that everyone is operating from the same set of expectations and knowledge base. Large groups of individuals are not conducive to the creation of documents and quick decision-making. They are more suited to producing feedback, ideas, and suggestions about existing documents or modifying draft decisions after the initial analysis has been completed. A planning committee is one tool that is used to focus the energies and responsibilities of the process. The planning committee spearheads the process serving as the quarterback of the team, but it does not take sole responsibility for all decision-making and all the nuts and bolts work.

A planning process should be designed to include all founders and as many other stakeholders as is practical.

An inclusive process:

- Helps to build both internal and external enthusiasm and commitment to the charter school. Individuals take on ownership of the goals and efforts to achieve the stated outcomes;
- Incorporates a level of objectivity into the process;
- Develops foundations for future working relationships;
- Develops uniformity of purpose among all stakeholders;
- Establishes a continual information exchange among key stakeholders.

The planning committee should be:

- Limited to no more than five to seven individuals;
- A combination of visionaries (individuals who see what the charter school can be) and "actionaries" (those who ask what resources will support and ensure that the projected goals and tasks are realistic);
- A group of individuals who has formal or informal power and the respect of the rest of the founders;
- A combination of future board and staff members, if possible, including the individual who will write the final plan.

Can an External Consultant Help Your Planning Process?

For founders with little or no experience in planning, an external consultant can enhance the planning process by providing the following services:

- **Facilitating of retreats, meetings, and the planning process as a whole:**
The use of a consultant to serve as the "conversation traffic cop" is one method of ensuring that good ideas do not get lost in the emotion of the process or personality of the participants. A consultant can work with an organization to minimize planning barriers that impact effectiveness, using his or her experience as a source of tried and true processes.
- **Training in planning information and processes:**
It is critical for everyone involved in the planning process to be speaking the same language and using the same planning tools. External consultants can provide that conduit of information flow and education.
- **Providing an objective and different perspective in the process:**
As an outsider the consultant can ask questions and challenge existing assumptions. Having an outside consultant participate in the planning process helps ensure that founders are willing to question their beliefs.
- A consultant who has facilitated and conducted many strategic planning processes can provide significant information and advice on tools and processes that can best accomplish your goals.

The Plan: A How-To

Strategic Planning Model

We are providing a brief “how-to” because of the importance we place on strategic planning as the foundation of your charter school plan. You may also want to visit your local library to find additional information on strategic planning.

The five general steps are:

1. Readiness
2. Articulating the Mission, Vision and Values
3. Situation Assessment
4. Developing Strategies, Goals and Objectives
5. Completing the Written Plan

Step One – Readiness

Founders must first assess if they are ready. Readiness implies leaders that are truly committed to the effort, and able to devote the necessary time and attention. Founders that determine they are ready to begin strategic planning must perform five tasks to pave the way for an organized process:

- Identify specific issues or choices that the planning process should address;
- Clarify roles (who does what in the process);
- Create a Planning Committee;
- Develop an organizational profile;
- Identify the information that must be collected to help make sound decisions.

The product developed at the end of the Step One is a Work Plan.

Step Two - Articulating Mission, Vision and Values

A mission statement is like an introductory paragraph. It lets the reader know where the charter school is going; and it also shows that the charter school knows where it is going. A mission statement must communicate the essence of the charter school to the reader. The ability to articulate mission indicates focus and purposefulness.

A mission statement typically describes a charter school's

- **Purpose** – why create the charter school, and what it seeks to accomplish.
- **Business** – the main methods through which the charter school will fulfill this purpose.
- **Values** – the principles or beliefs that guide the charter school as it pursues its purpose.

Whereas the mission statement summarizes the what, how, and why of a charter school's work, a vision statement presents an image of what success will look like. With mission and vision statements in hand, a charter school's founders have taken an important step towards creating a shared, coherent idea of what type of school it is strategically planning.

How to Write a Mission Statement

There is no formula for finding the wording that best expresses the collective intention of your charter school. It can be drafted by one person alone or after input gathered from all the founders. The most important issue is that there is consensus on the answers to the questions used in developing the mission statement.

One approach is to define and discuss these questions and find out where the areas of consensus are and where there are differences. There is a "process" benefit to hashing over a mission statement as well. In the course of discussion and debate, founders are introduced to nuances of a charter school's mission and environment. As a result, the

group will have confidence that the mission statement, which emerges, is genuinely an articulation of commonly held ideas.

Groups are good at many things, but one of them is not writing. Have group discussions about big ideas and concepts and then let one or two individuals draft and redraft the wording before submitting a reworked version for the group to respond to. It may help to circulate the draft mission statement to other stakeholders. Mix facts with passion, humanity, and an eye on the big picture. Keep refining the mission statement until you have a version that stakeholders can actively support.

Now to the Values

Values are beliefs that your charter school's founders hold in common and endeavor to put into practice. The values guide your founders in performing their work. Examples of values include: a commitment to excellent education, innovation, diversity, creativity, honesty, integrity, and so on. Marvin Weisbord writes in *Productive Workplaces*¹¹ that values come alive only when people are involved in doing important tasks. Ideally, an individual's personal values will align with the spoken and unspoken values of the charter school. By developing clear consensus on the values of the charter school, founders have a chance to contribute to the articulation of these values, as well as to evaluate how well their personal values and motivation match those of the charter school.

Creating the Vision – The Fun Part of the Process

A vision is literally a mental image of the successful accomplishment of the mission, and thus the purpose of the charter school. You might say that a vision is a ***guiding image of success formed in terms of a contribution to society***. If a strategic plan is the "blueprint" for a charter school's work, then the vision is the "artist's rendering" of the achievement of that plan.

11 Weisbord, Martin (1991). Productive Workplaces: Organizing and Managing for Dignity, Meaning, and Community (The Jossey-Bass Management Series) Pfeiffer (2nd ed.)

Vision:

- Is a common or shared understanding of what it means to learn and be educated.
- Describes the dream that motivates you and others to create a charter school.
- Describes the outcomes of an education at the proposed school, what students know when they graduate, the role teachers play in the school, the role of the proposed school in the community it will serve.

A Vision Also:

- Provides a solid base upon which to build a successful application.
- Is easy to share with others.
- Describes the clear sense of purpose shared by parents, students, teachers, staff, and the schools board of directors.
- Motivates the school's decision-makers in all aspects of planning and operations;
- Prevents misunderstandings.
- May be used as a guide for decision-making.
- May provide a set of criteria by which to measure a school's progress toward its defined purposes.
- Gives potential employees, prospective students, and their parents clear indications of how they will be treated and what will be expected of them.
- Explains to chartering authorities and the community at large how this charter school is distinctive from other public schools.

There is one universal rule of planning. You will never be greater than the vision that guides you. No Olympic athlete ever got to the Olympics by mistake—a compelling vision of his or her stellar performance inevitably guides all the sweat and tears for many years. The vision statement should require the organization's members to stretch their expectations, aspirations, and performance. Without that powerful, attractive, valuable vision, why bother?

A vision statement should be realistic and credible, well articulated and easily understood, appropriate, ambitious, and responsive to change. It should orient the group's energies and serve as a guide to action. It should be consistent with the organization's values. In short, a vision should challenge your team to achieve its mission. Creating a vision begins with and relies heavily on intuition and dreaming. You may brainstorm what you would like to accomplish. Talk about the values that you share in pursuing that vision. Different ideas do not have to be a problem. People can spur each other on to more daring and valuable dreams and visions—dreams of changing the world that they are willing to work hard for.

An exercise founders may use in defining vision is breaking into small groups, agree on a rough time frame, say five to ten years, ask people to think about the following questions: How do you want your community to be different? What role do you want your charter school to play in your community? What will success look like? Then ask each group to come up with a metaphor for your charter school, and to draw a picture of success:

"Our charter school will be like ... a mariachi band - all playing the same music together, or like a train - pulling important cargo and laying the track as we go, or.... "

The value of metaphors is that people get to stretch their minds and experiment with different ways of thinking about what success means to them. Finally, have all the groups share their pictures of success with each other. One person should facilitate the discussion and help the groups discuss what they mean and what they hope for. Look for areas of agreement, as well as different ideas that emerge. The goal is to find language and imagery that your founders can relate to as their vision for success.

At the end of Step Two, a draft mission statement, and a draft vision statement is developed. Appendix B offers several examples from new and operating Maryland charter schools.

Step Three - Assessing the Situation

Once founders commit to why the proposed charter school will exist and what it will do, they must take a clear-eyed look at its current situation. Strategic planning, thinking, and management include an awareness of resources and an eye to the future environment. Situation assessment means obtaining information about the founders' strengths, weaknesses, and performance—information that will highlight the critical issues that they face and that its strategic plan must address. These could include a variety

of primary concerns, such as funding issues, opportunities, regulations, needs in the targeted student population. The point is to understand and evaluate the critical issues around which to organize the strategic plan.

You may start your assessment with what is called an environmental scan. Then, it is often helpful to take these results and organize them using a *SWOT* (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) format. At the end, you will review the critical issues against your mission and vision in order to evaluate the challenges ahead.

An **environmental scan** is a first assessment step to determine priorities for new strategic initiatives (such as starting a charter school) and mission enhancement. This data collection can be done through literature research, individual/group interview, focus groups, or surveys. You might use more than one method to collect information. Let's take a quick look at the value and limitations of each method.

- **Literature Review** is important for gathering commonly gathered data like employment statistics, census data, etc. It may also provide cutting edge ideas in the field and can be used to educate board members on future alternative and trends in the field.

An example would be reviewing recent research on the success or failure of specific curricula in meeting the needs of students similar to those in your community.

- **Interviews** are time consuming both to schedule and to complete. A preset list of a few questions (5-6 at most) is essential and must be used consistently with all interviewees in order to have value. The advantage to conducting individual interviews occurs when those being interviewed are unavailable for other sorts of data collection and/or require confidentiality in order to give open and honest responses. In those cases, a third party is required and the responses should be grouped (all funders, all competitors etc.) so that individual information cannot be identified.

An example would be to meet with community leaders, such as the head of the planning board, to find out how they feel about the place of charter schools or the strength of the public school system in town.

- **Focus Groups** are less time consuming than individual interviews and the discussion is interactive with other group members. While still using a consistent set of a few questions, the interaction between members gets to a depth of information not available otherwise. The difficulty is in summarizing the findings of a group process. There is also a tendency for the person running the group to try to respond to questions or defend the organization. This should be avoided at all costs. It will inhibit the participants and may result in less significant findings.

An example would be to talk to a group of prospective parents about their desires and concerns about their own children's education.

- **Surveys** are often seen as the cheapest, least time consuming and easiest way to collect input from key stakeholders. While they are fairly straightforward to use, they have several severe limitations. Response rates are very low (you may not get much more than by using focus groups), the information collected is limited by the response categories in the questions (which may miss important new ideas) and open-ended questions lower the response rate and are hard to summarize.

An example would be a survey of the parents in order to reach more than a handful as in a focus group.

While the environmental scan is a vital part of any planning process, it is also the step where most planning processes break down. Data collection of this sort is hard work and takes a bit of time. Too often organizations lose energy here or take too long to do the job. Set a reasonable time limit and prioritize stakeholders from whom you must get input (i.e., funders, parents, community activists, and donors). Any environmental scan, which exceeds 3 months, is destined to fail.

An alternative to the environmental scan—or a way for the Planning Committee to integrate the result—is to have a one-time planning retreat where founders (and possibly a select group of stakeholders) do their best to brainstorm strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, while prioritizing the results. This approach is used regularly in organizations and has the value of getting the job done quickly. The price for this efficiency is a high risk of missing important input and trends that are not on the group's radar screen. If you can add results from an environmental scan, the job will be more meaningful.

The **SWOT** technique, a simple and effective vehicle for collecting information, helps focus the process by breaking it down into four broad categories:

- | |
|---|
| <p>S What are the founders' <u>Strengths</u>?</p> <p>W What are the founders' <u>Weaknesses</u>?</p> <p>O What external <u>Opportunities</u> might move the charter school forward?</p> <p>T What external <u>Threats</u> might prevent the charter school from succeeding?</p> |
|---|

Evaluating the founders' general strengths and weaknesses, as well as the strengths and weaknesses specific to each aspect of the charter school's design/application, typically includes assessments of:

- Founders and potential board member capabilities;
- Quality of design/application;
- Reputation of founders and potential partners;
- Management information and financial systems;
- Facilities and resources, etc.

Successful organizations exploit strengths rather than just focus on weaknesses. In other words, this process is not just about fixing the things that are wrong, but also nurturing what is right.

The same kind of thinking should apply to how founders approach opportunities and threats-- the external trends that influence creating the charter school. These are usually categorized into **P**olitical, **E**conomic, **S**ocial, **T**echnological, **D**emographic, and **L**egal (PESTD~~L~~) forces. These external forces can include such circumstances as changing student populations, increased competition, changing regulations, etc. They can either help a charter school move forward (opportunities) or hold a charter school organization back (threats) -- but opportunities that are ignored can become threats, and threats that are dealt with appropriately can be turned into opportunities.

Since SWOT analysis may be your primary means of receiving input from a broad and representative constituency, it is important to include as many stakeholders as possible in this process.

A common and useful approach used during meetings is to brainstorm ideas onto flip charts. After the lists of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats have been recorded, the listed ideas can be grouped into logical topic or issue groups (e.g., all the ideas related to staffing or program development should be grouped together) to make the data easier to present and analyze.

The products of Step Three include a database of quality information that can be used to make decisions and a list of critical issues, which demand a response from the founders.

Step Four - Developing Strategies, Goals, and Objectives

Once the charter school mission is clear and critical issues identified, it is time to figure out what to do about them: the broad approaches to be taken (strategies), and the general and specific results to be sought (the goals and objectives). Strategies, goals, and objectives may come from individual inspiration, group discussion, formal decision-making techniques—but the bottom line is that, in the end, the leadership agrees on how to address the critical issues. The charter school application is a very helpful document in identifying a list of critical issues to address. It is important that planners are never afraid to go back to an earlier step in the process and take advantage of newly learned insights to create the best possible plan.

A key component of a potential charter school's plan is the evaluation of its design components effectiveness and efficiency. This evaluation will provide data about whether to follow each design element or to develop new ones. Focus on both potential outcomes, or results, and process, or methods. Outcome evaluation looks at whether the charter school will achieve its planned results. Process evaluation looks at internal charter school management, both staff performance and the extent to which the charter school

will be successfully implemented. Build the outcome evaluation into your goals and objectives.

The product of Step Four is an outline of the founding groups strategic directions -- the general strategies, long-range goals, and specific objectives of its response to critical issues.

Step Five - Completing the Written Plan

The mission has been articulated, the critical issues identified, and the goals and strategies agreed upon. This step essentially involves putting all that down on paper. Usually one member of the Planning Committee (or even a planning consultant) will draft a final planning document and submit it for review to all key decision makers. This is also the time to consult with outside experts such as the Maryland Charter School Network and leaders of successful charter schools to determine:

- whether the plan is viable;
- whether the founders can accomplishing the goals proposed by the strategic plan;
- to ensure that the plan answers key questions about priorities and directions in sufficient detail to serve as a guide.

Revisions should not be dragged out for months, but action should be taken to answer any important questions that are raised at this step. It would certainly be a mistake to bury conflict at this step just to wrap up the process more quickly; because the conflict, if serious, will inevitably undermine the potency of the strategic directions chosen by the planning committee.

The product of Step Five is a strategic plan!

Standard Format for a Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is simply a document that summarizes (in about ten pages of written text) why the charter school is being created, what it is trying to accomplish, and how it will go about doing so. Below is an example of a common format for strategic plans, as well as brief descriptions of each component listed, which might help writers organize their thoughts and their material. This is just an example, however-- not the one and only way to go about this task.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The final document should include a table of contents. These are the sections commonly included in a strategic plan.

I. Executive Summary

In one to two pages, this section should summarize the strategic plan. It should reference the mission and vision; highlight the long-range goals (what the charter school is seeking to accomplish); and perhaps, note the process for developing the plan. From this summary, readers should understand what is most important about the organization.

II. Mission and Vision Statements

These statements can stand alone without any introductory text.

III. Profile of Founders

The reader should learn the story of the founders.

IV. Critical Issues and Strategies

The section may be presented as an outline or as a narrative. It should include, at minimum, the tasks necessary to answer the questions in the charter school application. Once the application is complete, repeat process with an emphasis on implementing these elements.

V. Charter School Goals and Objectives

In many ways, the goals and objectives are the heart of the strategic plan. Mission and vision answer the big questions about why the charter school will be created and how it seeks to benefit society, but the goals and objectives are the plan of action—what the charter school intends to do. As such, this section should serve as a useful guide for operational planning and a reference for evaluation.

VI. Action Steps to Creating the Charter School

Develop this section as a guide to achieving the previous two sections.

VII. Appendices

Resources such as possible curricula, this manual, possibly a description of a potential facility; community partners, etc.

Chapter Two – Lessons Learned: The Benefits of Planning

Why should you consume all the resources that planning requires, a precious commodity for all founders? As a process that eventually defines the direction and activities of the charter school, it can be an overwhelming task. You will benefit both from the planning process, as well as from the final planning document.

Some benefits of a plan include:

- A framework and a clearly defined direction that guides and supports the governance and management of the charter school;
- A uniform vision and purpose that is shared among all stakeholders;
- An increased level of commitment to the charter school and its goals;
- Improved quality of education for students;
- A foundation for fund raising and board development;
- The ability to set priorities and to match resources to opportunities;
- The ability to deal with risks from the external environment.

Lessons Learned: After All the Work -- Use the Plan

- Actively use the plan as to manage the design, application writing, and startup processes.
- Actively use the plan for short-term guidance and decision making.
- Formalize the usage of the plan into day-to-day activities. For example, a group or organization may read the mission statement at the opening of every business meeting to remind them of their focus and purpose.
- Organize the work of starting your charter school in the context of the plan.
- Establish operational goals and activities within the context of the strategic plan (e.g., include goals and objectives in decision making).
- Design a system for controlling the process.
- Ensure that there are mechanisms to inform founders on progress.

Chapter Three

Fundraising – Everyone Gets Involved

Introduction

While you are working on the charter school's financial plan, you will soon realize that per pupil charter school funding will not meet all of your needs. In any new organization—facing the challenges of securing and readying a facility, developing curriculum, purchasing furniture, books, equipment, etc., and preparing of the school's educational plans—it can be tempting to just brainstorm fundraising ideas and select those that the founders like best.

This chapter will help founders understand the critical role of the board, individuals as donors, and how to prepare a simple fundraising plan to follow during the course of the year. We hope that this limited introduction to fundraising will help you overcome the barriers to getting started.

Where The Money Comes From

When you first consider fundraising, the tendency is to begin making suggestions and trying whichever activities someone volunteers to tackle. People may say:

- Let's get a grant;
- Let's have a fundraising dinner;
- How about a bake sale or yard sale;
- Maybe celebrity X can make a large donation.

A more successful method is to learn about the sources for charitable funds; to assess ideas to set realistic expectations, and to balance level of effort with resources; to

develop a plan in order to concentrate your efforts on a few major goals; and finally, to begin a long process of relationship building.

Here are some facts and figures.

The 2003 Giving USA study found that for \$240.72 billion in 2003 contributions:

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| ▪ Corporations gave | 5.6% |
| ▪ Bequests contributed | 9.0% |
| ▪ Foundations gave | 10.9% |
| ▪ Individuals gave | 74.5% |

Since individual donors are the source of most charitable giving, it pays to focus on finding those people who share your vision for the education of children. In Maryland, citizens have above average incomes, giving about 3% of income to charity with education as a high priority. Education also ranks among the top giving areas for Maryland foundations.

Some other reasons to focus attention on individual donors are that:

- Donations from individuals are most likely to be unrestricted;
- Individuals are most likely to support startup organizations – to respond to enthusiastic personal appeal;
- Fundraising among individuals builds a base of support within the community.

Who Will Do the Fundraising for a New Charter School?

The charter application process begins with a vision for education. However, the task requires founders to build an organization, an institution. All stakeholders play a role in fundraising for success, the founders, the board, the staff, and the parents. The complete school community works to build its presence in the larger community.

| WHO | FUNDRAISING ROLE | STRENGTH |
|----------|---|--|
| Founders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign off on grant applications • Attend key meetings with potential donors • Function as spokesperson | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the vision • Know details – wrote the charter application • Are credible educators or community leaders |
| Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write foundation and corporate grants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have knowledge of program details and education philosophy |
| Board | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify individuals • Advocate • Organize fundraising meetings or events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to goals of school • Have given themselves |
| Parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer, especially for events • Identify friends and family | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very personal cause, their children • Diverse talents among the group |

As you learn more about fundraising, you will hear new terms and plenty of jargon. The following definitions may be helpful.

- **Annual fund:** the overall program and operating funds raised in a year. May be from individual donors, events, grants.
- **Annual appeal:** the annual approach to individuals, usually by mail.
- **Restricted funds:** funds donated for a specific project. Must be tracked separately in the accounting system and can only be used for the designated purpose. May cover more than one year.
- **Unrestricted funds:** can be used at management discretion, support operating costs.
- **Campaign:** a specific fundraising activity or goal. Might be a mailing or series of integrated events.
- **Major donor:** definition depends on the organization. Might be \$100 for a startup organization. For one Ivy League university a major donor is \$1,000,000 or more; they consider everything else as part of the annual appeal.

How to Reach Individuals

Board

Board members are always crucial for raising money—they know people, they care for the organization, they should be relentless advocates. So, while you might recruit board members because they are educators, lawyers, accountants, or community activists, you should always make clear that they are expected to participate in fundraising.

First, trustees should contribute themselves. The giving level may vary widely, but they should each give at a personally significant level. Foundations and other donors will ask if your board is 100% invested.

During the startup stage, paid school staff members are writing curricula, recruiting staff, and preparing the charter application. The board **IS** the fundraising staff at this time; they have real responsibility. They should lead the effort by bringing their address books to create a direct mail appeal, organizing fund raising events, organizing parents to help, hosting house parties to tell people about the school and its vision, inviting a few prospects to breakfast or lunch – or to the school for a tour. The board may well need training in order to get started. Build that into your budget. It will pay off.

The following table shows some common fundraising ideas and their roles vs. your particular goals.

| Events | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Event type | Who leads | Pros | Cons | Goals | Guidance |
| House parties | Board | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces school to board friends and family • No cost, host pays • Low investment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not likely to generate large donation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build list of friends • Find local supporters for \$ and volunteers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare handouts about school goals and achievements • Prepare information on fundraising needs • Give people ability to pledge or donate on the spot, but also info to take away |
| <p>"Fundraiser" event</p> <p>Examples: dinner, concert or other performance, especially useful if school theme is arts related.</p> | Board and Parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates good feelings about the school • Ticket fee plus silent or open auction, 50:50 (raffle needs license) • Opportunity for corporate sponsors (favor events and children or education causes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember, often a FriendRaiser more than a FundRaiser • Lots of work for the amount of money raised • Needs cash as an advance investment to pay for location, caterer, printer, postage, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build towards a signature annual event, which may generate significant funds over time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can volunteers contribute location, food, auction items, printing, mailing – expenses that require \$ in advance • Silent auction – price to the audience (don't offer items worth \$1000 if audience not able to give more than \$100) |
| Cultivation event | Board and Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives prospects a chance to see deeper | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes careful planning - an exact script | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donation or pledge expected from many attendees within reasonable time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to house party, but previously identified good prospects • Showcase students – give people a feel good opportunity |

| Events | | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Event type | Who leads | Pros | Cons | Goals | Guidance |
| Bake sales, art sales, walk-a-thons, (walk or bike or kite flying – good if physical activity a school theme) | Board Parents and Volunteers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages more people, including parents and students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People intensive, but can be volunteer led | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees or sales at time of event | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't under price; be sure you make enough money. If it works, make it annual activity – build reputation |

Annual Appeal

It is never too early to start building a base of community supporters. The charter school should run an annual appeal every year.

Start right away.

The board can lead by building a mailing list of their friends and colleagues.

Include the parents.

Find the school neighbors.

Add them all to the list.

There are two basic approaches to reaching this list that you have developed—direct mail and phone. Often it helps to integrate the two. First, mail a letter and reply form to everyone on the list. Have the board add a brief handwritten note to each letter. Even if they don't know the person, these notes are proven to increase the response. Then follow-up the mailing with a phone-athon to those who haven't responded. Use the office of a board member if you can.

The letter can be simple. Open with a story about a child who didn't thrive in traditional public schools but has been (or could be) helped by your school or a similar

A word about parents: While your school may not be in a high income neighborhood, the parents made an effort to have their child admitted to your school, which is, after all, a free public school.

Maybe they can give only \$10, or \$10/month. But ask. They have a stake. In addition to money, parents may be able to contribute to the list or provide a skill. Having a parent undertake some plumbing repairs or paint the classroom saves money and

school. Then describe the school and its education vision. Close with a specific request and action, such as “Please donate \$25. Use the form provided or donate on our website, www.nameofcharterschool.org.”

The phone approach is also simple. Introduce yourself as a board member and volunteer.

Note that they received a mailing recently. Say a few words about the school. *Ask for questions. **ASK for the donation. **Thank them either way.*****

Meanwhile you are building a list of supporters, a list that will grow over time. In addition, you may identify potential major donors. If someone seems really interested or makes a significant donation (even \$100 might qualify for a new institution), call them, meet them, and engage them.

Thank the donors several times. The board member connection can make a personal call. The school should send a formal letter. The newsletter might list donors. Donors might be invited to a school event as a thank you. Keep going. A rule of thumb is seven thank-yous. This is a demanding goal. Plan the acknowledgement process along with the asking process.

Finally, start a good record system, a database. There are commercial systems, homegrown databases, and systems on the web. For example, “eBase” is free for the first 500 names.

Other Funding Sources

Foundation and corporate grants are, of course, other sources of funds. Foundations may support very specific projects, but are often wary of new organizations. They prefer the school to develop a track record first. However, if someone on the board has a personal connection, you may get a hearing.

Corporations think “marketing opportunity” in their giving approach. Supermarkets might provide “in kind” donations – food for an opening party. Local companies might sponsor an event—especially if they are a very community-oriented business—such as a walkathon or bike ride.

Before the approach, research the organization. Does your group match their priorities?

Making the Case – Telling the Story

It is important to write a “case statement.” It works as a cheat sheet for the board and other volunteers. Try to prepare one for every fundraising need or event. It can be just a page or two with bullet points. In business, these are called talking papers. It will help in talking to donors and friends, providing “relentless advocates” with a clear story and facts to bolster a conversation or letter.

The case statement should include:

1. Mission and vision of the school;
2. Goal of the fundraising campaign (a facility or new science lab, computer room, gymnasium, library etc.);
3. Description of community need;
4. Description of project (such as after-school program if applicable);
5. Simplified budget; and
6. How the project will be evaluated.

The case statement tells why the school needs money, how much, how it will be used, and how you will know if you achieved the program goal.

Be careful to describe the need as the community’s need, rather than the school’s need. For example, if requesting funding for an after-school program be sure to discuss the community’s lack of appropriate safe places for children to go after school, as well as describing unique local threats such as gangs, drugs, crime, etc. that unsupervised

children might face. You must demonstrate to the givers that their money will solve an important problem.

In addition, take care to describe the need fully, rather than just something that you lack. You might want to raise \$1,500 for video/LCD projectors for the classroom. It is not enough merely to state that the school needs audiovisual equipment. If you define this as a tool that will offer a multi-sensory learning approach by adding visual and auditory imagery to book learning, you are talking about offering a successful teaching model for all types of learners-- a more compelling story.

The case describes what the money is for, how much it will take to get something done, and why. If you just say we need \$5,000 – or we need money to furnish the classrooms – it is hard for the prospect to know if his or her contribution will make a difference. Sometimes it helps to list items needed and their costs, providing donors an opportunity to sponsor an item: 20 microscopes at \$X each, 4 lab tables at @ each, 4 balance beam scales at @ each, etc.

The case statement tool helps you define the reason your school needs the money and helps to tell your story effectively.

The Plan – Five Simple Steps

Finally, before heading off with hat in hand, pull all these ideas together into a plan. It doesn't have to be fancy, but a plan sets priorities, goals, balances resources, manages the work. You can use a table or spreadsheet.

| Simple Fundraising Plan | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Stage I – Fundraising Goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define how much money is to be raised. • Define the purpose for raising the money – be VERY specific. |
| Stage II – Overall Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set targets for the amount of funds, which will be raised from each source (individuals, events, grants, etc.) |
| Stage III – The Targets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List individuals, corporate or foundation prospects. • Identify who will be responsible for contacting them • Choose the strategy(s) for reaching out to these prospects |

| Simple Fundraising Plan | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| | such as phone call, letter, house-party, luncheon, etc. |
| Stage IV – Action Plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a calendar with each fundraising project, broken down into tasks. • For each task, list who will perform it, who will assist them, and when will they be done. |
| Stage V: Fundraising | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a plan is developed it is essential to work the plan. • Monitoring the plan is a key responsibility of the board. • Fundraising is an ongoing process of building relationships and persistent efforts. This chapter is a very short introduction to some practical approaches to get the charter school started on the road to fundraising success. • It may be helpful to talk with other nonprofit community-based organizations and charter schools in your community, to attend seminars, check the library's fundraising collection, and check out a few websites. Several are listed below to help you take the next step in preparing and executing a successful fundraising plan. |

Fundraising Resources – A Starter List

Foundation Center: Search for foundations, online tutorials (<http://www.fdncenter.org/>)

The Foundation Center has an extensive collection of books on every aspect of nonprofit organization and fundraising. Local public libraries have basic grant foundation directories, and at least, some book collection on fundraising.

There is one Foundation Center cooperating collections in Maryland:

Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore
 Social Science & History
 400 Cathedral St.
 Baltimore, MD 21201
 (410) 396-5320

Federal Government: Central source for federal grants (www.grants.gov/)

Board Source: Help for boards (www.boardsource.org)

Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers: Network of grantmakers, not a source of grants, but identifies major foundation players in Maryland (www.abagmd.org).

Chapter Three – Fundraising Lessons Learned

- Individual donors are the major sources of charitable funds.
- Board members are critical in fundraising.
- Don't forget the parents.
- Don't lose the creative fundraising ideas, but BUILD A PLAN.

Chapter Four

Methods for Writing the Application

The ABC's of Grant Writing ¹²

Writing a charter school application involves a set of technical skills that are generally defined as grant writing. It involves precision, clarity, and focus. It is **not** merely an exercise in bureaucratic paperwork. It is the process of identifying and describing all the critical characteristics of your charter school. It should be used as an opportunity to think through what and why your founders are trying to create. It should be integrated into your strategic planning process..

One word of caution – while creating a charter school is a great opportunity to be creative, writing your application requires intense discipline. Follow all format instructions exactly as written. Answer each and every question in the order they are presented. Write clearly and limit your answers to what the question asks.

The application does not stand alone. This process is grounded in the conviction that a partnership should develop between the charter school and the local board of education.

This truly *is* an ideal partnership. The charter school has the ideas and the capacity to educate children and the local board has the resources to monitor and support the school. Bring the two together effectively, and the result is a dynamic collaboration.

¹² Modified from Jane C. Geever and Patricia McNeill. *The Foundation Center's Guide to Proposal Writing* (New York: The Foundation Center, 1997).

This chapter is organized into four sections:

- I. Overview Advice
- II. Key Sections of the Application – Guidance and Pitfall Avoidance
- III. Writing Tips
- IV. Consultants – More Than Grant writers

Overview – How to Approach the Charter School Application

Getting Background Information

The first thing you will need to do in writing the application is to gather the documentation for it. If all of needed information is not readily available, determine who will help you gather each type of information. The data-gathering process makes the actual writing much easier.

It is important that you have a good sense of how the complex details of the proposed school fits into its philosophy and mission. The need for the school must also be documented. These concepts must be well articulated in the proposal

Use the Application Guidelines as a Resource

In the application guidelines questions are followed by citations from statute/regulations and notes on what the reader will be looking for. ***One hundred percent of these are significant.***

ALWAYS make sure your responses are consistent with all appropriate statutes and regulations as cited. It is NOT good enough to say you will follow the regulations. You must DEMONSTRATE that you understand and are committed to compliance.

ALWAYS ask yourself if you have supplied what you were instructed to provide and that which the reader will be looking for. ***They are not kidding – readers follow a scoring rubric and will thoroughly check all your responses.***

Reviewing Existing Applications

An application is not a copyrighted commercial publication and there are no points for being totally original. Study successful existing applications (available through local boards and in person from MCSN on request). Look at how they answered each question. Don't just copy from them. After all, they do not have your exact mission, vision, or learning environment. A reader can easily spot a choppy, thrown-together set of copied responses. Edit and tweak all that you have "borrowed," so that it is both stylistically consistent and integrated with all other sections of your application.

Integrating All Aspects of School

Review each section of the application with respect to whether it stands well alone – i.e., whether it thoroughly and clearly answers the questions. Then review each section of the application for consistency with all other sections. Consistency needs to be:

- **Factual:** A simple error such as failing to have the same number of personnel in the organizational chart and the budget is a red flag for readers. There are a myriad of opportunities for this type of error.
- **Philosophical:** A school with a very traditional pedagogy might well have a more hierarchal style of administration and a progressive pedagogy might go well with facilitative leadership. Whatever you describe throughout the application should build on the mission, vision, themes, etc. of the school.
- **Environmental:** A school must reflect the realities of its community – inner city schools in high poverty neighborhoods face different challenges than schools in rural or suburban communities. Neighborhoods with many English Language Learners (ELL) students or highly mobile populations need to be designed to reflect those realities. Make sure that the need you described is well reflected in the school you propose.

Key Sections – Thoughts for Application Preparation

The charter school application is very thorough. By the time you have written this application, you will have detailed everything you plan to achieve and exactly how you will get there. As we've said before, don't think of this as an application. **It is YOUR plan of intent, YOUR plan of action.**

SAMPLE ELEMENTS OF A MARYLAND CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

1. Profile of Founding Group
2. Administrative and Governance Structure
3. Mission , Goals and Objectives
4. Student Population and School Calendar
5. Educational Program
6. Academic Program, Standards, and Assessment
7. School Management
8. Student Policy and Services
9. Personnel
10. Human Resource Information
11. Policy, Regulations, and Legal Requirements
12. Parent Involvement and Community Participation
13. School Facilities
14. Finances, Budget Summary, Cash Flow Schedule
15. Recruiting and Marketing Plan
16. Transportation
17. School Safety and Security

Statement of Need

The statement of need will enable the reader to learn more about the issues. It presents the facts and evidence that support the need for the charter school and establishes that your founders understand the problems and, therefore, can reasonably address them. The information used to support the case can come from authorities in the field, as well as from your own experience.

You want the need section to be succinct, yet persuasive. Like a good debater, you must assemble all the arguments. Then, present them in a logical sequence that will convince the reader of their importance. As you marshal your arguments, consider the following six points.

First, Decide Which Facts or Statistics Best Support the Project.

Be sure the data you present are accurate. There are few things more embarrassing than to have the authorizer tell you that your information is out of date or incorrect. Information that is too generic or broad will not help you develop a winning argument for your project. Information that does not relate to your organization or the project you are presenting will cause the authorizer to question the entire proposal. There also should be a balance between the information presented and the scale of the school.

Second, Give the Reader Hope.

The picture you paint should not be so grim that the solution appears hopeless. Avoid overstatement and overly emotional appeals.

Third, Decide How You Can Demonstrate that Your School Will Address the Need Differently or Better than Other Local Institutions.

It is often difficult to describe the need for your project without being critical of the existing public school district. Nevertheless, you must be careful not to overdue it. Being too critical of the district will not be well received by the readers. It may cause them to look more carefully at your own proposed school to see why you felt you had to build your case by demeaning others. The readers may have history in the existing system.

If possible, you should make it clear that you are cognizant of, and on good terms with, others doing work in education. Keep in mind that readers are usually very interested in collaboration. They may even ask why you are not collaborating with those

you view as key competitors. So, at least, you need to describe how your work complements, but does not duplicate, the work of others.

Fourth, Avoid Circular Reasoning.

In circular reasoning, you present the absence of your solution as the actual problem. Then your solution is offered as the way to solve the problem.

The statement of need does not have to be long and involved. Short, concise information captures the reader's attention.

An Example of Circular Reasoning:

*There is no arts focused school in Town X.
Therefore the new ArtsCharter School will fill the gap.*

Better:

Research has shown that arts education fosters self-confidence, helps students learn conflict resolution, and improves their overall ability to learn. Thus, the proposed ArtsCharter School children will be successful.

Goals and Objectives

Goals describe the broad standards and outcomes for the students, staff and school.

Goals answer these questions

- Are the specific standards and outcomes for students aligned with the vision?
- What should students know and be able to do?
- What are the desired outcomes?
- Are the objectives to be measured the truly important ones?

Objectives are the measurable outcomes of the school. They define your methods. Your objectives must be tangible, specific, concrete, measurable, and achievable in a specified time period. Writers often confuse objectives with goals, which are conceptual and more abstract. To reiterate, objectives are the specific measurable results of achieving goals.

Well-articulated objectives are critical to an application's success. For the purpose of illustration, here is the goal of a project with a subsidiary objective:

Goal: Our after-school program will help children read better.

Objective: Our after-school remedial education program will assist fifty children in improving their reading scores by one grade level as demonstrated on standardized reading tests administered after participating in the program for six months.

The goal in this case is abstract: improving reading, while the objective is much more specific. It is achievable in the short term (six months) and measurable (improving fifty children's reading scores by one grade level).

Using a different example, there are at least **four types of objectives**:

1. **Behavioral Objective:** A human action is anticipated.

- Example:** Fifty of the seventy children participating will learn to swim.
- Performance Objective:** A specific time frame within which a behavior will occur, at an expected proficiency level, is expected.
Example: Fifty of the seventy children will learn to swim within six months and will pass a basic swimming proficiency test administered by a Red Cross-certified lifeguard.
 - Process Objective:** The manner in which something occurs is an end in itself.
Example: We will document the teaching methods utilized, identifying those with the greatest success.
 - Product Objective:** A tangible item results.
Example: A manual will be created to be used in teaching swimming to this age and proficiency group in the future.

In any given application, you will find yourself setting forth one or more of these types of objectives. Be certain to present the objectives very clearly. Make sure that they do not become lost in verbiage and that they stand out on the page. For example, you might use numbers, bullets, or indentations to denote the objectives in the text. Above all, be realistic in setting objectives. Don't promise what you can't deliver. Remember, your school will be accountable for achieving its objectives.

You will need to create goals and objectives to respond to the following:

- Academic achievement – what performance level will the school be held accountable for attaining?
- Meeting school specific goals;
- Include state board goals, district priorities, and community needs;
- Content-based or performance-based?
- Maryland state-mandated assessments;
- Must be measurable – consider what instrument will be used to measure;
- Expected performance goal – baseline and increase.

Educational Methods

By means of the objectives, you have explained to the reader what will be achieved by the school. The application will include many sections that describe the

specific activities that will take place to achieve the objectives. It might be helpful to divide our discussion of methods into the following: how, when, and why.

How: This is the detailed description of what will occur within your charter school. Your methods should match the previously stated objectives.

When: The methods section should present the order and timing for the tasks. As appropriate provide timetables so that the reader does not have to map out the sequencing on his/her own. The timetable tells the reader "when" and provides another summary that supports the rest of the methods sections.

Why: You may need to defend your chosen methods, especially if they are new or unorthodox. Why will the planned pedagogy, theme or approaches lead to the outcomes you anticipate? You can answer this question in a number of ways, including using expert testimony and examples of other schools that work.

The methods sections enable the reader to visualize the implementation of the school. They should convince the reader that your founders know what they are doing, thereby establishing their credibility.

Staffing and Administration

The application will contain a detailed staffing plan. You need to discuss the number of staff, their qualifications, and specific assignments. "Staffing" may refer to volunteers or to consultants, as well as to paid staff. Most proposal writers do not develop staffing sections for volunteers. Describing tasks that volunteers will undertake, however, can be most helpful to the reader. Such information underscores the value added by the volunteers as well as cost-effectiveness.

For paid staff, be certain to describe which staff will work full time and which will work part time. Identify how staff will be recruited specifically for the project. Salary

costs are affected by the qualifications of the staff. Delineate the practical experience you require for key staff, as well as level of expertise and educational background.

The application will contain a detailed administration plan. It needs to be crystal clear who is responsible for financial management, measuring outcomes, and reporting

Evaluation

Evaluation should be built into the way you describe all aspects of the charter school. The evaluation plan indicates that you take your objectives seriously and want to know how well you have achieved them. Evaluation is also a sound management tool. Like strategic planning, it helps a charter school refine and improve its programs. An evaluation can often be the best means for others to learn from your experience.

There are two types of formal evaluation. One measures the product; the other analyzes the process. Either or both might be appropriate to your project. The approach you choose will depend on the nature of the project and its objectives. For either type, you will need to describe the manner in which evaluation information will be collected and how the data will be analyzed. You should present your plan for how the evaluation and its results will be reported and the audience to which it will be directed. For example, it might be used internally or be shared with the authorizer, or it might deserve a wider audience. An authorizer might even have an opinion about the scope of this dissemination.

Tips for Grant Writing

Strengthen your application by following these content and format suggestions, ranging from bold type to white space. Keep the reader in mind. These are tips that experienced proposal writers follow.

Bold Type: Bold type is easier to read than underlining, italics, or all capital letters as a means of creating emphasis. Use bold type to emphasize only the key words, but avoid overemphasis.

Editing: Revise, reduce, rearrange, and rewrite to improve. Are all the major pieces of the application in the proper order? Does your draft look attractive and readable?

Guidelines: Read and re-read forms and guidelines—and believe them!

Headings: Headings and subheadings act like a table of contents placed directly in your application text; that is, at a glance they reveal the main ideas and the organization of your proposal to the reader. Use headings and subheadings from the guidelines.

Lists: Lists help to get the message to the reader with a sense of immediacy, without being wordy. Furthermore, because lists are easy for readers to skim, they convey chunks of information quickly. Use a numbered list when items need to be examined in a specific sequence. Use a bulleted list when items are all equally important.

Proofreading: Proofread and proofread again your application. Proofread your application in multiple readings, looking for different features on each reading. As you proofread, look at:

- **Content**—does your application have enough substance? Are your ideas complete?
- **Form**—is your organization logical? Are all facts and figures accurate? Are ideas expressed clearly? Is the application design visually appealing?
- **Mechanics**—are words spelled correctly, especially proper names? Are all numbers and computations accurate? Are sentences grammatically correct, including subject-verb agreement? Are sentences punctuated properly?

Page Numbering: Follow the local board required format exactly as described in the guidelines.

Ragged Right Margins: A ragged right margin is easier to read than one that is right justified because the proportional spacing slows readability. It is easier for the reader's

eye to track from the end of one line to the beginning of the next line when the right-hand margins are jagged.

Charts and Graphs: Use charts and graphs to present information in an easily scanned manner as well as to create more visual interest in your presentation.

Transitions: Transitional expressions are words and phrases that signal connections among ideas; these connectors can help you achieve coherence in your writing. Common transitional words and phrases can indicate:

- **Addition**– also, in addition, again, and, and then, too, moreover, besides, further, furthermore, equally important, next, then, finally, likewise, first, second, third, last.
- **Example**– for example, for instance, thus, as an illustration, namely, specifically, in particular, incidentally, indeed, in fact, in other words, said differently, that is, to illustrate.
- **Result**– therefore, thus, consequently, so, accordingly, due to this, as a result, hence, in short, otherwise, then, truly, that caused, that produced.
- **Summary**– as a result, hence, in short, in brief, in summary, in conclusion, finally, on the whole, to conclude, to sum up, thus, therefore, as a consequence, at last.

Type Style: If the guidelines stipulate the type style and type size that you must use, follow them! If type style is not specified, consider using serif typefaces for the text of your proposal and sans serif typefaces for titles and headings. Serif typefaces such as Times Roman and Courier have small strokes that finish off the main stroke of a letter and make it easier to read. Sans serif typefaces such as Universal and Arial, which do not have the small finishing strokes, are ideal for titles and headings because they stand off from the body of the text. Remember, a familiar-looking document is a friendly document.

White Space: Use white space to break up long copy. Ample white space makes your application appear inviting and user-friendly. White space can indicate that one section is

ending and another is beginning, or that an idea is so central to the proposal that it needs to be set off by itself.

Judicious use of white space breaks your application into smaller, manageable chunks of information. Even a simple use of white space between paragraphs helps the mind to see the information in that paragraph as a unit. You can easily indent and skip lines for paragraph lists and other pieces of materials. One creative use of white space is the making of lists.

Consultants – More than Grant Writers

A consultant can help you through the process, provide missing expertise, and provide perspective. They work with you, not separately. The reasons for hiring a consultant could include:

- **You don't know how.** A consultant offers skills and expertise the founders' lack.
- **You don't have the time.** A consultant, guided by experience and expertise, can get the job done more quickly.
- **You need an outside perspective.** You might need a consultant when you are looking for someone to see the situation objectively, without the filters and preconceived notions that internal people may have.
- **You need everyone to participate.** Using a consultant will enable all founders to fully participate in a process such as strategic planning, without one of them having to wear a facilitator's or coordinator's hat too.
- **You need to learn best practices.** Because they have a breadth of experiences from different organizations, a consultant can ask the right questions, moving your organization to greater learning and success.

Successful consultancies are collaborative with both parties building a relationship of mutual respect, integrity, trust, and dependability. In the end, you should complete the process with new learning and expertise.

What consultants can provide:

- Organizational skills, planning, time management;
- Ethical framework, core set of values, courage to confront tough issues;
- Skill in communication, facilitation, coordination, diplomacy;
- Common sense;
- Taking the long view;
- Courage;
- Sense of humor;
- Energy;
- Flexibility (willing to customize services);
- Political neutrality.

What founders can provide:

- Honesty and open communications;
- Recognition of needs;
- Willingness, even eagerness, to seek advice;
- Strong leadership;
- Reasonable/realistic expectations;
- Access to information and personnel;
- Organizational structure and staff to support the initiative;
- Commitment to agreements, staff and time requirements, and deadlines.

Finally, there are a few negatives to using consultants:

- **Expense:** Founders frequently lack the significant financial resources to hire top quality consultants.
- **Ownership:** There is a serious concern that the product will be more reflective of the consultant than of the founders' vision.
- **Experience:** There is a serious concern that in planning for creating a charter school and writing the lengthy, highly detailed application over-reliance on a consultant can generate high quality documents divorced from real participation by the founders. As a result, you might not truly understand what you are

submitting, what you are committing to, and what you are going to be responsible for implementing.

- **Commitment:** Sadly, in consulting as in all aspects of life, the skills and commitment of individual providers vary widely. Experience has shown that the right consultant can be an invaluable asset. Others have been shown to be more motivated by greed, more self-aggrandizing than valuable, and more concerned with their own needs than those of their clients. ALWAYS check references and samples of past work before hiring.
- **Ethical:** A highly qualified consultant can shape the application to falsely inflate the resources, qualifications, and readiness of the founding group. MCSN is committed to supporting the development of high quality charter schools that achieve excellent educational outcomes, that are well administered, are fiscally responsible and that reflect the needs and desires of their communities. No one is well served if a charter is awarded to founders unlikely to achieve that level of success.

Chapter Four – Lessons Learned about Writing the Application

- Gather all your data.
- Find models in other applications.
- Practice writing goals and objectives.
- Assure that the application is an integrated whole – in content and in style.

Chapter Five

Governance Plan:

Building a Fully Functioning Organization

Board Governance

Establishing and maintaining a strong board are critical tasks for any charter school. For a newly formed school, attention to the composition and work of the board is vital to ensure a smooth transition into a fully functional organization. Founding boards have the delicate task of protecting their original passion and dreams while also making room for new people to fully engage in a sense of “ownership” of the organization. Start out knowing that board development is a slow deliberate process that will test your patience, create opportunities to test your most basic premises and assumptions and hopefully, create stability for dealing with on-going challenges.

What is Governance, Really?

Board governance is a seriously misunderstood concept, even in schools with a long history. In a founding charter school, the concept of governance is often confused with management and operations as founding members find themselves needing to do a bit of both. Let's start by isolating the unique tasks of governance:

- Ensuring that the charter school makes a real and valued difference in the community;
- Ensuring that the charter school functions in a prudent and ethical manner;
- Creating and sustaining a future focus that keeps the charter school relevant in the community;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the charter school leader in managing all of the above.

Ensuring that the Charter School Makes a Real and Valued Difference in the Community

The first and most important task of the board is to state clearly, why the charter school exists and what it is to achieve over time. A clear and crisp mission statement is the tool that will be used over and over to frame this discussion and future decisions about the organization. What sets you apart from other schools in the area? How will you know if the school is successful? What unique strategy or philosophy forms the base of anything that you do?

Basically, the board ensures that the charter school starts out and stays mission focused. You will be tempted over time to respond to funding opportunities. It is the board's job to ensure that there are real criteria in place to evaluate these opportunities and stay clear of those that take you off mission.

It is also the job of the board to regularly review whether the charter school is achieving success. The board and the staff cannot do that evaluative work if there is not a commonly understood standard for success. The board sets and maintains clear standards for success and then regularly asks for information about ongoing progress against these standards.

A Special Note: Volume only indicates volume; it does not indicate success.

Be sure that your charter school can answer the “*so, what?*” question.

“We served 150 children last year”

So, what? – did they learn any new, important skills?

Are they any better off than when they came to the school?

Ensuring that the Charter School Functions in a Prudent and Ethical Manner

The board holds the charter school “in trust” for the citizens of Maryland and the community in which you are located. You have been given a charter to run a school. Board members act as “trustees” on behalf of the larger community and must ensure that the charter school functions in a safe and prudent manner. Having strong and ethical standards in the form of policies is important work of the board. Board members do not represent their own self-interest on a board – they represent the interests of the whole community. This includes responsibility to future students, as well responsibility to current students.

Special Note: It is far too common for charter schools to develop policy on the fly – in reaction to specific events. This creates two problems: the policies are too specific and don't cover other potential problems and the policy is embedded in board minutes where it loses its effectiveness over time. A better process is to intentionally create fewer proactive policies that cover broader topics and maintain a separate policy manual that is monitored on a

Policy development and monitoring ensures that the charter school is worthwhile because the charter school takes its ethical responsibilities seriously in the areas of finance, personnel, treatment of students, security and safety of facilities, asset management, etc. Staff implements policy, the board must take great care to state policy clearly, and then monitor the charter school's adherence to stated policy.

Creating and Sustaining a Future Focus that Keeps the Charter School Relevant in the Community

Too often, a board gets bogged down in the daily operations of the charter school. This is especially true of young charter schools where operational procedures are still evolving. A strong board will resist the temptation to micro-manage and will instead hold the staff accountable to both the mission statement (what difference do we make?) and

the stated policies (are we acting in a prudent and ethical manner?). It is not the job of the board (or individual board members) to act as the vicarious chief executive and ask, “would I have done it that way?” Whether current behavior/practices are ethical and effective is a board concern – specifically how tasks are carried out is not.

Since the board does not engage in day-to-day operations, it has the time and responsibility to look into the future. Where should the organization be in three years? How is the community changing and what must we do to adapt to the change? What will our students need in the future that is not available now?

The board’s job is to routinely assess its internal and external environment, and to set strategic priorities for the future (see the earlier chapter on strategic planning). The board sets these goals and then it monitors progress and helps remove obstacles that get in the way. This will require that the board stays informed about the needs of students and families, aware of changing regulatory requirements and alert to changing needs of a community. It also requires that the board stay focused on just a few future priorities and encourages staff to set aside time to work on tomorrow’s needs in addition to today’s challenges.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the School Leader in Managing All of the Above

Regardless of what the title is – headmaster, principal, executive director – there is only one staff member that reports directly to the board. This person is hired by the board, reports to the board as a whole (not individual members) and is accountable for the operations of the charter school. The relationship between the board and the school leader is critical to the success of the charter school. There must also be clear accountability and role differentiation between the board and school leader.

For this reason, it is best practice for the school leader to have voice but no vote on board matters – i.e., to serve as an ex officio member of the board. He/she is not a full member of the board. His or her work is distinctly different.

This is often an area that is difficult for newly established charter schools, especially if the school leader is one of the founders. Role differentiation comes slowly in the early days when everyone is needed to do everything. Be assured that this role is essential to a strong future and that future conflicts are unavoidable if clarity is not achieved. The board evaluates the effectiveness of the school leader. However, the board must first do its own job of setting the mission, establishing policy and setting strategic priorities. It is only by doing its own job that it is able to evaluate the school leader with the criteria including: did the charter school make a valued difference, is it running in a prudent and ethical manner, and is there progress on strategic goals?

If the answer is “yes” in each of those areas, you probably have a strong school leader. If the answer is “no,” then the board must assess whether it was clear in its own statements of mission, policy and direction, and the degree to which the school leader had the skills needed to achieve the desired results.

The existence of a weak, unskilled or disorganized school leader must be dealt with quickly either through professional development or replacement. Most boards wait too long to identify these problems and do not do the necessary work to establish clear standards by which the school leader is evaluated.

Special Note: In the early days of a charter school there will be many situations which are not yet in the control of even the best school leader. Building an organizational infrastructure, while also running programs, is a daunting task that may require some flexibility in the standards for mission effectiveness and progress on strategic goals. The one area that should never be compromised is adherence to ethical standards/policies.

Under Maryland charter school law, the employees of a charter school, including the school leader, are employees of the local board of education and as such are subject to the terms of the local collective bargaining agreement and any negotiated amendments to the agreement.

Who Should Be on the Board? – Recruitment and Care of Board Members

The first important decision an organization makes is to differentiate between volunteers and board members. Board members are volunteers in that they do not get paid for their work, but they are a very unique type of volunteer and should be put into a separate category. Board members perform governance activities (outlined above). Volunteers are unpaid staff that support the daily operations of the organization.

Another essential difference is that volunteers typically report to staff (the exception is when volunteers are involved in board work on board committees). Because the school leader reports to the board while volunteers report to staff, there is a potential for conflict of interest when board members are also program volunteers. Do not underestimate this potential for conflict. This does not mean that board members cannot also be program volunteers – it just means that they must be very cognizant of which hat they are wearing in every situation and adapt their expectations. They should not bring volunteer concerns to the board table without working them through with staff first.

Good board members want to do board work – governance. They enjoy being involved in the big picture and recognize their limitations in doing the day-to-day tasks of the organization. They want to focus on the results of the work and have (or should have) a passion for the mission. They may bring specific expertise or experience that could be helpful to the organization but they do not limit their involvement/concern to those areas.

The true test of a good board member is whether he or she sit forward and participate on all agenda items. Individuals with expertise in financial matters should carry equal passion for policy discussions and strategic priorities. Those who have

backgrounds in education must also engage in the discussion of budgets and financial audits. While it is an ideal – it is one worth striving for – making the full board agenda relevant and engaging for all board members.

Often, charter schools look for community members who are already passionate about their mission. This will limit the potential pool to those who already know who you are and are in some way associated with your work. A better criterion is to look for people who “should” be interested in your mission. Take the time to cultivate these people, engage them in your work, and encourage them to serve. An example of these community members is private business owners who may not have school age children. They do, however, have a stake in the quality of education in the community, as that is their source for future employees. They will be more likely to hold the organization accountable for long-term success.

Another common mistake in recruiting board members is to minimize the time and effort needed to be a good board member. A startup organization will need people who are ready and available to give time for creating a solid governance base for future operations. Be honest about your stage of development and the work that needs to be done. Recruit people who want to do that hard work.

You should assume that people you recruit to the board will have had a range of experience in performing board functions. Learning to be a board member is often like learning to be a parent – training is on the job and the job differs depending on the special needs of each child. Invest time in orienting new board members to your special needs before they are asked to serve. Invest in annual board training that keeps your board doing governance tasks and improving their skills in governance. Have a clear board member job description that honestly informs prospective members of their duties and responsibilities.

Board Structure – Alternative Models

There are basically a handful of types of nonprofit boards in operation today and some models are best suited for particular size organizations. Recognize that the model you choose now may not be effective once the organization grows and/or matures. Be ready to make changes in the future even if those changes will be emotionally painful for the people involved. Most of all, be ready to move from a founding board to a governance board even if that means founding members may need to take on other, non-board roles.

Board Models

There are four basic board models:

1. Founding,
2. Grassroots,
3. Strategic Governance, and
4. Power Boards

Take your time as your organization grows. You don't need a power board before you have the infrastructure and track record to take advantage of those skills.

Founding Boards: This type of board is usually very small (less than 10 people) and close knit. Founders bring passion and energy that is unmatched in the education world. Board meetings are usually loosely organized and are reactive to the issues of the day (what do we need to get done next?). There is usually little differentiation between board members, volunteers, and early staff in terms of roles and activities. Interest in the charter school is very personal – board members may also be parents of the charter school's students.

The job of the founding board is time limited and intense. Take care that initial tasks of writing by-laws and policies consider that future boards should be larger and

focused on governance tasks, not operating tasks. The job of the founding board is to replace itself with a more permanent structure within 2-4 years.

Grassroots Boards: Many charter schools choose this “working board” model. Size varies but is most often 12-25 members. A grassroots board has many similarities to a founding board in that the members tend to be personally involved and passionate about the mission. There is also still some overlap between board functions and volunteer functions, although these can be managed by organizing the board agenda into two parts—a governance agenda followed by a separate operations agenda. This means that meetings tend to be long and include more detail than in other models. Special care must be taken to ensure that governance tasks do not get pushed off the agenda because of operational needs.

Grassroots boards can be very productive and work well for smaller charter schools. Since there is overlap in roles it is important to consistently ask, “whose job is this particular task?” Assuming it is someone else’s job can cause problems and missed opportunities.

As a charter school grows and matures, grassroots board can become problematic. There will come a time when the organization must ask itself whether this board model is still appropriate. If this is done intentionally and in a strategic way, the transition to another model can occur without much angst. If you are not careful, this model can cause conflict and distrust between board and staff. The transition is then much more painful and difficult.

Strategic Governance Boards: This model focuses exclusively on governance tasks unique to boards (see first section). Optimal size is 15-20 members recruited from a broad cross section of the community. Pay attention to involving new members who “should” be interested. These boards avoid micro-management, and board members tend not to be also volunteers. Meetings last about 90 minutes and the agenda is highly organized and followed.

Staggered board terms and term limits are routine to ensure that there are new voices on the board over time. The unifying force is the mission rather than individual passion or personalities. The founding passion and values are institutionalized in the culture of the organization so that turnover in staff and board is not destructive or feared. New ideas are welcome with program growth and enhancement the focus. Because management tasks are not part of the board agenda, there is more time for discussion of future goals and attracting new supporters based on a clear vision.

Power Boards: This model is typically used by large charter schools. Board membership is based on an individual's access to personal and professional resources. Board members understand that their job is to bring new resources and donors to the organization. Meetings are short and highly focused.

A strong power board achieves a healthy balance between governance and fundraising tasks. Since there is usually a large professional staff, there is little attention to management issues and board members are rarely program volunteers.

For smaller charter schools, there is an alternative to a power board. Many small to mid-size charter schools will add an advisory council that does the fundraising work of the power board. The advisory council only meets a few times a year and has no governance tasks. The regular board retains all the governance tasks, and also supports fundraising efforts. It is not advisable to mix board models. Individuals attracted to working with power boards will very quickly become frustrated by the work style of a grassroots board and visa versa.

Another alternative is the formation of a separate corporation, otherwise known as a foundation. The foundation can be structured in such a way that it directly benefits a specific recipient (your school), and has some (but not all) overlapping board membership. The foundation can attract the energy of people who want to help raise money but may not be interested in running the school. A foundation has the added

benefit of keeping unrestricted assets off the balance sheet of the school until they are needed. Running a foundation and a school is double the work. Be prepared to invest time and energy in both or wait until the school is functioning smoothly before starting a separate foundation.

Individual Roles and Responsibilities – Who Does What?

The following is a brief listing of individual roles within the organization relative to board functioning.

Board Chairperson: The Chair facilitates the work of the board by leading board meetings, assigning board tasks to committees and individuals, and monitoring board member accountability. The school leader does not “report” to the Chair though he or she may report “*through*” the Chair. The school leader reports to the board as a whole, not to individuals. The board gives instructions to the school leader officer by voting on policy and requests for information. The Chair supervises the board, not the school leader.

Committees: Board committees do the pre-work of the board. They research, digest information, and prepare recommendations for board decision-making. Whenever possible, committees should bring to the board more than one viable recommendation so that there is true choice and decision making, not the tendency to rubber stamp or ignore committee work. Good committee work provides real options for the entire board to discuss and consider before final decision-making.

Because committees do the work of the board, the following committees are advisable:

- **Policy Committee** identifies gaps in policy areas, leads board discussion on policy content, and develops written policies for board approval. It also establishes a reasonable monitoring schedule for existing policies and decides the best methods for monitoring (direct observation, staff reports or outside evaluation) each policy area. Many charter schools have specific committees for areas of policy expertise such as finance or personnel. Non-board members may be invited to be part of these (and all) board committees to act as advisors.

- **Evaluation Committee** establishes clear standards/metrics for success using the mission as the base tool. It also reviews evaluation data from staff and other sources and reports on progress to the board. The evaluation committee engages staff in the discussion of what data is important and what are reasonable indicators of success.
- **Strategic Planning Committee** facilitates an ongoing planning process to set 3-year strategic goals, and then monitors' progress on the goals. It also assesses ways in which the board can help remove obstacles to progress either through advocacy, creating important community linkages or making financial investments in strategic priorities. The Planning Committee would also establish a schedule of board presentations to keep the membership informed of changes in the external environment and potential new challenges or opportunities. These presentations could include staff presentations about client needs or outside presenters who have information about changes in the field.
- **Nominating and Board Development Committee** (sometimes known as a Governance Committee) works on the recruitment, training, and retention of board members. This includes identifying and vetting prospective members, organizing new member orientations so that new members are ready to assume the role and preparing the way for existing members to assume leadership roles.
- **Executive Committee (Board Officers and Committee Chairs)** There is currently some controversy on the need and function for an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee should never become the “shadow” board that discusses all the upcoming decisions prior to the board meeting. However, the Executive Committee may be called on to make interim decisions between board meetings for items that cannot wait for the next scheduled meeting. This decision making function should be used with caution and only at times where it is absolutely necessary. A common use of the Executive Committee is to set the agenda for the next meeting. This function is not needed if the board ends each meeting by setting the agenda for the next meeting.
- **Ad Hoc Committees.** The board should retain the right to establish any committee necessary to do the work of the board. Ad Hoc committees can be established as the need arises and disband when the work is done. Standing Committees that are named in the by-laws must remain in effect at all times and must report at every board meeting, even if they have not met. It is best to minimize the number of standing committees and use ad hoc committees as needed for interim tasks (e.g., a Search Committee for Executive transition, a policy subcommittee requiring a specific area of expertise such as a committee to

oversee a curriculum upgrade or a facility expansion).

- **Development Committee** does not need to be a board committee and it should include non-board members. It only acts as a board committee when it establishes policy relative to fundraising. Otherwise, it is an operational committee that would also involve staff and volunteers to achieve the fund raising goals of the charter school.

The school leader has the right to establish any other committee that he/she desires to help with the operations of the charter school. These committees are advisory (they do not make decisions which are binding on the school leader), and can provide valuable input from the community. They do not report to the board unless they are doing board work. Examples of advisory committees could include parent advisory committee, facility committee, marketing committee, or an insurance committee. The school leader is under no obligation to establish advisory committees and is free to solicit advice as needed from individuals rather than committees.

Fundraising as the Job of the Board

You will note that the discussion of fundraising as the job of the board first surfaced under the discussion of power boards. That is not to suggest that founding, grassroots and governance boards do not fundraise. However, fundraising is not the unique task of a board – it is not a governance task. It is essential to the well-being of any organization and must be a team effort. It is everyone's job to fundraise – board, staff and volunteers. How these tasks get allocated will depend on the size of the organization and the amount of philanthropic funds needed to do the work. Large charter schools might employ development staff who can take on many, but not all, the fundraising functions. Small charter schools rely more heavily on volunteers, board members and consultants to do most of the fundraising, including perhaps grant writing.

The important criterion for fundraising success is whether the charter school is worth raising money for – does it make a difference and is it run in an ethical and prudent manner? The board's job is to ensure the worthiness of the charter school by monitoring measures of success, monitoring adherence to policy and ensuring a future focus. If the

board does its job well, then it goes without saying that they will want to give and get. If board members are unwilling to give money to the charter school or ask others to give, this sends a disastrous message to other potential donors. Why should they consider giving or trust that the organization is worth giving to?

New charter school must clearly negotiate roles for fundraising tasks among staff, board, and volunteers. There is no perfect model; there is only the best distribution of tasks relative to your organization's distribution of available time, skill, and energy. Not discussing it ahead of time will only lead to confusion and missed opportunities.

Setting A Board Agenda Which Does Board Work

Typical board agendas are based on board structure rather than function. They include a Chairperson's report, Director's report, and committee reports. While this type of agenda can work well for an organization and is currently used extensively, there is a better alternative. The alternative structures the agenda around the work of the board. It ensures that every board meeting has some attention to policy, evaluation, and strategic planning.

Sample Board Agenda:

1. Consent Items (items which require board action but minimal discussion)
 - a. Minutes of the last meeting
 - b. Approval of grant acceptance
2. Policy Discussion & Monitoring
 - a. Board discussion of potential worry areas on the topic of student confidentiality (Policy Committee to facilitate discussion)
 - b. Board review and final approval of draft policy on budgeting
 - c. Monthly monitoring of financial status compared to board policy (AKA: Treasurers report)
 - d. Approval of expenditures.
3. Evaluation (Evaluation Committee to facilitate discussion)
 - a. Director's report on student progress to date
 - b. Discussion of the use of standardized test scores for evaluating success.
 - i. Is this an appropriate measure of success for our students?
 - ii. What level of achievement would indicate success and what would indicate failure?

4. Strategic Planning
 - a. Progress to date on goal to acquire new facility
 - b. Teacher presentation – long term implications of changing student demographics – an increase in non-English speaking students
5. Board Evaluation And Next Agenda
 - a. Nominating Committee Report on filling board vacancies
 - b. Deciding on priority policy, evaluation and strategic topics for next agenda

Personnel Policy¹³

In order to write your application you will need to develop an outline of your school's personnel policy. In order to open and operate your charter school you will need to develop a clearly written personnel policy, have it approved by the board and provide a copy to all employees. Without established procedures and consistency of their application, your school is at risk for both legal and operational difficulties. The authors of this guide strongly suggest that you acquire a well written existing personnel policy guide from an operating charter school or district in Maryland and use it as a basis for preparing your own guide. We also strongly recommend that you engage the assistance of an employment lawyer who is familiar with education law.

When hiring staff it is vital that you communicate clearly both the mission and vision of the school you are creating. This includes a thorough review of the school culture you are trying to create, the educational and other

Legal Principals

- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that all applicants/employees must, by law, be given equal opportunity regard-less of race, religion, color, creed, national origin, gender, and age.
- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination in the work-place on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, national origin, gender, and age.
- The Civil Rights Act applies to the employee selection and termination process as well.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of disability.
- The ADA states that "reasonable accommodation" must be made on behalf of an employee with a physical disability.
- The ADA prohibits any inquiry during an interview that is likely to lead to information about an impairment or disability, or the need for accommodation thereof, prior to offering an applicant a position. However, you may inquire about an applicant's ability to perform specific essential (though not marginal) job functions (e.g., lifting up to 50 pounds).
- Title VII and the ADA cover all private employers, state and local governments, and education institutions that employ 15 or more individuals.

¹³ Personnel Policy section was modified from Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory "Charter Starters Leadership Training" <http://www.nwrel.org/free/departments.asp?d=2>

values you are trying to acculturate and the details of the school's design. All serious candidates should review the approved charter application and be familiar with its design elements. The process of hiring, training, start-up, and continuous employee training needs to be constantly reinforcing the school's mission, vision and design.

Under Maryland law, all personnel are employees of the district. As such they are subject to the district human resource policies.

Recruitment

As the charter school movement in Maryland grows, Maryland Charter School Network plans to organize an annual job fair to assist all Maryland charter schools in hiring staff. We strongly advise that you participate.

Some recruiting ideas to consider:

- Newspaper advertisement is the most common avenue for communicating with candidates.
- Teacher fairs.
- Use student teachers and offer jobs to those who are most compatible with your school.
- Write recruitment literature to both explain and sell your school.
- Feature what is exciting about your school – its design, its opportunity for in-service training, its opportunity to share in creating a new learning environment.
- Include founders, community partners, parents, school support personnel, and students in recruitment activities (recruitment literature, seeking applicants, and participating in interviews)
- Use the Internet. Post job openings on your website, as well as on job search sites.

Now to the selection process:

1. Select an interview panel. This may include the head of the school, teacher(s), parent(s), and even student(s). The selection panel must be aware of conflict of interest and/or nepotism laws; serving the school with one's personal interests driving decisions can be dangerous.

2. Develop job descriptions that state qualifications, duties, and responsibilities. Be sure to incorporate the district job descriptions unless a waiver has been granted.
3. Decide what you will ask for beyond the district application forms – in addition to the “obvious” questions such as employment history and credentials consider asking for a writing sample or ask a series of questions relating to mission and educational philosophy. It will save everyone a lot of time if you can screen out applicants with poor writing skills and/or obvious incompatibility with your school’s design.
4. ALL hiring will be finalized by the district Human Resource department.
5. Collect and review applications—then invite selected applicants for an interview.
6. Develop questions and a consistent protocol prior to the interviews.
7. Maintain consistency, asking the same general questions of all interviewees.
8. Outline what is expected of employees.
9. Explain the school’s vision and mission.
10. Ask interviewee if he/she has any questions.
11. Select finalists based on both their qualifications and their fit with the school’s design.
12. Perform reference and background checks on the finalists—check background, credentials, teaching experience, and all references. Be sure that you understand which responsibilities belong to the charter school and which belong to the district.
13. Maryland statute requires police fingerprinting and a criminal background check.
14. Checking references is tricky – former employers have reasonable concerns about litigation. You can learn information on dates of employment, rates of pay, and whether the reference would rehire the applicant.
15. ALL new employees should receive a thorough orientation. Include information about the school, names, and duties of staff members, administrative policies, curriculum, and school community. Consider having a welcoming event with all staff, parents, trustees, and key stakeholders invited.
16. Professional development should be part of the hiring process and continue thereafter.

Performance Reviews

Performance evaluation is an important part of staff retention. Experienced candidates may ask about your review process during their employment interviews. As district employees, all staff members will be subject to the same performance evaluation process as other district employees.

Salary Schedule

Salary is determined by the existing negotiated agreement. The employee organization and the public charter school may mutually agree to negotiate amendments to the existing agreement to address the needs of the particular public charter school.

Tenure

All teaching staff members, janitor and secretaries, who are either employed in the charter school shall acquire tenure according to the same criteria as stated in the existing collective bargaining agreement.

School Assessment and Accountability

When you create a charter school, the “deal” is:

1. that you are being granted an opportunity to develop an innovative public school,
2. allowed to have a some discretion in the schools design, and
3. to be governed by a self-selected board of trustees

***In exchange for all this, the charter school agrees
to a HIGH standard of accountability***

One benefit of the charter school movement is that failing schools go out of business. Over time, this will guarantee that most surviving schools meet high standards of achievement.

This leads to the question: “*Who are charter schools accountable to and what are they accountable for?*”

First, there is the government:

- The local boards of education will monitor all aspects of your school’s performance to insure it fulfills the elements outlined in your application, state law, fiscal standards, and academic achievement.
- The school must have an annual audit.
- Your facility must meet all zoning, health and safety standards.

Second, there are your parents and students:

- The easiest way to fail and lose your charter is by empty seat syndrome – failing to satisfy students and parents resulting in untenably low enrollment.
- Parents and students need to feel ownership of the school. They need to feel respected and welcomed. They need to experience the school as a place of successful learning.
- Ultimately the founders of a charter school **MUST** know their community, understand their stakeholders’ needs, and respond appropriately.

Finally, within the charter application you will have to describe the standards and processes for evaluating both student achievement, and the school’s success as an institution. Charter schools are held accountable for academic achievement by their students on state and district-wide tests; meeting the goals and objectives described in your application; use of public funds; as well as compliance with all applicable laws and regulations not waived for charter schools.

Critical Questions for Accountability:¹⁴

1. What is our school's mission?
2. What do we want our students to know and be able to do?
3. How will we know whether our students are achieving or attaining the goals and standards we specified in our charter?
4. How will we gather and monitor the necessary student performance information?
5. How will we set and measure progress toward school performance goals?
6. How will we use the student and school performance information we have gathered?

A summary of accountability issues can be seen in the following outline for a typical annual report.

An **Annual Report** may describe in detail the following:

- Achievement of the Schools Mission, Goals and Objectives.
- Efficiency in the Governance and Management of the School
 - Summary of Board Accomplishments
 - Board Policies
 - Board Meetings
 - Board Committees
 - Open Public Meetings Act Compliance
 - Board Training
- Attainment of the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum; and the Delivery of an Educational Program Leading to High Student Achievement
 - Incorporation of Content Standards
 - Summary of Progress
 - Planned Activities
 - Innovative Programs and Practices
 - Family Activities
 - Academic Programs: Math Program; Reading Program; Writing Program; Science Program; World Language Program
 - Technology Education
 - Professional Development/Support Provided for Teachers and Staff
- Maryland School Assessment Results and Local Assessment of Students
 - Summary of Assessment Plan

¹⁴ Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory "Charter Starters Leadership Training"
<http://www.nwrel.org/free/departments.asp?d=2>

- Results from Standardized Assessment
- Reporting System
- Accountability

- Degree of Parental and Community Involvement in the School
 - Parental Involvement: Outreach Procedures; Organizations and Committees; Parent Satisfaction; Training and Support
 - Community Involvement: Outreach Procedures; School Community Activities and Plans.

- Public Relations and Outreach Efforts

- Student Admission Policies and Staff Recruitment Plan
 - Admission Policies: Timelines and Activities; Admission Results; Student Withdrawals and Exit Interviews
 - Staff Recruitment: Timelines; Application Review and Interview Procedures; Recruitment Results; Exit Interview Procedure and Results

- Contextual Factors Regarding Student Success Achievement
 - Diverse Learners: Students with Educational Disabilities; Bilingual/ESL Students; At-Risk Students.
 - Non-Academic Programs
 - School Culture

- Annual Financial Report

- Report from outside Evaluator.

Chapter Five – Lessons Learned about Good Governance

- Governance is about making sure that your school makes a difference.
- Governance is about making sure that your school is ethical.
- Governance is about planning for the future.
- Governance is not a casual process.

Chapter Six

Education Plan: The Heart of the Matter

Curriculum

Once your mission and vision for the proposed school are complete, then it is time to choose or develop an aligned curriculum. There are many choices available. The U.S. Department of Education even provides curriculum models that have been successfully implemented elsewhere.¹⁵ Keep your mission and vision statements close by since they will guide your exploration of curricular models. The curricular model that you finally choose as a means to educate your chosen population must fit with your mission, vision of education, and the population you have chosen to serve. If there is misalignment anywhere between these four elements, your school will be subsequently less successful and may even fail.

Remember whatever curriculum you select must be aligned with the
Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum (MVSC)

While your charter school will have wide latitude in **HOW** you educate students, it will have limited latitude in **WHAT** your students must learn. Your school **MUST** teach the content of the MVSC. It is OK, in fact highly desirable, to teach more than the MVSC, and this is where you have great discretion. Remember, however, that state mandated testing will both reflect the MVSC and be one of the primary measures of your schools' success and primary factors in its survival.

We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that you select a curriculum that has already been established as well aligned with the MVSC, or that you secure early in the planning

¹⁵ See www.ed.gov/admins/comm/choice/charter/report_pg6.html
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stages the significant professional resources to modify your selected curriculum. You want to bring your curriculum into alignment with MVSC and to demonstrate that alignment. This is a requirement of the application process.

Please note that creating original curricula is a formidable task requiring tremendous resources. It is far more realistic to acquire existing curricula and then modify it to meet the unique elements of your proposed school mission and design. Any curricula model must be evaluated, mapped, and found to be in alignment with the MVSC. Many vendors will claim this alignment, but your school's very survival will depend on this alignment.

Background on Content Standards

During the past decade, there have been numerous comparative studies on the education levels of our children. These studies compared education levels among various countries and revealed that, by and large, the American education system was failing on many levels. This realization seems to have led to a rethinking about the systems in place and alignment to standards specifically. The No Child Left Behind Act¹⁶ requires accountability from our schools to produce results—results not for some children, nor even most children, *but for all children*.

To achieve these results, states must raise the bar and pull up our children. This Act required that all states establish, or reestablish, standards that were aligned to federal education standards. Once the state standards were aligned, then states were required to implement an alignment of the all school districts within the state system. State curricular content standards were developed. State assessments were aligned with these standards for a completely coordinated educational system.

¹⁶ See “No Child Left Behind: The Impact of the New Title I Requirements on Charter Schools” US Department of Education, March 24, 2003 in the Appendix.

As mentioned early in this manual, charter schools are exempt from some of the requirements on traditional public schools, in exchange for increased accountability. These schools are still required to produce students capable to passing each state's assessment instruments. Charter schools may be able to choose the instructional design, but are still required to teach an aligned content. Charter schools will be evaluated primarily on the end result of this product.

Go to <http://mdk12.org/instruction/curriculum/index.html> and follow the links to download a copy of the current MVSC.

A *curriculum*, which includes the educational program, student activities, and assessment strategies, should agree with and amplify the school's mission statement. It is *your educational philosophy made real*. Curriculum should be diversified and balanced to help students as they proceed through levels of performance in all learning areas. Keep in mind that curriculum, teaching, and evaluation are interrelated—they support and reflect one another. Designing one component without thought to the others can do your school a disservice.

Since curriculum formats vary widely, it may be helpful to look at examples from you local school district or other charter schools. Having models always helps, even if they help you decide what not to do.

Some Practical Steps toward Choosing/Developing Your Curriculum¹⁷

- Decide what a student needs by the end of school – the final year.
- Decide what a student needs within each grade level and how those levels can connect for continuity.
- Align these needs with the MVSC.

¹⁷ Maryland Charter School Network Training Series, 2004 prepared by Joni Berman, President Maryland Charter School Network and Jeffrey Lischin, Consultant. See also the MCSN Website.

- Write inter-disciplinary curriculum units around a theme. For instance, math, reading, writing, science, and social studies can be integrated into a study of environment and the water we drink.
- Write units that are linked directly to assessments.
- Design ways to tell if the curriculum is actually working with regard to objectives.
- Allow enough time for staff to develop and improve the curriculum.
- Accommodate the autonomy and individual styles of teachers.
- Consider how your curriculum fits with those of other schools your students may come from or go to. For example, if you plan a K-8 school, prepare your students with qualifications for entry into the local high school.

In designing your curriculum, draw on available resources and materials, such as the following:

- Accelerated Schools
- Advantage Schools, Inc.
- American Advanced Placement courses
- Beacon Education Management Services
- Calvert Schools
- Carnegie Basic Schools
- Central Park East's Senior Institute
- Coalition of Essential Schools
- Core Knowledge Sequence
- Edison Project
- Expeditionary Learning
- Foxfire
- International Baccalaureate
- Marva Collins Education Method
- Modern Red Schoolhouse
- Montessori
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics guidelines
- New American Schools
- Nova Learning, Inc.
- Paideia
- SABIS International
- Waldorf

Instructional Design

If charter schools have little choice regarding the content of their instruction, instructional design is where they can be most creative. This is not about where we are going (educationally), but how we are getting there. What is the manner in which we will instruct our students? These questions must be answered in terms of the population to be served. If the school is to serve a dropout recovery population, will an entrepreneurial approach meet their needs? If the school is to serve a largely disabled population, what curricular model would fit these students the best, and at the same time appeal to their non-disabled peers? Charter schools don't have the luxury of building a school and knowing the students will attend. If the Charter school doesn't have a program that appeals to students and families, then these students will not attend. No students equates to no money in the Charter school world.

Educational Philosophy

Often charter schools organize around a particular educational philosophy that unites the school community and provides the foundation for the curriculum. The Core Knowledge Sequence, the Ten Common Principles of the Coalition for Essential Schools, and the Edison Project's Ten Educational Keys are among the "off-the-shelf" materials charter school applicants have selected. Below are brief illustrations of how each of these educational philosophies drives curriculum.

- **The Core Knowledge Sequence** offers a planned progression of specific knowledge in history, geography, mathematics, science, language arts, and fine arts. It represents a first and continuing attempt to state explicitly the core of shared knowledge children should learn in grades K through 6. It is a guide to content from grade to grade, designed to integrate instruction in the classroom. The educational philosophy underlying this curriculum is *that broad content knowledge, more than cognitive skill development, should be the focus of education.*
- **The Coalition of Essential Schools** espouses a contrary approach, in which *cognitive skill development and "doing a few things well"* are more important than covering a host of topics. Adolescents are encouraged to use their minds

well, master a number of essential skills and areas of knowledge, individualize and personalize their goals, and motivate their own learning situations—a student-directed rather than teacher-directed education.

- **The Edison Project's** educational philosophy falls somewhere in the middle. Edison's curriculum *stresses both academic skills and broad content knowledge*. In part, it attempts to accomplish its objectives through longer school days, an extended school year, and accelerated learning. Edison's curriculum is designed to cut across five "domains": cognitive, creative, physical, character and values, and practical skills. The curriculum is "infused with ***The Greats***—great works of human imagination and invention; great performances of music, art, and drama."

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is your teaching method. This differs from curriculum content and is not just about the charter school application. The method is how you will train your teachers and is basic to your vision.

Create an outline of teaching approaches, tools, and methods.

- Is the school using Progressive Education methods?¹⁸ Or Direct Instruction?¹⁹ Or Back-To-Basics?²⁰
- Is the school using whole language or phonics or a blend?
- Is the school using an arts or music or ecology infused approach?

Attributes of High Achievement Schools—Guiding Questions ²¹

We have learned that high performing schools have asked and answered the following questions.

¹⁸ A set of reformist educational philosophies and methods that emphasize individual instruction, informality in the classroom, and the use of group discussions and laboratories as instructional techniques.

¹⁹ The Direct Instruction Strategy is highly teacher-directed and is among the most commonly used. This strategy is effective for providing information or developing step-by-step skills.

²⁰ "Back to the Basics" schools for reading, writing and math. I.e., Usage of phonics for reading; correct grammar, spelling and punctuation for writing; math fundamentals; letter grades; and competition inside and out of the classroom.

²¹ Maryland Charter School Network Training Series, 2004 prepared by Joni Berman, President Maryland Charter School Network and Jeffrey Lischin, Consultant.

- **Common Focus:** Describe the specific academic, intellectual goal(s) on which your school community will be focused. Include efforts that focus on literacy and reading. Describe the process and participants involved in defining these goals. What research-based instructional approach or model will your school use to support these goals? How will you align your use of time, tools, materials, and professional development to support your goals?
- **High Expectations:** How will you develop the belief among your staff members that all students can learn at high levels and meet state standards? How will this belief be communicated to the students? How will high expectations be reflected in your classrooms and implemented school-wide? What will the academic rigor and level of learning look like in your classroom?
- **Personalized:** Describe your planned school structure and how it is designed to provide personalized attention for each student. How will each student be provided a powerful and sustainable adult relationship and an adult advocate/mentor? How will personalized instruction be offered for each student that includes input from the student, parents, and teachers? How will it be used to monitor student progress?
- **Respect and Responsibility:** Describe your planned school environment. To what degree will it be safe, ethical, and studious? Describe the shared understanding and the common set of expectations you will create among students, staff, and parents. What are they? How will the school community regularly revisit the expectations? How will the staff teach and model respectful and responsible behavior? How will the students participate in the development and maintenance of a respectful, productive school environment?
- **Performance Based:** How will students demonstrate competencies and how will they be promoted to the next instructional level at your school? What kind of performance-based assessment (e.g., portfolios, exhibits, demonstrations, and

- group projects) will your teachers use in their individual classrooms? How will they be used to monitor student achievement? To what extent will you have consistent school-wide standards? What kinds of support opportunities will be provided to accelerate learning for all students? How will data be used to inform instruction, scheduling, and to communicate to students their progress?
- **Time to Collaborate:** How will the schedule be structured to support ample and ongoing time for teachers to plan, collaborate, and develop skills to support school goals? How will teachers collaborate horizontally and vertically to ensure powerful student learning? How will professional development be structured/scheduled to result in meaningful adult learning that will have a significant and positive impact on student learning? What kind of structured partnerships will exist with parents, the business community, and higher education to support adult and student learning?
 - **Technology as a Tool:** What kinds of engaging and imaginative curriculum will teachers use that is supported by technology? Give examples of how technology will be infused/integrated into curriculum content to support/enhance teaching and learning. How will technology be used to gather, organize, and interpret data in order to improve classroom practices? How will technology be used to publish your progress to parent and engage the community in continuous improvement?

Developing Academic Standards

Step 1: The charter school standards team (which could comprise a group of parents, teachers, and administrators) reviews the school's mission to reflect on what its purpose is, whom it hopes to serve, and what its expectations of those students are.

Step 2: The team develops a list of exit outcomes, or "graduation standards," of those qualities and skills it feels its graduates should achieve.

Step 3: The team creates a list of interim skills and "benchmark" outcomes that allow the students to demonstrate their progress in attaining the exit standards.

Step 4: Teachers develop lists of specific academic skills that students will demonstrate in each subject area and class.

Special Education and Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Remember that charter schools are public schools that must admit students through open, non-discriminatory policies. Thus, you need to prepare for diverse students with a wide variety of special needs.

Legal Issues Arising from IDEA:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the law that guarantees all children with disabilities access to a free and appropriate public education. You need to consider the following legal issues as you develop your plans and your charter school application.

- The charter school application should describe the methods and strategies for servicing students with disabilities in compliance with all federal laws and regulations.
- A charter school must determine with the district how the special education and related services mandated by each enrolled child's IEP will be delivered. Some Maryland districts will provide these services. Other districts have decided that the charter school is responsible for the delivery of these services directly or by contract with a qualified third party. The application should indicate which entity the charter school contemplates would provide the required services. It is likely, of course, that the charter school will provide some services while calling upon outside resources to provide the remainder.

The federal regulations implementing the IDEA, 34 CFR § 300, are available on line at <http://idea.ed.gov/download/finalregulations.pdf>

IEP and IDEA ²²

Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Each IEP must be designed for one student only, and must be a truly *individualized* document. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities.

The IEP is the cornerstone of a quality education for each child with a disability.

To create an effective IEP, parents, teachers, other school staff—and often the student—just come together to look closely at the student's unique needs. These individuals pool knowledge, experience, and commitment to design an educational program that will help the student be involved in, and progress in, the general curriculum. The IEP guides the delivery of special education supports and services for the student with a disability. Without a doubt, writing and implementing an effective IEP requires teamwork.

The IEP process is one of the most critical elements to ensure effective teaching, learning, and better results for all children with disabilities. It is required by our nation's special education law—the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, or IDEA.

The IDEA requires certain information to be included in each child's IEP. It is useful to know, however, that states and local school systems often include additional information in IEPs in order to document that they have met certain aspects of federal or state law. The flexibility that states and school systems have to design their own IEP forms is one reason why IEP forms may look different from school system to school

²² Special Education Reference Primer on Charter Schools
http://www.uscharterschools.org/cs/spedp/print/uscs_docs/spedp/home.htm or Maryland Specific Primer
<http://www.mdcharternetwork.org/documents/CSSpedEdResourceManual7306.pdf>

system or state to state. Yet, each IEP is critical in the education of a child with a disability.

The Basic Special Education Process Under IDEA

The writing of each student's IEP takes place within the larger picture of the special education process under IDEA. The following is a brief outline of how a student is identified as having a disability and needing special education and related services and thus, an IEP.

Step 1: Child is identified as possibly needing special education and related services.

"Child Find." The state must identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities in the state who need special education and related services. To do so, states conduct "Child Find" activities. A child may be identified by "Child Find," and parents may be asked if the "Child Find" system can evaluate their child. Parents can also call the "Child Find" system and ask that their child be evaluated.

Referral or request for evaluation. A school professional may ask that a child be evaluated to see if he or she has a disability. Parents may also contact the child's teacher or other school professional to ask that their child be evaluated. This request may be verbal or in writing. Parental consent is needed before the child may be evaluated. Evaluation needs to be completed within a reasonable time after the parent gives consent.

Step 2: Child is evaluated.

The evaluation must assess the child in all areas related to the child's suspected disability. The evaluation results will be used to decide the child's eligibility for special education and related services and to make decisions about an appropriate educational program for the child. If the parents disagree with the evaluation, they have the right to take their child for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). They can ask that the school system pay for this IEE.

Step 3: Eligibility is decided.

A group of qualified professionals and the parents look at the child's evaluation results. Together, they decide if the child is a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA. Parents may ask for a hearing to challenge the eligibility decision.

Step 4: Child is found eligible for services.

If the child is found to be a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA, he or she is eligible for special education and related services. Within 30 calendar days after a child is determined eligible, the IEP team must meet to write an IEP for the child.

Once the student has been found eligible for services, the IEP must be written. The two steps below *summarize* what is involved in writing the IEP. This guide will look at these two steps in much greater detail in the following section.

Step 5: IEP meeting is scheduled.

The charter school staff schedules and conducts the IEP meeting. School staff must:

- Contact the participants, including the parents;
- Notify parents early enough to make sure they have an opportunity to attend;
- Schedule the meeting at a time and place agreeable to parents and the school;
- Tell the parents the purpose, time, and location of the meeting;
- Tell the parents who will be attending; and
- Tell the parents that they may invite people to the meeting who have knowledge or special expertise about the child.

Step 6: IEP meeting is held and the IEP is written.

The IEP team gathers to talk about the child's needs and write the student's IEP. Parents and the student (when appropriate) are part of the team. If the child's placement is decided by a different group, the parents must be part of that group as well.

Before the school system may provide special education and related services to the child for the first time, the parents must give consent. The child begins to receive services as soon as possible after the meeting.

If the parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. If they still disagree, parents can ask for mediation, or the school may offer mediation. Parents may file a complaint with the state education agency and may request a due process hearing, at which time mediation must be available.

Here is a brief summary of what happens after the IEP is written.

Step 7: Services are provided.

The school makes sure that the child's IEP is being carried out as it was written. Parents are given a copy of the IEP. Each of the child's teachers and service providers has access to the IEP and knows his or her specific responsibilities for carrying out the IEP. This includes the accommodations, modifications, and supports that must be provided to the child, in keeping with the IEP.

Step 8: Progress is measured and reported to parents.

The child's progress toward the annual goals is measured, as stated in the IEP. His or her parents are regularly informed of their child's progress and whether that progress is enough for the child to achieve the goals by the end of the year. These progress reports must be given to parents at least as often as parents are informed of their non-disabled children's progress.

Step 9: IEP is reviewed.

The child's IEP is reviewed by the IEP team at least once a year, or more often if the parents or school ask for a review. If necessary, the IEP is revised. Parents, as team members, must be invited to attend these meetings. Parents can make suggestions for

changes, can agree or disagree with the IEP goals, and agree or disagree with the placement.

If parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they may discuss their concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. There are several options, including additional testing, an independent evaluation, or asking for mediation (if available) or a due process hearing. They may also file a complaint with the state education agency.

Step 10: Child is reevaluated.

At least every three years the child must be reevaluated. This evaluation is often called a “triennial.” Its purpose is to find out if the child continues to be a “child with a disability,” as defined by IDEA, and what the child’s educational needs are. However, the child must be reevaluated more often if conditions warrant or if the child’s parent or teacher asks for a reevaluation.

LEP and ELL Students

You must also prepare for students who are not disabled, but who are considered Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or English Language Learners (ELL). For legal requirements regarding providing instruction to ELL students, you may review the following publications of the United States Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights:

- “Policy Update on Schools’ Obligations Toward National Origin Minority Students With Limited-English Proficiency (LEP students),” dated September 27, 1991;
- “Office for Civil Rights Policy Regarding the Treatment of National Origin Minority Students Who Are Limited English Proficient,” dated April 6, 1990 (and attaching “The Office for Civil Rights’ Title VI Language Minority Compliance Procedures,” issued originally December 3, 1985); and
- “Identification of Discrimination and Denial of Services On the Basis of National Origin,” dated May 25, 1970.

- Each of these publications is available at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/docs/laumemos.html>.

Chapter Six – Lessons Learned About Education Planning

- Educational planning is embodiment of your vision.
- You will be accountable for educating the children.
- You will have to educate to achieve standard skills and content knowledge.
- You will have to accommodate a diversity of children.

Chapter Seven

Student Assessment²³

The first questions you need to ask before designing a student assessment process for your charter school are:

- “Why are we assessing students?”
- “What exactly do we want to assess?”
- “What do we hope to accomplish through assessment?”
- “What is the most effective approach to student assessment?”

“Why are we assessing students?”

Simply put – we assess in order to be accountable and to drive continuous improvement. In answering this question think about who your school is accountable to – students, parents, the district, the state, the federal government, your community, your partners.

Then identify the legitimate interests of each stakeholder and how they will use the assessment data you have developed. For example students need feedback in order to understand their progress. Teachers need to know what is working in their classroom and what improvements are needed. The district needs to monitor the overall success of your school. Add to this list until it is comprehensive and you will have a vision of why assess students.

²³ This chapter is modified from materials published by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory www.nwrel.org; NY Charter School Resource Center Guidebook 2005; www.USCHARTERSCHOOLS.org; **National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST)**. CRESST is affiliated with the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at UCLA.

“What exactly do we want to assess?”

The first place to look for answers to this question is the charter school's goals and objectives. The best assessment methods, executed with the greatest level of skill, cannot compensate for inappropriate or inadequate goals. You will definitely want to measure academic progress. You will also want to measure progress related to your school's theme; e.g. performing arts, technology, character education, service learning. You may want to measure other indicators of student growth in psycho-social areas, behavioral areas and health/hygiene. Most charter schools employ multiple assessment methods in a systematic fashion. The assessment methodology you choose is not inherently good or right. Any such methodology must be viewed in the context of assuring achievement of the school's objectives.

“What do we hope to accomplish through assessment?”

In answering this question, founders generally will point to continuous improvement for students, within each classroom and for the school as a whole. We strongly encourage you to create a testing process that documents where students are upon admission in order to create a context and valid comparison for measuring their progress.

A well-designed assessment process will also examine the impact of the assessment methods themselves—on both teachers and students. Whatever methods the teacher employs will necessarily modify his/her behavior. It is critical to align measurement with your school's educational philosophy, content and pedagogy. Clearly, a progressive educational approach will dictate very different assessment techniques from those used by a back-to-basics school or a service learning school. “Techniques used to evaluate progress toward achievement of goals, in themselves, have the effect of focusing the teacher's attention, determining purposes, and influencing directions for action. These effects are inevitable. They cannot be ignored simply because they are inconvenient.

They must be taken into account in the selection of assessment techniques. Means of assessment that fence teachers in, destroy initiative, or create debilitating anxieties may prove to be too great a price to pay ... Assessment techniques do not only measure learning, they also affect it. How students perceive assessment devices and what they learn from the employment of such devices must be matters of vital concern in the selection of evaluative instruments. Anyone who has ever observed how students react to different kinds of examinations can attest to the varied effects they produce. Evaluative techniques that threaten, destroy self-esteem, distort perceptions about what is really important, or encourage negative, hostile behavior may be no bargain when assessed in terms of their impact on the recipients. Students learn from all their experiences, including the experience of being evaluated, and those experiences must also be taken into account in determining accountability.”²⁴

Many critics of No Child Left Behind and the current emphasis on mandatory state-wide testing cite its unintended consequences as a serious problem. They point to a reduction in educational opportunities in the arts, music, and dance as a side-effect of mandatory high stakes testing. They point to “teaching to the test” as an unintended practice which may be harmful to students. While MCSN cannot appropriately take a position on this controversy, we feel it is important that founders examine the impact of measurement when designing a charter school and choosing the assessment approach that the school will use to supplement mandatory testing.

“What is the most effective approach to student assessment?”

All schools use an array of different assessment tools to evaluate students. In selecting assessment tools, you should seek the most efficient means of measuring achievement of the school's goals and objectives. The best approaches provide reliable information with minimal unintended negative consequences and maximum efficiency in using scarce resources of time, training, and finances.

²⁴ Northwest Regional Education Laboratory www.nwrel.org

Types of Assessment Tools

Traditional Assessment uses

- Teacher and textbook designed classroom tests and quizzes
- Grades on assignments such as book reports, laboratory reports, research papers, and homework
- Standardized tests

Nontraditional Assessment (a.k.a. “authentic,” alternative) uses

- Portfolios
- Exhibitions and performances
- Holistic rubrics
- Graduation committees

Most charter schools use a blend of traditional and non-traditional methods. In Maryland, required testing makes it impossible for a charter school to rely exclusively on nontraditional evaluation. It is more difficult to establish the validity and reliability of nontraditional assessment tools. There is, however, some robust research available on how to conduct non-traditional evaluation that is scientifically proven. A survey of non-traditional evaluation will be included in future editions of this manual.

| Descriptive Guide to Standardized Tests ²⁵ | |
|---|--|
| Types of Tests | |
| Type | Description |
| Achievement Tests | Measure how much a student has learned, but not what a student is capable of learning. (See Aptitude Tests below.) Achievement tests are given after students have been instructed in a particular area of knowledge or trained in a specific set of skills. |

²⁵ **Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory**; “Charter Starters Leadership Training Workbook 3: Assessment and Accountability;” Rural Education Program, Dr. Joyce Ley, Director, July 1999 and **National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST)**.

| Descriptive Guide to Standardized Tests²⁵ | |
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| Types of Tests | |
| Aptitude Tests | Measure what a student is capable of learning. Cognitive ability tests and IQ tests are examples of aptitude tests. These test scores are often used to predict future performance. |
| Competency Tests | Achievement test designed to determine whether a student has met a minimum standard of skills and knowledge in a specific subject area. |
| "High Stakes" Tests | Nationally recognized standardized tests frequently used as college admissions criteria or for National Merit Scholarships. Both the SAT and ACT are examples of "high stakes" tests. |
| IQ (Intelligence Quotient) Tests | Ability tests are designed to compare the abilities of people who are the same age. Alfred Binet developed IQ tests early in the 20th century. |
| Performance-Assessment Tests | Alternative to standardized testing that requires a student to demonstrate knowledge of a particular subject. Also known as "open-ended" tests, these often include essay questions or applied math problems. Explicit definitions of what students must do to demonstrate proficiency at a specific level on the content standards. For example, the performance level "exceptional achievement" on a dimension "communication of ideas" is reached when the student examines the problem from several different positions and provides adequate evidence to support each position. |
| Terms Used To Describe Tests and Student Performance | |
| Term | Definition |
| Accommodations and Adaptations | Modifications in the way assessments are designed or administered so that students with disabilities (SWD) and limited English proficient (LEP) students can be included in the assessment. Assessment accommodations or adaptations might include Braille forms for blind students or tests in native languages for students whose primary language is other than English. |
| Alignment | <p>The process of linking content and performance standards to assessment, instruction, and learning in classrooms. One typical alignment strategy is the step-by-step development of (a) content standards, (b) performance standards, (c) assessments, and (d) instruction for classroom learning. Ideally, each step is informed by the previous step or steps, and the sequential process is represented as follows: Content Standards - Performance Standards - Assessments - Instruction for Learning.</p> <p>In practice, the steps of the alignment process will overlap. The crucial question is whether classroom teaching and learning activities support the standards and assessments. System alignment also includes the link between other school, district, and state resources. Alignment supports the goals of the standards, i.e., whether professional development priorities and instructional materials are linked to what is necessary to</p> |

| Descriptive Guide to Standardized Tests²⁵ | |
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| Types of Tests | |
| | achieve the standards. |
| Alternative Assessment (also Authentic or Performance Assessment) | An assessment that requires students to generate a response to a question rather than choose from a set of responses provided to them. Exhibitions, investigations, demonstrations, written or oral responses, journals, and portfolios are examples of "alternative assessment." Ideally, alternative assessment requires students to actively accomplish complex and significant tasks, while bringing to bear prior knowledge, recent learning, and relevant skills to solve realistic or authentic problems. Alternative assessments are often one key element of an assessment system. |
| Analytic Scoring | Evaluating student work across multiple dimensions of performance rather than from an overall impression (holistic scoring). In analytic scoring, individual scores for each dimension are scored and reported. For example, analytic scoring of a history essay might include scores of the following dimensions: use of prior knowledge, application of principles, use of original source material to support a point of view, and composition. An overall impression of quality may be included in analytic scoring. |
| Anchor(s) | A sample of student work that exemplifies a specific level of performance. Raters use anchors to score student work, usually comparing the student performance to the anchor. For example, if student work was being scored on a scale of 1-5, there would typically be anchors (previously scored student work), exemplifying each point on the scale. |
| Assessment | The process of gathering, describing, or quantifying information about performance. |
| Assessment System | The combination of multiple assessments into a comprehensive reporting format that produces comprehensive, credible, dependable information upon which important decisions can be made about students, schools, districts, or states. An assessment system may consist of a norm-referenced or criterion-referenced assessment, an alternative assessment system, and classroom assessments. |
| Benchmark | A detailed description of a specific level of student performance expected of students at particular ages, grades, or development levels. Benchmarks are often represented by samples of student work. A set of benchmarks can be used as "checkpoints" to monitor progress toward meeting performance goals within and across grade levels, i.e., benchmarks for expected mathematics capabilities at Grades 3, 7, 10 and at graduation. |
| Classroom Assessment | An assessment developed, administered, and scored by a teacher or set of teachers with the purpose of evaluating individual or classroom student performance on a topic. Classroom assessments may be aligned into an assessment system that includes alternative assessments and either a |

| Descriptive Guide to Standardized Tests²⁵ | |
|---|---|
| Types of Tests | |
| | norm-referenced or criterion-referenced assessment. Ideally, the results of a classroom assessment are used to inform and influence instruction that helps students reach high standards. |
| Content Standards | Broadly stated expectations of what students should <i>know and be able to do</i> in particular subjects and grade levels. Content standards define for teachers, schools, students, and the community not only the expected student skills and knowledge, but what schools should teach. An example of a language arts standard is: "Fourth-grade students will be able to gather information for a report using sources such as interviews, questionnaires, computers, and library centers." |
| Criteria | Guidelines, rules, characteristics, or dimensions that are used to judge the quality of student performance. Criteria indicate what we value in student responses, products, or performances. They may be holistic, analytic, general, or specific. Scoring rubrics are based on criteria and define what the criteria mean and how they are used. |
| Criterion-Referenced Assessment | An assessment where an individual's performance is compared to a specific learning objective or performance standard and not to the performance of other students. Criterion-referenced assessment tells us how well students are performing on specific goals or standards rather than just telling how their performance compares to a norm group of students nationally or locally. In criterion-referenced assessments, it is possible that none, or all, of the examinees will reach a particular goal or performance standard. For example: "All of the students demonstrated <i>proficiency</i> in applying concepts from astronomy, meteorology, geology, oceanography, and physics to describe the forces that shape the earth." |
| Dimensions | Desired knowledge or skills measured in an assessment and usually represented in a scoring rubric. For example, a measurement of student teamwork skills on a performance assessment might include six dimensions: <i>adaptability</i> (recognizing problems and responding appropriately), <i>coordination</i> (organizing team activities to complete a task on time), <i>decision making</i> (using available information to make decisions), <i>interpersonal</i> (interacting cooperatively with other team members), <i>leadership</i> (providing direction for the team), and <i>communication</i> (clearly and accurately exchanging information between team members). |
| Equity | Equity is the concern for fairness, i.e., that assessments are free from bias or favoritism. An assessment that is fair enables <i>all</i> children to show what they can do. At minimum, all assessments should be reviewed for (a) stereotypes, (b) situations that may favor one culture over another, (c) excessive language demands that prevent some students from showing their knowledge, and (d) the assessment's potential to include students with disabilities or limited English proficiency. |
| Exhibitions | Presentations by a student for a panel of faculty and experts. Exhibitions are designed to determine students' knowledge of a subject and their ability to explain what they have learned. |

| Descriptive Guide to Standardized Tests²⁵ | |
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| Types of Tests | |
| Holistic Scoring | Evaluating student work in which the score is based on an overall impression of student performance rather than multiple dimensions of performance (analytic scoring). |
| National Percentile | Compares one student's score with those of other students. For example, if a fourth-grader's national percentile is 82, that student outperformed 82 percent of the fourth-graders. The highest percentile is 99. |
| Norm Referencing | Performance measure based on the Bell curve. "Norm" refers to normal, or average, so that most of the scores will fall in the average range. In Norm referenced assessments, student performances are compared to a larger group. Usually the larger group or "norm group" is a national sample representing a wide and diverse cross-section of students. Students, schools, districts, and even states are compared or rank-ordered in relation to the norm group. The purpose of a norm-referenced assessment is usually to sort students and not to measure achievement towards some criterion of performance. |
| Portfolios | A portfolio is collection of work, usually drawn from students' classroom work. A portfolio becomes a portfolio assessment when (1) the assessment purpose is defined; (2) criteria or methods are made clear for determining <i>what</i> is put into the portfolio, <i>by whom</i> , and <i>when</i> ; and (3) criteria for assessing either the collection or individual pieces of work are identified and used to make judgments about performance. Portfolios can be designed to assess student progress, effort, and/or achievement, and encourage students to reflect on their learning. Portfolios are a type of alternative assessment. |
| Reliability | Measure of a test's consistency. For example, if a student takes a test one day and gets an 85 and then retakes the test a few months later and gets an 83, that indicates that the test has a high degree of reliability. |
| Sampling | Using the results of a group to predict the results of the whole. A school test can be given to a sample of students in such a way that the results accurately evaluate students in that category. If the sample is poorly chosen or self-selected (volunteers), the results would be meaningless. Sampling would allow school districts to save money, but is infrequently used because of political pressure. |
| Scale | Values given to student performance. Scales may be applied to individual items or performances. For example, <i>checklists</i> , i.e., yes or no; <i>numerical</i> , i.e., 1-6; or <i>descriptive</i> , i.e., "The student presented multiple points of view to support her essay." Scaled scores occur when participants' responses to any number of items are combined and used to establish and place students on a single scale of performance. |
| Standardization | A consistent set of procedures for designing, administering, and scoring an assessment. The purpose of standardization is to ensure that all |

| Descriptive Guide to Standardized Tests²⁵ | |
|---|--|
| Types of Tests | |
| | students are assessed under the same conditions so that their scores have the same meaning and are not influenced by differing conditions. Standardized procedures are very important when scores will be used to compare individuals or groups. |
| Standards | The broadest of a family of terms referring to statements of expectations for student learning, including content standards, performance standards, and benchmarks. |
| Standards-Based Reform | A program of school improvement involving setting high standards for all students and a process for adapting instruction and assessment to make sure all students can achieve the standards. |
| Stanine | Test scores are also grouped in "stanines," nine equal units. Scores of 1–3 are considered below average, 4–6 are considered average, and 7–9 are considered above average. |
| Validity | The degree to which the results of an assessment are dependable and consistently measure particular student knowledge and/or skills. Reliability is an indication of the consistency of scores across raters, over time, or across different tasks or items that measure the same thing. Thus, reliability may be expressed as (a) the relationship between test items intended to measure the same skill or knowledge (item reliability), (b) the relationship between two administrations of the same test to the same student or students (test/retest reliability), or (c) the degree of agreement between two or more raters (rater reliability). An unreliable assessment cannot be valid. |

Standardized Assessments²⁶

Charter schools generally use standardized tests because they have been extensively documented as valid and reliable. This enables the school to document its achievements in a manner which has widespread acceptance. There are many standardized assessments available for purchase from private testing services. It is your responsibility to research available tests carefully to ensure alignment with the school's performance indicators and curriculum as well as Maryland learning standards. The following table provides basic information about some of the more prominent testing

²⁶ NY Charter School Resource Center Guidebook 2005

companies and the standardized assessments they offer. According to Gregory Cizek, Associate Professor of Educational Measurement and Evaluation at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, these tests “substantially define large-scale, norm-referenced achievement testing in the United States.”²⁷

| Standardized Tests²⁸ | | | |
|--|---|----------------------|--|
| Exam | Publishing Company | Grades Tested | Subjects Tested |
| California Achievement Test (CAT) (5th Edition) | CTB McGraw-Hill www.ctb.com (314) 821-1700 | K-12 | Reading, Language, Spelling, Math, Study Skills. Science and Social Studies also offered (not included in the “basic skills” test battery). K tested only in visual recognition, word analysis, comprehension, and math concepts applications. Grades 1-4 not tested in study skills. |
| Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) Terra Nova (CTBS) | CTB McGraw-Hill www.ctb.com (314) 821-1700 | K-12 | K tested in word skills. Grades 1-3 tested in word analysis, reading, ELA, math, science, and social studies. K-12 tested in math computation and concepts and reading comprehension; 1-12 tested in vocabulary, language mechanics, and expressions: 2-12 tested in spelling; 4-12 tested in study skills. Science and Social Studies tests also offered. |
| Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) | Riverside Publishing www.riverpub.com (800) 323-9540 | K-8 | Reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies; no reading test offered for kindergarten. |
| Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT) | Harcourt Education Measurements www.hemweb.com (800) 572-5373 | K-12 | Reading (vocabulary and comprehension), language, math (concepts and procedures), problem solving, and, except for kindergarten, spelling, social studies, and science. |
| Stanford Achievement Test | Harcourt Education Measurements www.hemweb.com (800) 572-5373 | K-12 | Reading, language, spelling, listening, math, study skills, science, and social studies. K-1 not tested in language or spelling. K-3 not tested in social studies or science. |

²⁷ “Filling in the Blanks: Putting Standardized Tests to the Test,” Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, October 1998, www.edexcellence.net/doc/cizek.pdf.

²⁸ NY Charter School Resource Center Guidebook 2005

| Standardized Tests ²⁸ | | | |
|--|--|---------------|---|
| Exam | Publishing Company | Grades Tested | Subjects Tested |
| Terra Nova CAT (Terra Nova 2nd edition also is CAT 6th edition) | CTB McGraw-Hill www.ctb.com (314) 821-1700 | K-12 | Reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies. |
| Core Knowledge Tests | Touchstone Applied Science Associates, Inc. (TASA) www.tasaliteracy.com (800) 800-2598 | 1-5 | Curriculum referenced math, language arts, history, geography, and science. |

Gathering, Using, and Reporting Data²⁹

In planning how your charter school will collect student assessment data, always consider the multiple audiences who will be interested in using this data. Stakeholders include the students and their families, classroom teachers, school administrators, the Board, the authorizer, and the community. Each stakeholder has legitimate concerns which are overlapping but not identical. It is worth examining the possibility of adapting some of the same standardized tests used by the local district in order to facilitate comparisons of individual and aggregate progress.

You will need to integrate these aspects in your assessment data collection process:

- **Determine baselines for incoming students:** As part of a robust initial evaluation we advise you to both review students' records from their previous schools and administer a pre-test.
- **Assess annual student achievement:** Use the same instrument(s) and method(s) that you have chosen for the baseline assessment, as well as other assessment methods, to document year-to-year progress.
- **Plan to interpret and use data:**
 - Measure progress from the baseline

²⁹ www.USCHARTERSCHOOLS.org

- Compare academic progress to prior rates of progress in previous schools
- Compare student achievement to your school's goals and objectives.

- **Plan to interpret data for critical student subgroups:**
 - Learn how to identify achievement for subgroups of students (e.g., males/females; breakdown by family income; special education groups; English language learners/native English speakers)
 - Disaggregated data can identify specific aspects of achievement to identify specific strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and instruction, set priorities for professional development, or reallocate resources.

- **Plan to report student progress to all stakeholders: Use some or all of the following:**
 - Grades and report cards
 - Portfolios, narratives, and student-involved conferences
 - Annual reports
 - Informational brochures
 - Annual "stakeholder meetings."

Chapter 7 Lessons Learned

Before designing a student assessment process for your charter school ask:

- “Why are we assessing students?”
- “What exactly do we want to assess?”
- “What do we hope to accomplish through assessment?”
- “What is the most effective approach to student assessment?”

Integrate these aspects in your assessment data collection process:

- Determine baselines for incoming students
- Assess annual student achievement
- Plan to interpret and use data
- Plan to interpret data for critical student subgroups
- Plan to report student progress to all stakeholders

Finally, remember that an effective accountability system will use student assessment data in an ongoing improvement process with all of your school's stakeholders. Student assessment is the core accountability program that drives the whole school improvement process.

Chapter Eight

Facilities: Start Now to Find Your Space³⁰

Introduction

The challenge of finding a suitable facility for your charter school has become an impediment to creating new charter schools across the country. It is so serious that we recommend that you have a strong plan for a facility when you apply for your charter. Local boards may accept a well-reasoned plan for how founders are going to find a site.

Remember that charter schools are both an opportunity to be creative and are public schools following significant regulations. We encourage you to think outside the box and consider converting or building nontraditional spaces. At the same time, remember that zoning, health and safety regulations are inflexible. In our opinion, creativity is a virtue but health/safety are NOT something we would like to compromise.

Failure to secure a facility has caused a number of approved charter schools to fail before they could open their doors. Make sure you are knowledgeable and well connected to your local decision makers – you'll stand a much greater chance of success with them on your side.

Some of the easiest sites for your school are former public, private, or parochial schools that are either not being used or are underused. Having been built as schools, they will be, most likely, relatively inexpensive to make ready—unless they have significant problems such as the presence of lead, asbestos, or lack of handicap access.

³⁰ This chapter was prepared using materials from Northwest Educational Laboratory and the Illinois Charter Developers' Handbook

In research on charter schools, problems with facilities are inevitably near the top of the list of hurdles facing charter school founders. The most recent national study of charter schools indicates that “inadequate facilities” was rated as a very difficult barrier by 35.8 percent of all charters surveyed (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). The key to finding a workable facility for your charter school is to start the planning process early, and be flexible in the first few years.³¹

Planning for Facilities

Before you can hunt for a facility you need to define what your needs are. Unless your founding group has in-house expertise, you will need the assistance of experts on real estate, architecture, and finance.

The New York Charter School Resource Center (1999) advises that “some architects may be willing to help find adequate space on a pro bono basis if the charter school’s mission is pitched to them convincingly (e.g., performing a community service for kids in need, etc.)”³²

The following checklists offer guidance for working through the facility acquisition processes of needs assessment, site identification, site evaluation, and financing.

Phase I Facility Needs Assessment:³³

1. What is the educational vision of the school, and how will the facilities reflect that vision?
2. How flexible are you willing to be in facility size and location?
3. What is your ideal student/teacher or student/adult ratio? What kind of spaces will you need to maintain that ratio?

³¹ Northwest Ed Lab

³² Northwest Ed Lab

³³ Northwest Ed Lab

4. Is it possible for the school to relocate in a year or two?
5. How many students do you have, or plan to have?
6. Will the student population change significantly in the next three to five years?
7. Do you understand the complexity of long-term leases and/or purchase financing under Maryland charter school regulations?
8. What kind of classroom spaces will allow the school to meet its educational goals?
9. What other kinds of spaces will be needed (recreation, art, library, science, office, lunchroom, etc.)?
10. What kinds of facilities would be ideal to have near the school that you don't have to own and maintain (parks, libraries, performing arts centers, etc.)?
11. What kind of technological capacity does your school facility need to have?
12. Where do the students that your school will serve live?
13. What transportation options will be available to your students?
14. How much total space is needed for the interior of the charter school?
15. How much total space is needed for the exterior of the charter school?

Phase II Initial Site Identification: ³⁴

1. Give yourself plenty of time to consider the advantages and disadvantages of as many options as possible. Compare each of them to the Phase I results.
2. Do your homework. Find out about your local building and zoning codes, permits, and approval process. These are available at your city hall.
3. Identify possible allies, partners, and champions. Consider seeking support from community based organizations, nonprofit affordable housing developers, faith-based organizations, local political leaders, chambers of commerce, civic groups, real estate agents.
4. Ask the school district for a list of existing, unused district or educational facilities.
5. Consider partnering with a local community college or existing private or alternative schools.

³⁴ Northwest Ed Lab

6. Consider existing community or public facilities that may not be used during the day.
7. Consider partnering with local community groups (YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, community centers).
8. Inquire with the city for a list of vacant buildings currently owned by the city.
9. Consult with a real estate agent, architectural firm, local business, or corporate sponsor for support and options.
10. Network and use other relationships to identify possibilities, including: office space; retail space; donations of buildings; partnerships with local businesses (school-to-work relationship);
11. Modular units: Buy or lease, new or used, low cost. These take from 30-45 days to install plus time for utilities to be connected. Questions to ask: Is this a turnkey project? (I.e. is it user-ready?) Is the foundation included? What are flooring options? Carpet, tiles? Is plumbing included?
12. Finally, after you identify the best options for a site, explore your options more thoroughly by evaluating them on several factors. Architects can help facilitate this process (choose an architect with experience in this area).

A Word About Contractors:

Is the contractor bonded? You may purchase bonding insurance against contractor's work, which will protect you if the contractor goes out of business or he/she does not insure subcontractors.

Phase III Evaluate the Site: ³⁵

1. **Evaluate your space requirement:** Is the space appropriate considering the mission of the school?
2. **Location:** Does the location fit your needs and the needs of your students?
3. **Building Status:** Is the building up to code? If not, how much will it cost to bring it up to code? Use professionals to answer this. Your town's building inspector

³⁵ Northwest Ed Lab

may advise – however, you will need architects, engineers, and contractors to help with time/cost/feasibility analyses.

4. **Explore Liability Costs:** including insurance and maintenance/repairs.
5. **Plumbing and Wiring:** What will it cost to add needed plumbing, telephone lines, and so forth?
6. **Compliance Issues:** zoning; building codes; Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA dictates that you must provide easy access for individuals with disabilities); safety and health-related (hazardous materials, fire codes, number of entrances and exits, and their locations), lighting requirements, space requirements (bathrooms, space room).

Phase IV: Facilities Financing

Facilities represent perhaps the most significant cost for charter schools. charter founders face a daunting challenge paying facilities costs. Unlike district schools, charters usually pay facilities costs out of operating funds. In addition, charter schools lack bonding authority and have restrictions on long-term borrowing.

Please reference the chapter on fundraising for guidance on ways to supplement operating funds in financing your facility.

Facilities financing is too complex to be adequately covered within the scope of this manual. In addition to seeking expert advice, you should develop the personal expertise of a well-prepared consumer. Therefore, there are numerous guides you can download on the subject. Comprehensive coverage of facilities financing is at www.publiccharters.org and www.uscharterschools.org/gb/dev_fin.

Another helpful site is NCB Capital Impact, which is very interested in helping charter schools find and pay for buildings. They are both a financial services company and a development company with substantial technical assistance expertise. Their resource guide [*The Answer Key: How To Plan, Develop and Finance Your Charter School Facility*](#) can be downloaded for free on their Website.

Some Funding Options:³⁶

- **Foundation Loans:** Available for short term needs such as minor renovations.
- **Bank Loans:** A traditional way to secure enough cash to undertake costs such as building renovations. You must determine in advance whether the amount and timing of per-pupil revenue will support loan repayments. In addition, because you don't yet have a financial track record, you face creditworthiness challenges.
- **Loans From Community Development Financial Institutions:** Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) provide nonprofits access to various forms of reduced interest financing.
- **Modular Buildings:** Several companies offer construction management and financing assistance to non-profit organizations that purchase their modular facilities. The modular units can be constructed as stand-alone facilities or additions to existing buildings.
- **Multi-use Facilities:** A multi-use facility can generate revenue, either through rental income or through proceeds from other operations, to offset some of the school's facility costs. It can also allow the school to grow by using a greater share of the building over time and renting out smaller portions. If a community development corporation (CDC) operates the building and rents at a low rate to the school, the school can avoid many of the hazards of real estate financing/development/operations. The CDC also can provide better credit with banks and the funding community.
- **Occupancy in Existing School Facility:** The local school district may own buildings that are partially or fully unused. If you can develop the support of the district, you can avoid many start-up challenges. Obviously, you will need to show them how you are a resource for the community that doesn't harm the district.
- **Start Small and Grow:** Reduces your capital needs until you have a track record of success. It is always easier to sell yourself when funders can visit a successful reality. You can house your school in a temporary space for the first few years.
- **Partner with an Established Institution** to guarantee the loan or to float a bond to secure the capital needed to finance your building needs.

³⁶ Illinois Charter Developers' Guide

- **Combine Several Options:** for example, fundraising and a bank loan, to create the most affordable and appropriate facility financing package

To appreciate the financial choices a bit more, the table below offers a basic analysis.

| Facilities Financing Options - Pros and Cons ³⁷ | | |
|--|---|--|
| Type of Funding | Pros | Cons |
| Funding from Operating Funds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables school to maintain autonomy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverts funds earmarked for educational programs |
| Capital Campaign | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can strengthen and broaden network of financial supporters • Mobilizes volunteer group to support school • Raises funds without adding bureaucracy to school's operations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time – can take four or five years to reach funding goals • Costly - Need to hire a dedicated professional staffer, fundraising consultant or securing significant pro-bono support to coordinate and monitor the campaign. |
| Traditional Bank Loans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure cash resources for large project, such as facilities purchase and/or renovation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banks reticent to provide long-term financing to school with five-year charter • High interest rates • Banks may require “balloon financing.” • Burdensomely high loan repayment costs. |
| Loans Guarantee by other entities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More available lenders. • Guarantees loan against possibility of default | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds risk to guarantor's operations • Invites regulatory control from guarantor |
| Low-interest loans through community development financial institutions (CDFIs). ³⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDFIs offer access to loans for non-profit organizations unable to get loans approved elsewhere. • Loans at below-market rates. • CDFIs may provide technical assistance in organizational start-up, financial and facilities planning and other critical issues for charter schools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDFI loans are competitive, i.e. hard to get. • You must do your homework. |

³⁷ Illinois Charter Developers' Guide

³⁸ See the National Cooperative Bank Development Corporation at <http://www.ncbdc.org/>.

Facilities Financing Options - Pros and Cons³⁷

| Type of Funding | Pros | Cons |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Modular Buildings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modular structures are flexible. • Modular companies may provide financing. • Modular companies are often full-service construction management and financing firms. • Some modular companies specialize in charter school financing when other traditional lenders hesitate to lend to a charter school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school must own/lease sufficient land to house the buildings. • Modular companies usually require the use of their contractors and do not allow a bidding process. • Possible above market interest rates • Some modular companies offer only a leasing program. This can be good or bad as modular facilities may have a limited functional life span. |
| Multi-use facility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowers credit risk because it mitigates risk of facility becoming inoperative. Thus, financing may be easier to secure. • Other facility uses generate revenues. • In a Community Development Corporation building the CDC provides credit and links the funding community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds complexity to the operation of the school • Loss of control over site. |
| Occupancy in existing school facility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some school districts have underutilized school buildings. • The cost of required renovations may be significantly lower than for other types of facilities. • The district could become a partner in a capital campaign. • May encourage the charter school to address competing interests of various constituencies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts may hesitant to share space with charter schools they perceive as competition. • Space available may require extensive, expensive renovations. • Needs support of the district. • Could invite regulatory control by the district. • Questions of responsible for building maintenance/repairs. • Logistics of sharing lunchroom, gym, etc. may present problems. |

Chapter Eight – Lessons Learned About Facility Acquisition

- Do not postpone the search for a facility. You need a commitment in order to sign your charter agreement.
- Bring in expert assistance.
- Assess needs thoroughly.
- Explore community partnerships.
- Financing choices are complex, but available.

Chapter Nine

Parental and Community Involvement: Making the School Sing³⁹

This chapter is chock-full of ideas and suggestions for bringing parents and the community along as active supporters of the school and the education process. Don't be intimidated. You have a lot to do to plan and launch a school. But don't skip these areas. They are critical strategies to support your success. Begin. Learn. Keep going.

Parental Involvement

Parents are the primary educators for their children. Diane Savona, a teacher with 30+ years experience teaching impoverished, minority inner-city and special needs children, observed that “frequently you can predict which children will succeed in school by the extent to which they live with caring adults who actively support their education.”

Because parental involvement is a key feature of most successful charter schools, parents should be invited to join in school activities—starting with an open-door policy for classroom involvement, and possibly by having the school provide (itself or with a partner) adult education classes, parenting skills classes and family activities. The parents frequently need nurturing and non-judgmental opportunities to enhance their own sense of self-worth. The charter school environment can provide opportunities for the entire family to become more functional on a variety of levels. This approach will create a dynamic process where success for the whole family is assured.

When successfully integrated into your charter school, parent involvement creates community; builds commitment to, and enthusiasm for, the school and its programs; and requires hard work and diverse skills to meet the school's many needs. Effective

³⁹ Portions adapted from Illinois Charter School Resource Guide developed by Leadership for Quality Education.

strategies for involving parents in the school will vary widely according to the school's population. Determining and implementing strategies for your particular community requires a high level of cultural sensitivity. While little encouragement may be needed for one group of parents to become involved, another may require proactive efforts by school staff and administration to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere and to boost parents' confidence and sense of efficacy.

The possibilities for tapping into the vast wealth of knowledge, experience, and skills that parents offer reach far beyond the traditional PTA work of organizing fundraising and social events. An effective parent involvement program requires creative thinking and ongoing commitment in organizing the school's priorities and resources.

Shared Time between Parents and their Children⁴⁰

Many opportunities are available for parents or guardians to be involved in shared parent-child learning activities in the charter school and during field trips. Strengthening the parent-child educational interactions can be used as a method to advance the school's mission and goals.

Parents of elementary aged children should be provided the training, encouragement, and the resources to read books and sing with their children; assist in teaching math and letter, word, picture, and color identification; and build each child's self-esteem/self-confidence. Parents may participate in the preparation for activities such as playing educational games, arts and crafts. The parents can help introduce the children to literacy programs and other educational activities with guidance, literature, and programs provided through the school's staff. Parents may implement literacy projects like a Week-End Book Bag project, in which the school will train them and supply home literacy materials. They can reinforce children's learning, encourage older siblings to act as tutors, expose children to literacy material, teach them colors and how to identify them with the name, and teach children how to express emotions while reading.

⁴⁰ Adapted from a design for the Paterson YMCA Even Start Program prepared by Jeffrey Lischin Consulting Services.

A series of “Special” Parent-Child activities should be regularly scheduled. Ideas for possible events are listed below. Actual events should be planned with input from parents, students, and staff.

- **Outdoor Activity Day:** Multigenerational activities including parents, grandparents and siblings. Located in a park the day would include a picnic, ethnic music reflecting all participating cultures, and structured activities showcasing the children’s learning experience – perhaps a reading of original stories, an art show, and/or a professional story teller.
- Field trips to the Liberty Science Center, Newark Art Museum, Newark Performing Arts Center, Bronx Botanical Gardens, Bronx Zoo, New York Museum of Natural History, or other locally available musical, cultural, and theatrical venues.
- Architectural tour of your city or other nearby cities including the business district, some beautiful or historic homes, and magnificent churches.
- Pot luck dinners in which families are encouraged to prepare ethnic dishes, wear ethnic clothing, or bring ethnic music in order to experience positive shared multicultural experiences and build positive ethnic pride.
- Family fun nights in which simple activities such as a shared movie with popcorn are used as an opportunity to role model and reinforce parenting skills gained during Parenting Education Groups.

Guiding Principles and Helpful Hints: Parent Involvement ⁴¹

- 1. Clearly Communicate** your charter school’s goals, expectations, and mission to prospective parents and students from the earliest stages of the school’s development.
- 2. Hire a Parent-Involvement Coordinator or Community Liaison** to conduct outreach efforts, coordinate parent volunteers, and serve as a link between parents and staff.
- 3. Create and Distribute a Parent Policy Manual** containing the following information to all prospective parents:

⁴¹ Adapted from Illinois Charter School Resource Guide developed by Leadership for Quality Education.

- A list of parent involvement expectations and responsibilities
- A list of parent involvement opportunities
- Suggestions on what parents can do at home to support student learning
- Information on how parents can communicate and address issues and problems regarding the school

4. Create and foster an atmosphere in which parents' perspectives and input are expected, invited and incorporated in all aspects of decision-making, from researching after-school programs to participating in staff interviews.

- Develop and implement plans to ensure that school staff makes parents feel welcomed and encouraged to participate in decisions affecting their children.
- Make involvement in governance as convenient, accessible, and appealing as possible to parents: provide translation of written materials and meetings for non-English speakers, schedule meetings at convenient times, and offer refreshments and affordable childcare.
- Establish and publicize a wide variety of parent involvement opportunities to accommodate parents' diverse skills, interests, and work schedules.
 - Create and distribute a parent newsletter to keep parents informed of and involved in the school's activities.
 - Provide parent and teacher orientation and training sessions to maximize substantive and effective collaboration and participation in the school.
 - Establish mechanisms to recognize and encourage parent initiative and involvement and respond to parents' ideas and concerns.

Parent/Community Involvement Opportunities ⁴²

A good review of the following idea-lists will quickly show that parent and community volunteers can contribute to your success. We look forward to hearing from readers about your new ideas to add to the lists.

Come to School to Assist

- Share information with a student or class about a hobby or career;
- Share information with students about a country you have visited or lived in;
- Tutor one or a small group of students in reading, math or other areas;
- Help coach an athletic team;
- Help check a student's written work;
- Help produce a school or classroom newsletter (can also be done at home);
- Help sew or paint a display;
- Help build something (such as a loft in a classroom, playground, outdoor garden or other project to beautify the outside of the school);
- Help students work on a final exhibition or project (can also be done at home);
- Help answer the school's phone;
- Help plan a new playground for the school;
- Help plan and/or present a theme-based program for students;
- Demonstrate cooking from a particular country or culture to students;
- Share a particular expertise with faculty;
- Help coach students competing in an academic competition (such as Odyssey of the Mind, Future Problem Solving, Math Masters);
- Help bring senior citizens to school to watch a student production;
- Extend learning by helping to arrange learning opportunities in the community;
- Help set up an internship or apprenticeship or community service opportunity for a student at your business, organization or agency;

⁴² Illinois Charter School Resource Guide developed by Leadership for Quality Education; adapted from the Center for School Change, Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

- Host a one-day "shadow study" for one or a small group of students about your career;
- Take parts in a local field trip with a teacher and a group of students;
- Contact a particular local business or organization regarding a possible partnership with the school;
- Help to create a natural area outside the building where students can learn.

Serve on an Advisory or Decision-making Committee

- Serve on a school-wide advisory council;
- Serve on a particular school committee that reports to the advisory council;
- Serve as an officer in the school's PTA;
- Help organize a parent organization for the school;
- Help design a parent or student survey for the school;
- Help conduct and/or tabulate results of a parent survey regarding the school.

Share Information or Advocate for the School

- Serve as a member of the "telephone tree," to distribute information quickly;
- Write a letter to legislators about the school;
- Help design a brochure or booklet about the school;
- Help translate information about the school into a language other than English;
- Help translate at a parent/teacher conference for parents who don't speak English well;
- Write an article for publication in a magazine or newspaper about the school's activities.

Increase Financial Resources Available to the School

- Help write a proposal that would bring new resources to the school;
- Donate materials or services to the school;
- Arrange for a business or other organization to donate materials to the school;

- Help with a fundraiser for the school.

Help Other Parents Develop their Parenting Skills

- Help teach a class or produce a videotape for parents on ways they can be stronger, more effective parents;
- Help write, publish, and distribute a list of parenting tips.

Guiding Principles and Helpful Hints: Public Relations and Community Outreach⁴³

Strong, healthy public and community relations is critical through all phases of developing and operating a charter school. To develop the network of partners and supporters necessary for success, charter school developers should develop a specific set of short and long-range community outreach and marketing strategies. Your school can build strong relationships with critical stakeholders, and develop partnerships with parents, community groups, businesses, media, the local school district, higher educational institutions, and other organizations by:

- **Being Informed.** Credibility and impact reflects the quality of information you provide. Do extensive research before submitting your charter proposal. Consult resources listed in this guide and elsewhere to ask questions and verify information about charter schools.
- **Being Creative.** Presentation skills matter almost as much as the content of what you are communicating. How many politicians are elected despite their opponents being better qualified? How many inferior products are sold through effective advertisements? It is critical to identify resources for designing visually appealing, informative materials that will speak to your targeted audiences.
- **Being strategic** about how and where you present your charter school to the public.
 - Set up a committee to coordinate community outreach and marketing efforts.

⁴³ Illinois Charter School Resource Guide developed by Leadership for Quality Education.

- Designate a contact person (founder, principal, board member, or other supporter) to respond to media and other official inquiries. This person should be widely familiar with the school at all levels and savvy to media and other public-relations concerns.
- Reach out to a broad cross-section of the population.
- Build a list of media contacts and develop a positive rapport with each.
- Create materials to "get the word out" about your school using clippings, posters, flyers, brochures, newsletters, and an Internet website, if possible. Provide positive, clear, accurate messages about your school.
- Establish and publicize mechanisms to facilitate and respond to questions, concerns, and suggestions from the community. Schedule meetings during convenient times and provide refreshments, childcare help, and language translation where needed, to make people feel comfortable and welcome.
- Remember to recognize those that have helped or supported your school in any way.

Guiding Principles and Helpful Hints: Fostering Positive Relations with the Local School District

There are many areas of potential cooperation and mutual interest between charter schools and their local districts. There can be efficiencies in subcontracting with a district for services such as special education and food services. A charter school can help relieve overcrowding in district schools without the district investing in new or expanded facilities. A charter school can serve challenging populations that solve a problem faced by the district. A charter school can serve as a laboratory for innovation helping to improve the district. A charter school can provide a design choice for parents wanting a different opportunity for their children. Make your own list and then build a positive working relationship based on mutual interest. Try to remember and communicate that we all benefit from cooperation and that we all are harmed from hostility.

Here are some ideas about how to turn this into a productive and mutually beneficial relationship throughout the charter development process: ⁴⁴

- 1. Meet with the local superintendent (where possible) and /or top district staff before you start.** Seek out ways to work collaboratively with the district, complement/supplement programs that the district offers, and share or contract for services. Also, consider and discuss how the charter school could pool professional resources and knowledge with district teachers.
- 2. Do not criticize the district publicly.** Focus on the positive aspects of your charter, not the negative aspects of the local district or its schools. The message to stress is this: Charter schools are not "better than district schools"; they simply provide new educational options for students and the community. They represent another way of providing public education. Charter schools are strictly accountable to the public for delivering quality services.
- 3. Maintain open, courteous lines of communication.**
- 4. Provide clear, accurate information** to the local board and superintendent about charter schools in general and your proposal in particular.
- 5. Attend school board meetings, show sensitivity to the district's perspective and needs, and respond to questions and concerns as they arise.**

Chapter Nine – Lessons Learned About Parents and Community

- Parental involvement is an indicator of school success.
- Parents support the educational process.
- Parents are valuable resources.
- Community relations matter. Good relations are important.
- Reach out.

⁴⁴ Illinois Charter School Resource Guide developed by Leadership for Quality Education.

Chapter Ten

Financial Plan:

Sound Fiscal Policies

Avoid Trouble and Build Confidence

When starting a charter school, the development and implementation of fiscal (accounting) policies and procedures are critical to the success of the educational facility. When we discuss a charter school's fiscal policies, we are referring to more than just the manner in which we handle the dollars and cents that flow through the organization. We are referencing the comprehensive management of the entire operational structure of the accounting function. The creation of strong financial policies and procedures is a time consuming and highly technical task that includes a myriad of assignments. For a newly formed school, the thought process for establishing accounting rules and regulations must encompass all facets of financial management, such as:

- Gaining an understanding of the accounting rules and regulations that govern charter schools in Maryland. These regulations include, but are not limited to, Generally Accepted Accounting Principles ("GAAP") and Governmental Accounting Standards Board policies;
- Properly developing an efficient and effective internal control structure to protect the school's assets;
- Understanding the tasks and responsibilities of a charter school's fiscal department such as:
 - Developing and reviewing the annual fiscal budget;
 - Managing the school's cash receipts and disbursements;
 - Ensuring proper compliance with grants and funding source requirements; and
 - Properly reporting on the fiscal operations of the school.

This chapter of the manual will help founders gain an understanding of how to build the foundation for a charter school fiscal, finance, or accounting department. This section is not intended to be a comprehensive accounting manual, as a complete accounting policies and procedures manual would easily be more than 100 pages in length. This is just a brief outline of the issues that must be considered when establishing an efficient department.

Understanding the Applicable Accounting Rules and Regulations

GAAP and GASB

In general, the primary method of accounting for the Maryland charter schools is GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.) When a founder moves towards establishing a charter school, that individual must obtain at least what we call the “50,000 feet” level of understanding of the accounting rules and regulations that govern educational organizations. The level of understanding is referred to as 50,000 feet because, unless the founder is an accountant by trade, the regulations are somewhat difficult to grasp in totality at the outset. Therefore, the founder only needs to be familiar with the rules and does not need to become an accounting expert.

GAAP are the rules and regulations that prescribe how financial transactions of the school are recorded in the general ledger. The foundation of GAAP is the use of the accrual basis of accounting. Essentially, the accrual basis of accounting requires the school to recognize revenues as they are *earned* and expenses as they are *incurred* as opposed to recognizing revenues and expenses when the cash for these items are *received* or *disbursed*, respectively.

More specifically, the State of Maryland has mandated that all school districts, which include the new charter school, adopt and implement Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement No. 34. While GAAP is a “method of accounting,”

GASB 34 is a “financial reporting model.” The GASB-issued Statement No. 34 in June of 1999 as a way to improve the manner in which state and local governments report on the financial results of their ongoing operations. The primary goal of this statement was to make “reading” the financial statements easier. Under GASB 34, financial statements of governments and schools resemble more closely the financial statements of traditional commercial entities. As a result, the users of the school’s financial statements find the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (“CAFR”) more useful and much more meaningful.

Again, understanding and properly implementing GASB 34 into your school’s fiscal department is a major undertaking. The use of an independent accounting professional or consultant who is experienced in implementing the principles of GAAP and GASB is highly recommended. To obtain GASB Statement No. 34 in its entirety visit www.GASB.com.

Developing an Internal Control Structure

What Are Internal Controls?

The internal controls of a charter school are the policies, procedures, rules, and regulations that are developed and implemented in order to protect the assets of the organization. Many factors and characteristics that are present within the newly formed school will influence the internal control structure employed by the administration. Some of these factors and characteristics are:

- The size of the organization in regards to human capital;
- The technical knowledge and experience of the accounting/finance department staff;
- The financial resources available to the school; and
- The Administration’s (Founders’) attitude.

Here are some brief thoughts regarding these factors and characteristics.

Size of the Organization

Segregation of duties is the primary concept behind an effective internal control structure. Briefly stated, the segregation of duties is the assigning of similar fiscal tasks to separate individuals in order to eliminate the opportunity for misappropriation of the school's assets due to intentional acts or simple human errors.

For example, if the same individual is responsible for receiving, recording, and depositing checks that arrive to the school in the daily mail delivery, it would be very easy for that individual to divert payments to their own personal account. However, if management establishes proper segregation of duties, three different employees would perform the three tasks detailed in the previous example, and the ability and chance of diversion is greatly reduced.

Using the same scenario, instead of an intentional act of diversion, let's imagine that the same individual responsible for these activities mistakenly transposed numbers on a \$21,000 check that was received in the mail. Instead of recording the check as \$21,000 in the accounting system, the employee records it as \$12,000. Now, the charter school assumes that they have a shortfall of \$9,000. If we had proper segregation of duties, a second individual would review the transaction, most likely catching the transposition error, thus eliminating a problem that could linger on for many months.

Obviously, in a perfect world, a newly formed charter school would have enough employees that such a situation could not occur. But, as we all know, most newly formed charter schools have a limited number of staff members in the fiscal department, making proper segregation of duties virtually impossible. Therefore, we can clearly see how limited human resources can affect management's ability to create a strong, effective internal control structure.

If possible, the founder should ensure that the following positions exist within the accounting department to provide a somewhat effective internal control structure.

- Independent Audit Firm
- Business Manager/Controller
- Accounting Manager
- Purchasing Manager
- Accounts Receivable Manager
- Accounts Payable Manager
- Payroll Manager (In conjunction with an outside payroll service)
- Fixed Asset Manager (Can be the Head of Maintenance)

Technical knowledge and experience

The internal control structure of any organization is strengthened when the accounting department is staffed with knowledgeable, well-educated, and highly trained employees. When employees are strong fiscal professionals, the chance of undetected errors passing through the accounting system is greatly reduced, thus making assets “safer.” As we have said, the rules and regulations that govern the accounting practices of a newly formed charter school are very hard to understand and implement. Therefore, inexperienced individuals are more likely to make erroneous entries into the school’s accounting systems or disregard signs of potential problems within the financial records. We reiterate—*internal controls are there to protect the assets of the school.*

Therefore, if the accounting staff is not properly trained or educated in the rules and regulations that govern the charter school’s fiscal operations then the frequency of recording errors are increased. In addition, if assets, such as cash and revenues are not properly accounted for, they can easily be misappropriated.

Strong financial professionals, who truly understand the underlying accounting concepts, will frequently identify unusual items before they can be perpetuated over several weeks or months. When this level of expertise is available to the school’s administration, the review processes that exist over financial operations become more

efficient and much more effective, thus strengthening the school's ability to build a strong internal control structure.

Available Financial Resources

In the previous sections, it was noted that a larger, more educated accounting staff is a major component in building a strong internal control structure. The problem with this concept is that a large staff made up of highly experienced individuals is very expensive to maintain. Therefore, if the newly formed school only has access to limited financial resources, the administration will not be able to fully staff the accounting department. Because of these limitations, the internal control structure over financial transactions will not be as strong as desired. For this reason, management's visible concern for strong fiscal responsibility is especially important.

The Administration's Attitude

We mentioned in the initial paragraph of this chapter that establishing accounting policies encompasses all facets of financial management. The overall work environment and morale of the department's employees are a significant part of developing the internal control structure. When the administration projects an image of control over financial reporting, the employees that work under their tutelage will make a greater effort to ensure fiscal reporting accuracy. If the staff is concerned with accuracy and completeness, the chance of errors or misappropriations are decreased significantly. The founder must display a sense of urgency when it relates to financial management. The founder must have an active role in reviewing the financial operations of the school. When a process of checks and balances exist within the organization, staff members tend to be more diligent in their assigned tasks. If the administration takes a lax attitude towards fiscal management, the strength of the internal control structure is compromised.

How do We Develop a Strong Internal Control Structure?

The primary step in developing a strong internal control structure is to address the issues described above. In addition, the school's founder should develop control activities

that create a level of duty segregation sufficient enough to satisfy the needs of the organization. More specifically, to create a foundation for a strong internal control structure, the founder should at least:

- Adopt an attitude that exudes a “sense of urgency” as it relates to the proper treatment of financial transactions and matters;
- Establish an accounting department made up of properly educated and sufficiently trained staff members. In addition, ensure that the size of the department is consistent with the needs of the school and that the department size provides the administration with the ability to maintain the proper segregation of duties;
- Develop a review process that ensures that multiple staff members examine all financial transactions on a regular basis;
- Develop support documentation that substantiates fiscal transactions. This can be done by creating items such as checklists, request and authorization forms, purchase order forms, and timesheet & attendance records.
- Develop rules and regulations that restrict access to assets to a limited number of individuals. All employees should not have unlimited access to the assets of the school.

Again, the aforementioned bullet points are examples of the types of issues that should be addressed. In order to properly create an effective internal control structure, each individual charter school must examine their unique situation and development control activities that are consistent with their needs.

Understanding the Tasks and Responsibilities of the Fiscal Department

When the founder establishes a new charter school, we mentioned that they must have a basic understanding of accounting concepts such as GAAP and GASB 34, which address that manner in which financial transactions are recorded and presented in the form of financial statements. However, these principles and statements do not inform the founder of the many operational tasks that must be performed on a regular basis. These tasks include activities such as creating operational and capital budgets, reviewing grants

contracts and other financial based agreements, preparing financial statements to be used as an effective management tool, and reconciling certain general ledger accounts.

Therefore, the founder must become familiar with the reporting requirements prescribed by local, State, and Federal authorities. Normally, a charter school's fiscal department is responsible for, but not limited to, the following tasks:

- **Developing the annual budget.** The fiscal department should develop the initial draft of the annual budget using the chart of accounts prescribed for charter schools by the State of Maryland. The annual budget describes in detail the revenues and expenditures that are expected to be recorded during the upcoming fiscal year. Budgets are created then reviewed by the charter school's Board of Directors.
- **Managing the school's cash receipts and disbursements.** The fiscal department primary responsibility is to oversee the daily financial operations of the school. The foundation of operations is the receipt and disbursement of cash in order to maintain operations. Managing daily operations entails ensuring all transactions are properly recorded in the general ledger in accordance with GAAP.
- **Ensuring compliance with grant and funding source requirements.** The fiscal department is responsible for ensuring all disbursements of funds received as the result of a grant award are in compliance with the grant or funding source contracts. Essentially, when charter schools receive funds from third parties, those financial resources are earmarked for specified activities. It is the fiscal department's responsibility to ensure that the funds are used as intended. They do this by reviewing support documentation that substantiates all financial transactions related to specific grant contracts and agreements.
- **Proper financial reporting.** After all the transactions are properly recorded by the accounting staff during the year, the charter school is responsible for reporting the results of operations to various oversight agencies. These reports, which are required annually, are in the form of:
 - Audited financial statements (The format is prescribed by GASB 34)
 - A Comprehensive Annual Financial Report
 - Federal Informational Forms

In closing, the main point of this chapter is to introduce the founder to the primary elements necessary to establish a functional fiscal department. Again, this is a broad overview of the total process needed to accomplish this goal. In order to fully establish a

viable and effective accounting department, the founder may need to consult with a qualified accounting professional that fully understands GAAP, GASB, the State of Maryland reporting requirements, and the Federal reporting requirements as they relate to the disbursement of Federal funds.

Chapter Ten – Lessons Learned About Managing Finances

- Develop a top-level appreciation for accounting rules and regulations.
- Develop an internal control structure with segregation of duties.
- Adopt a “sense of urgency” for proper financial behavior.
- Remember that charter schools are accountable to the public.

Chapter Eleven

Lessons and Recommendations for Starting and Running a Charter School ⁴⁵

The experience of charter schools across the country has shown governance, facilities, and financing to be the top three stumbling blocks to school start-up. In addition to these challenges, clear, comprehensive accountability planning—defining, measuring, and reporting student and school achievement—is a critical responsibility that school founders, to their great disadvantage, too often fail to undertake seriously from the beginning of their charter planning.

Without a doubt, starting and operating a successful charter school entails diverse challenges, requiring equally diverse expertise from a high-energy coalition of school founders and supporters. Each of the above four challenges is addressed in greater detail in individual sections of this handbook. To begin, however, we offer the following planning tips that should guide and infuse your overall effort to plan, start up, and operate an effective charter school.

1. Start with a strong team that holds a common vision and brings diverse expertise.

Starting and running a charter school requires a wide range of knowledge and abilities, including visionary leadership, educational expertise, strong business and management skills, and political savvy. Common vision provides the foundation and driving force of successful charter schools. Group members' varied technical expertise and opinions inform all of the decisions about curriculum, hiring, student enrollment, and evaluation and assessment stemming from this vision. Consensus on every issue is not

⁴⁵ Illinois Charter School Resource, Guide Leadership for Quality Education, adapted from recommendations published by the University of Washington/RAND Program on Reinventing Public Education.

necessary, as long as the group agrees on the common principles and vision guiding the school's direction and lines of authority for final decision-making are clear.

2. Use outside experts.

Even with a strong, balanced team of founders, most charter schools will need additional technical support organizations, educational expertise, and professional financial, legal, and facilities planning assistance as they develop and refine the school's design plan and get the school off the ground. An important role of the core team is to identify what they do not know, find experts to address these areas, and integrate their advice into your charter planning.

3. Be flexible and willing to adapt to changing needs.

The skills required of the founding group will change through the various phases of developing a charter school.

- During the team-building phase, the potential applicant must build a strong core team, "network" to identify potential sources of political, financial, and technical support, and create a shared vision of the school's mission.
- During the planning phase, the team must establish a management structure and follow effective practices to ensure the smooth operation of the school, nurture individual commitment, and use outside assistance and specialized expertise wisely.
- Throughout the school development process, the school's founding coalition will need to engage in high-quality, community relations work, negotiating with public agencies and the local political establishment, dealing with political opposition, and presenting their school to the media and the general public. Group members should select skillful spokespersons, develop common positions on controversial issues, and exercise discretion, discipline, and diplomacy.
- After the charter is approved, business management skills and clear lines of financial authority are needed for a broad range of economic decisions concerning the allocation of resources, purchases, loans, contracts, and staffing.
- To determine when to release control and delegate authority, the core team members must recognize their individual skills and expertise, as well as their limitations. Founders should never give up control where decisions have a direct

influence on the school's mission or financial viability. All else should be delegated. As the process continues and as the school and its staff matures more decisions can be given over to others.

- View the charter application as a critical planning tool rather than a “hurdle” on the way to obtaining a charter.

Applicants should not approach the charter proposal as a grant application. A quality charter proposal must include much more than broad, ambitious promises of what the school will deliver. This document should cover the major planning issues facing the applicant, providing a detailed school design plan that will ensure a viable school. While the principles, philosophy, and goals guiding the school constitute important components of the proposal, applicants must also clearly and thoroughly address practical matters regarding cost and feasibility.

4. Establish well-defined roles and procedures.

A qualified board of directors and clearly written, well-understood by-laws, related governance policies and operational procedures will minimize potential confusion over roles and responsibilities, and facilitate efficient and wise decision-making during crises.

5. Be proactive: seek out constructive criticism and anticipate potential problems rather than wait to solve them after they arise.

A well-prepared applicant group will enhance the school's credibility, prevent problems before they arise, and limit the impact of potentially destructive situations when they do occur. School facilities and special education costs are two areas where careful, knowledgeable planning by charter school founders is especially crucial.

6. Always maintain focus on the school's mission.

Over time and through transitions, it is likely that the founding group will change in composition as members move on to other projects and the needs of the school shift. These transitions can be extraordinarily challenging to the integrity of the school as new

people bring in new ideas and priorities. While some of the above recommendations concerning clear leadership roles and policy guidelines can help address this issue, it is crucial to inculcate the school's founding mission throughout the school community continually so that it remains the central guiding force behind all decisions affecting the school.

6. Act as a trustee of the state's responsibility for public education.

Charter schools are public schools operated by private individuals. Charter school applicants and operators must honor and safeguard the public trust and fulfill the special obligations of providing public education. This includes, for example, recognizing and avoiding potential conflicts of interests. Likewise, policy decisions should always be made in the best interests of the students and the future of the school, not the adults involved in founding or operating the school.

School founders and operators must take responsibility for gaining a clear understanding of their legal obligations as guardians of the public trust through charter schooling.

Following are additional practical lessons learned by charter school teachers, directors, founders, and trustees during the first year of charter schools operation in New Jersey. The lessons are excerpted from *New Jersey Charter Schools: the First Year 1997-98*, led by Professor Pearl Rock Kane of Teachers College, Columbia University.

Early Lessons from New Jersey Charter Schools: the First Year 1997-98

What lessons have charter school constituents learned that would be helpful for others founding charter schools?

Early lessons learned by Charter School Teachers:

- Understand job demands
- Be flexible

Early lessons learned by Charter School Directors:

- Expect long hours
- Set limits
- Provide staff development
- Budget your time
- Plan and revise
- Build relationships

Early lessons learned by Charter School Founders and Trustees

- Teamwork is essential
- Develop thick skin
- Too much to do, too little time
- Hire the right director as soon as possible
- Listen to parents
- Expect a steep learning curve
- Cultivate a relationship with the local district
- Recruit a working board
- Hire professional expertise

Chapter Twelve

High-Quality Charter Schools: Creating and Operating an Excellent School

We all want the best possible schools for our children. We can assume that all founders intend to create a high quality charter school. If we are going to achieve this lofty vision the questions we must ask are:

What constitutes a High Quality Charter School when we see one?

How do we create a High Quality Charter School?

How do we sustain High Quality once it is achieved?

It is important not to conflate the appraisal of a particular mission or vision with an examination of quality. Whether creating a back-to-basics elementary school for low-income children, an ecology-themed school, a second-chance vocational high school for dropouts, or a school emphasizing any one discipline, the critical difference is between strong and weak implementations of a given design.

As has been discussed in this manual, a core principle in creating a charter school is accountability. Your school will be held accountable to many stakeholders, it will be held accountable for many elements; however, your school's success is ultimately determined by the academic achievement and personal development of its students whose education is entrusted to your care.

We are restating the obvious in order to create a context for some critical information. Charter schools are part of an overall movement to reform and improve schools. They benefit from the rich resource of experiences and research into the task of educating children. In this chapter, we will review the parameters of success within the charter school movement and the "Effective Schools" movement. We examine the confluence of factors in creating/maintaining effective schools consistent with the needs of at-risk students. We provide an example of Charter School Quality Standards.

As the charter school movement matures, it is insufficient in Maryland to merely add numbers to our ranks. We have achieved great success at bringing the movement to scale, and a growing track record of successes and failures can yield valuable lessons.

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools co-convened the Consensus Panel on Charter School Academic Quality, a national working group consisting of leaders and key stakeholders in the charter school sector – including charter operators, authorizers, charter school support organizations, policy leaders, researchers, and charter school funders and lenders. The Consensus Panel has launched a grassroots, quality standards-setting initiative to strengthen and advance the charter school sector. In a report entitled “[A Framework for Academic Quality](#),”⁴⁶ The Consensus Panel recommends **Four Essential Indicators Of Academic Quality**:

1. **Student Achievement Level (Status)** – How students have performed at a single point in time on particular assessments (typically including, but not necessarily limited to, state standardized tests). In other words, a “snapshot” of student performance.
2. **Student Progress Over Time (Growth)** – How individual students have improved over time on particular assessments.
3. **Postsecondary Readiness and Success (for High Schools)** – Student preparation for postsecondary education, training, workforce participation, or military service.
4. **Student Engagement** – Basic, objective measures of student engagement in schooling, such as attendance and continuous enrollment.

⁴⁶ “[A Framework for Academic Quality](#),” 2/08, funded by a National Leadership Activities grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Charter Schools Program. Collaborating organizations: The Colorado League of Charter Schools; CREDO at Stanford University; The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, and NACSA.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, in its report “Renewing the Compact: A Statement by the Task Force on Charter School Quality and Accountability,”⁴⁷ describes the following quality principles and recommendations for achieving them:

Seven Principles of Quality Chartering

1. Quality is more important than quantity. Growth is not an end in itself.
2. The primary aim of charter schools is to pursue academic achievement for all students. Non-academic goals are important but do not by themselves justify charter renewal.
3. Charter schools must achieve at high levels—not just offering something marginally better than failing neighboring schools, but providing the kind of education that equips graduates for success in postsecondary education, fulfilling work in the 21st century economy, and responsible citizenship.
4. Charter accountability must be both internal and external. State-mandated standardized tests are a necessary and appropriate condition of public accountability, but are not sufficient. Charter schools should embrace more frequent and expansive student assessment as a source of feedback that guides professional practice.
5. People make the difference. There is no foolproof “charter model” and a high priority must be placed on recruiting, mentoring, and evaluating those who lead and teach in charter schools.
6. Since charter schools are public schools, the students who attend them are entitled to the same level of financial support as students in other public schools.
7. Every kind of organization that supports or represents charter schools should be a force for quality, including authorizers, resource centers, state associations, lenders, and national advocacy groups.

Summary of Recommendations:

- **Let Evidence Drive Operations:** Charter schools are about outcomes, and operations must be informed by constant feedback about student achievement and operational performance. Leaders, staff, and parents must monitor progress on many fronts and push for improvement where the evidence points. Charter schools must make data-driven decision-making the center of their instructional culture.
- **Embrace Assessment:** Assessment is essential to accountability and to instruction. If you see testing as an impediment to innovation; overcome the impediment by measuring student growth over time and by augmenting standardized assessments with measures

⁴⁷ “Renewing the Compact: A Statement by the Task Force on Charter School Quality and Accountability”, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Washington, DC, www.PublicCharters.org

that show attainment of your charter school's specific *mission*.

- **Measuring Mission:** If your mission includes student competencies not covered in mandated state assessments, don't neglect to measure whether students attain core academic knowledge and skills needed to compete at the next level of education. Supplement standard measures with those that authenticate your added competencies by finding ways to describe and measure them.
- **Spread Effective Practices:** Share lessons learned.
- **Build a High-Quality, Sustainable Teacher Force**
- **Build High-Quality, Sustainable Charter Leadership**
- **Develop the Capacity of Charter School Boards of Trustees**
- **Strengthen Authorizer Competence and Responsibility:** One good resource is The National Association of Charter School Authorizers' (NACSA) *Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing* (www.charterauthorizers.org).
- **Assure that Charter Authorizers Are in Business by Choice.**
- **Strengthen Charter School Accreditation:** Charter schools should seek periodic, intensive quality review by an outside party. Associations should help schools find the most appropriate and credible quality review providers. The charter-accrediting program of the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE) is a useful guide. The U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools award process includes an intensive, standards-based review.
- **State Associations Reinforce Quality Standards:** Consider adopting a version of the California Charter School Association's (www.charterassociation.org) "quality statements."
- **Fully Fund Charter Schools**
- **Public and Private Funders Bring Quality to Scale**
- **Charter School Laws Emphasize Quality:** The entire enterprise of quality chartering must rest on the foundation of a good charter law. In our view, a "strong" charter law is one that supports academic achievement, not just more charter schools.

Effective Schools Movement

Research has revealed a series of very specific characteristics which distinguish effective schools, e.g. those in which all students master priority objectives. A review and synthesis of the effective schools research by Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL) identified factors that contribute to high levels of student performance under the broad categories of in-

school effects, teacher effects, instructional leadership, curriculum alignment, program coupling and educational change/implementation. NWREL summarized the research findings into:⁴⁸

School Leadership: The role of the school principal is to focus the whole school on instruction and use this focus as a means of establishing and acting upon priorities in the school. The principal and all others in the school know the school is a place for learning.

School Climate: All staff and all students share the expectation that all students can learn. Effective schools exhibit equity in terms of learning. Learning takes place in a safe, orderly environment, and students are expected to behave according to established, fairly executed rules of conduct.

Classroom Instruction and Management: All teachers are highly skilled in and use a variety of instructional methods and techniques. There are clear instructional objectives, activities are tied to objectives, and there is frequent monitoring and evaluation of student progress toward those objectives.

The Basic Beliefs of the Effective Schools Movement

(Dr. Lawrence W. Lezotte)

All children can learn and come to school motivated to do so;

Schools control enough of the variables to assure that virtually all students do learn;

Schools should be held accountable for measured student achievement;

Schools should disaggregate measured student achievement in order to be certain that students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status are successfully learning the intended school curriculum;

The internal and external stakeholders of the individual school are the most qualified and capable people to plan and implement the changes necessary to fulfill the Learning for All mission.

Dr. Lawrence W. Lezotte states that “Researchers found that ... effective schools had strong instructional leadership, a strong sense of mission, demonstrated effective instructional behaviors, held high expectations for all students, practiced frequent monitoring of student

⁴⁸ Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL, www.nwrel.org) School Improvement Research Series (SIRS) Topical Synthesis #1 “Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows” November 1987, Greg Druian and Jocelyn A. Butler

achievement, and operated in a safe and orderly manner. These attributes eventually became known as the Correlates of Effective Schools.”⁴⁹

Ron Edmonds states “while schools may be primarily responsible for whether or not students function adequately in school, the family is probably critical in determining whether or not students flourish in school.”⁵⁰ Edmonds stated that all effective schools had:

- “the leadership of the principal notable for substantial attention to the quality of instruction;
- a pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus;
- an orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning;
- teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery;
- the use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation.”

The Correlates of Effective Schools⁵¹

The core tenets of the **Effective Schools Movement** are found in a series of “correlates” (statements of what characteristics are most likely to be found in a high-quality school) with the corollary premise that these characteristics should guide a school’s development, evaluation, and continuous improvement. These correlates are:

Instructional Leadership. In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates the mission of the school to staff, parents, and students. In addition, the principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program.

The extent to which the Correlates are in place in a school has a dramatic, positive effect on student achievement.

Correlates are not independent of one another, but are interdependent.

(Dr. Lawrence W. Lezotte)

Clear and Focused Mission. In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated mission of the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the school’s

⁴⁹ “Revolutionary and Evolutionary: The Effective Schools Movement” by Dr. Lawrence W. Lezotte

⁵⁰ “Programs of School Improvement: An Overview” 1982 quoted in “Revolutionary and Evolutionary: The Effective Schools Movement” by Dr. Lawrence W. Lezotte

⁵¹ “Revolutionary and Evolutionary: The Effective Schools Movement” by Dr. Lawrence W. Lezotte

goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. The staff in the effective school accepts responsibility for the students' learning of the essential curricular goals.

Safe and Orderly Environment. In the effective school we say there is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

Climate of High Expectations. In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can obtain mastery of the school's essential curriculum. They also believe that they, the staff, have the capability to help all students obtain that mastery.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress. In the effective school, pupil progress over the essential objectives are measured frequently, monitored frequently, and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances, as well as to improve the curriculum as a whole.

Positive Home-School Relations. In the effective school, parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are given opportunities to play important roles in helping the school to achieve its mission.

Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task. In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential curricular areas. For a high percentage of this time, students are actively engaged in whole-class or large-group, teacher-directed, planned learning activity.

In summary, the Correlates of Effective Schools provide school improvement teams with a comprehensive framework for identifying, categorizing, and solving the problems that schools and school districts face. And because the Correlates are based upon the documented successes of effective schools, they offer hope and inspiration to those struggling to improve. If the schools from which the Correlates are drawn can do it, so can you!

(Dr. Lawrence W. Lezotte)

The Maryland State Department of Education Office of School Innovation has distributed a self-evaluation checklist based on Lezotte's "Correlates of Effective Schools," with the following indicators:

I. Safe and Orderly Environment

- Students, parents, teachers, and visitors feel that the school environment is orderly, purposeful, business-like, and free from the threat of physical harm.
- Teachers, students, and staff feel that the school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.
- Expectations for students are very clear and supported by all building staff consistently.
- Positive and cooperative behavior is clearly demonstrated with all staff and students.

II. Climate of High Expectations

- Teachers believe and demonstrate that all students can master essential school skills and content through their classroom practices (all students can learn with the right supports and learning environment – all kids can learn).
- Teachers articulate and demonstrate confidence in their ability to help all students attain mastery of essential learning (teachers hold high expectations for themselves- this is called teacher sense of efficacy).
- School leader keeps track of teacher efficacy and provides the training to increase the teacher's confidence in effectively meeting the learning needs of all his or her students.
- School leader offers teachers models of successful practices and opportunities to improve their practice (i.e., culture of learning).

III. Instructional Leadership

- The principal acts as the instructional leader and understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program.
- The principal ensures that all the instructional systems (curriculum, materials, assessments, teaching strategies, classroom practices) are aligned and support learning for all students.
- The principal develops the ownership and commitment of all staff, students, and parents to the vision for the school.
- The principal models distributive leadership by instilling leadership in the staff to lead improvement and development efforts for the school.

IV. Clear and Focused Mission

- The mission of the school clearly indicates its main purpose.
- All staff can articulate what the mission is and how they are working to achieve it.
- School goals, targets, and performance measures are aligned in forwarding the mission.
- All school policies, practices, and procedure are clearly linked to and support the mission.

V. Opportunity To Learn and Time on Task

- The school is structured to insure a strong learning environment. Instructional time is valued and protected.

- There are different levels of supports offered to students to support their individual learning needs: in the classroom, during the school day, after the school day, during summers, recesses, or weekends (out of school time) and extended to the home environment.
- Teachers demonstrate the ability to do learning and task analysis, to take the learning goals apart in ways that can help scaffold student learning and make meaningful connections. They provide models of what is expected, give students immediate feedback, and offer re-teaching using varied instructional strategies to meet the needs of students. They maintain high expectations of learning and achievement, but achieve those standards by using different strategies with different students, as appropriate.
- Student engagement is always observable in every classroom.

VI. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

- Student academic progress is measured frequently using a variety of assessment procedures:
 - Teacher generated assessments
 - Curriculum end-of-unit assessments
 - Portfolios of student work linked to learning standards, assessed through rubrics and containing teacher commentary related to students' demonstrated progress to meet and exceed standards
 - Performance benchmarking assessments
 - Project- or performance-based assessments
 - Standardized testing.
- Teachers use assessment results to guide planning of lessons, adjust teaching strategies, classroom practices, develop learning supports and seek additional intervention supports.
- The principal and teachers are able to articulate and demonstrate how many students are meeting, exceeding, or not meeting learning standards.
- The principal and teachers can share what academic intervention has been implemented for students who are not meeting standards.

VII. Home School Relations

- Communication with parents regarding school events, development, and student progress occurs through various means.
- The school has clearly articulated the expectations of home learning supports and has provided parent training to help them provide these supports.
- Parent involvement in school life (classrooms, events, activities, committees etc.) is encouraged and opportunities are created.
- Parent satisfaction is valued and optimized.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools⁵² report recommends that state associations adopt quality standards, and cites the California Charter School Association's "quality statements" as a model.

⁵² "Renewing the Compact: A Statement by the Task Force on Charter School Quality and

California Charter School Association
Quality Standards for Charter School Operations⁵³

Quality Standard 1: Student Academic Achievement First:

| | |
|--|--|
| A charter school promotes student learning through a clear vision and high expectations. It achieves clear, measurable program goals and student learning objectives, including meeting its stated performance standards and closing achievement gaps of students. | Achieves clear, measurable program goals and student learning objectives, including meeting its stated performance standards |
| | Demonstrates high expectations for student achievement |
| | Provides a challenging and coherent curriculum for each individual student |
| | Implements and directs learning experiences (consistent with the school's purpose and charter) that actively engage students |
| | Allocates appropriate resources in the way of instructional materials, staffing and facilities to promote high levels of student achievement |
| | Supports students in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment characterized by trust, caring and professionalism |
| | Productively engages parental and community involvement as a part of the schools support system |
| | Shares its vision among the school community and demonstrates its mission in daily action and practice |

Quality Standard 2: Ethical Leadership

| | |
|---|--|
| The leaders of a charter school are stewards of the charter's mission and vision and carry out their duties in a professional, responsible and ethical manner. Charter school leaders use their influence and authority for the primary purpose of achieving student success. | Effectively communicates and engages stakeholders in the vision and mission of the school |
| | Consistently puts into practice the educational program outlined in its charter |
| | Generates and sustains a school culture conducive to student learning and staff professional growth |
| | Regularly monitors and evaluates the success of the school's program |
| | Provides regular, public reports on the school's progress towards achieving its goals to the school community and to the school's authorizer |
| | Makes management decisions with the goal of optimizing successful teaching and learning experiences |
| | Treats all individuals with fairness, dignity and respect |
| | Has a cogent understanding of the laws that govern charter schools and monitors the trends, issues and potential changes in the environment in which charter schools operate |

Accountability”, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Washington, DC, www.PublicCharters.org
⁵³ California Charter Schools Association Quality Standards are adopted and modified from WASC/Charter Schools Focus on Learning (2004), the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leadership (1996), and the California Charter Schools Association Membership Council (2004). www.myschool.org

| | |
|--|--|
| | Uses his/her influence and authority for the primary purpose of achieving student success |
| | Abstains from any decision involving a potential or actual conflict of interest |
| | Respects diversity and implements practices that are inclusive of all types of learners consistent with the school charter |
| | Engages community involvement in the school |

| Quality Standard 3: Continuous Focus On Increasing Quality | |
|--|--|
| A charter school engages in a process of continuous self-improvement in order to increase the effectiveness of its educational program. The school regularly assesses and evaluates student learning based on stated goals. | Uses information sources, data collection and data analysis strategies for self- examination and improvement |
| | Establishes benchmarks and a variety of accountability tools for monitoring student progress |
| | Establishes both long and short term goals and plans for accomplishing the school's mission as stated in its charter |
| | The school has well-defined long and short-term goals that are clearly linked to its mission and vision |
| | Uses student assessment results to improve curriculum and instruction |
| | Uses the results of evaluation and assessment as the basis for the allocation of resources for programmatic improvement |
| | Involves staff, students, parents and other stakeholders in its accountability for student learning and in the school's program evaluation process |
| Quality Standard 4: Responsible Governance | |
| A charter school board and administration establish and implement policies that are transparent and focused on student achievement. Charter school board members and administrators have a cogent understanding of and comply with the laws that govern charter schools. | Ensure that policies are implemented in a fair and consistent manner |
| | Monitor the trends, issues and potential changes in the environment in which charter schools operate |
| | Seek input from impacted stakeholders |
| | Enact policies that respect diversity and implements practices that are inclusive of all types of learners consistent with the school charter |
| | Actively engage the school's authorizer in monitoring the school's educational program and its fiscal status |
| Quality Standard 5: Fiscal Accountability | |
| A charter school fulfills its fiduciary responsibility for public funds and maintains publicly accessible fiscal records. The school conducts an annual financial audit which is made public. | Creates and monitors immediate and long-range financial plans to effectively implement the school's educational program and ensure financial stability |
| | Conducts an annual financial audit which is made public |
| | Establishes clear fiscal policies to ensure that public funds are used appropriately and wisely |
| | Ensures financial resources are directly related to the school's purpose: student achievement of learning goals |

Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth

Charter schools are open to all students living in the district, however, there is a strong trend to target students living in distressed communities, on those at-risk of failing due to a history of academic underachievement, substance abuse, juvenile justice issues, truancy, or dropping out of school, etc. Many approaches to meeting the needs of at-risk students are being used by charter schools across the country. Examples include an emphasis on character education for students facing educational barriers but not yet failing, back-to-basics curricula for underperforming, students and YouthBuild comprehensive employment training high schools for dropouts and/or adjudicated youth. Research has shown that the same quality indicators apply regardless of school design model or targeted student population. In fact, given that at-risk students are unlikely to overcome low-quality schooling, quality indicators are even more critical in serving this population.

While best practices for creating and operating effective schools are fairly universal, can these techniques, processes and procedures transfer wholesale to at-risk youth? If so, it increases the likeliness that effective schools research can be applied in providing quality education to at-risk students.

Some researchers fear that the effective schools movement could constitute a threat to the education for at-risk youth if not accompanied by supports that address the special needs of those likely to be dropouts (Hamilton 1986; McDill, Natriello and Pallas 1985a, 1985b, 1986; Levin 1986). Levin warns that “the unique needs of the educationally disadvantaged cannot be fully or effectively addressed by reforms of a general nature ... they should not be viewed as a substitute for direct and comprehensive strategies to solve the problems of the disadvantaged.”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL) www.nwrel.org, School Improvement Research Series (SIRS) Topical Synthesis #1 “Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows” November 1987, Greg Druian and Jocelyn A. Butler

A school only has access to its students for about 1,000 hours in a year. A student's home, family, and community are powerful influences. In serving an at-risk student population, a school must strong ties with families as well as with the community. Many such schools engage a web of third-party supports to ensure that families receive social services, healthcare, substance abuse services, adult education, and parenting education. Many of the strongest charter schools were created in partnership with community-based, faith-based, and/or post-secondary education institutions that can leverage the additional supports needed by at-risk youth and their families.

A school's inability to fully counteract societal barriers to education does NOT excuse it from combining the best principals of effective school research and at-risk intervention. Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL) surveyed the available research and concluded that "there is substantial overlap between what works with at-risk youth and what works in effective schools: the effective schools research may provide a useful framework for working with students who might otherwise receive poor or no education."⁵⁵

Going the Distance

At the beginning of this chapter we asked three questions. Previously we have provided descriptions of and theoretical backings for an understanding about what are the characteristics of High Quality Charter Schools. We hope that as Founders you will use this to help in designing and opening a High Quality Charter School.

Best practices and guiding principles may seem lofty and burdensome when faced with the daunting task of building a functional school from scratch. The more immediate challenges of ensuring enough desks for students or scheduling and staffing the cafeteria may trump self-assessment in the first months... or years. But since your charter school was founded on the notion that it is separate and distinct from most public schools, it is critical to maintain that integrity in the interest of your singular student population. To do so, a culture of self

⁵⁵ Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL) www.nwrel.org, School Improvement Research Series (SIRS) Topical Synthesis #1 "Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows" November 1987, Greg Druian and Jocelyn A. Butler

examination and continuous quality improvement (QI) must inhabit your school's staff, parents, and community stakeholders.

We strongly recommend that your school commit to a vigorous process of quality improvement based on gathering evidence, then using it for operations and planning. One way to do this is to designate staff and board resources to a clearly structured process. Another is to enlist outside resources. Perhaps the best is to do both. The MCSN and the MSDE offer highly targeted resources. Universities, particularly those with Schools of Education, are another option for quality review. Vendors include individual consultants like Joni Berman and Jeffrey Lischin, who created most of this manual) or larger fee-for-service companies.

You are responsible for the work of due diligence in securing and using QI resources. There is no single right way to do this – yet clearly it must be done.

Quality Indicators at a Glance

Seven Correlates of Effective Schools

1. **Instructional Leadership** effectively communicates the mission to staff, parents, and students and applies effective instructional methodology.
2. **Clear and Focused Mission** through which the staff shares understanding and commitment to the school's goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability.
3. **Safe and Orderly Environment** is an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, free from the threat of physical harm and conducive to teaching and learning.
4. **Climate of High Expectations** where the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can obtain mastery of the school's essential curriculum.
5. **Student Progress** towards stated objectives is measured and monitored frequently, then used to improve student behaviors/performances, and to modify the curriculum.
6. **Positive Home-School Relations** help parents understand and support the school's mission and play important roles in helping achieve the mission.
7. **Opportunity To Learn and Student Time on Task**, whereby students are actively engaged in whole-class or large-group, teacher-directed, planned learning activity.

Four Essential Indicators of Academic Quality

1. **Student Achievement Level (Status)** – Student performance at a single point in time on particular assessments.
2. **Student Progress over Time (Growth)** – Student improvement over time on particular assessments.
3. **Postsecondary Readiness and Success (for High Schools)** – Student preparation for postsecondary education, training, workforce participation, or military service.
4. **Student Engagement** – Basic, objective measures of student engagement in schooling, such as attendance and continuous enrollment.

Three Critical Recommendations

1. **Let Evidence Drive Operations:** Operations must be informed by constant feedback about student achievement and operational performance. Monitor progress and push for improvement where the evidence points. Make data-driven, decision making the center of your instructional culture.
2. **Embrace Assessment:** Assessment is essential to accountability and to instruction. Measure student growth over time.
3. **Measure Mission:** Supplement standard measures with those that authenticate your added competencies by finding ways to describe and measure them.

Chapter Thirteen

Resources and Links

There is a wealth of resources available that focus specifically on charter schools, and innovative educational models. Each of the following provides extensive information, resources, and links through their own online materials and websites. In many ways, we think this is the most critical chapter – each of the preceding chapters is worthy of being developed into a separate manual.

You, as founders, will need to do a lot of research. We hope you study the work made available by the following and use them to build a resource library for your charter school endeavor.

Handbooks/Charter School Development and Model Guides

1. ***Illinois Charter School Developer's Handbook***

Published by the **Illinois Network of Charter Schools**, this handbook equips potential charter school developers with the information they need to get started.

http://www.incschools.org/charter_starter_guidebook.html

2. ***Special Education in Charter Schools: A Resource Primer for the State of Maryland***

This primer was developed to provide guidance to Maryland's local school systems (charter school authorizers) and charter school developers (operators) as they confront the unique challenges in developing and implementing effective practices to ensure the access and success of students with disabilities in charter schools.

<http://www.mdcharternetwork.org/documents/CSSpecEdresourcemanual7306.pdf>

3. ***Center on Reinventing Public Education***

Models, tools and design guides for implementing school incubators, charter school start-up, accountability, curriculum and strategic planning. <http://www.crpe.org/index.shtml>

4. ***Opening Procedures Handbook: A Guide for Boards of Trustees and Leaders of New Charter Schools***

Published by **Massachusetts Department of Education**, the Handbook summarizes the opening procedures process, identifies the action items that must be completed prior to the school's opening, lists documents that must be submitted to the Charter School Office as part of the opening procedures process (as well as their due dates), and lists additional resources available to the school founders as they prepare to open the school's doors to students.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/new/?section=handbook>

5. ***The Catalog of School Reform Models***

Provides descriptions of 26 whole-school models plus additional entries on reading/language arts models. See description under the following Charter School Support and Technical Assistance section. <http://www.nwrel.org/csdi/products/archived/catalog/ArchivedAbouttheCatalog.pdf>

6. ***"Charter Starters" - Leadership Training Workbook Series***

[Northwest Regional Education Laboratory](#) workbooks provide research-based strategies for effectively starting and operating a charter school. Two companion publications provide a review of leadership characteristics and a guide for using the Charter Starter program to conduct leadership training. This is an archived site and is no longer maintained or updated. It is being kept online for reference and archival purposes.

7. ***US Department of Education's Innovations in Education Reports: Successful Charter Schools***

Elements of effective charter schools and stories of eight successful charter schools are presented in this report.

http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/scs/toc.htm

Charter School Support and Technical Assistance Organizations

1. ***Annenberg Institute for School Reform***

<http://www.annenberginstitute.org/>

Box 1985, Brown University
Providence, RI 02912

(401) 863-7990 Fax (401) 863-1290

E-mail: AISR_Info@brown.edu

Toolkits and guide are wide ranging and broad in topics including standards of practice, building successful partnerships, school capacity worksheets, teacher performance review, literacy benchmarks.

The Tools for School-Improvement Planning Web site reflects the Annenberg Institute's vision of accountability: any system designed to raise student achievement must be firmly committed to equal opportunities for all students and to ongoing, reflective use of data to inform decisions.

The Tools for School-Improvement Planning Web site contains observation protocols, focus group samples and questions, surveys, questionnaires, and other techniques to help you examine your specific school-improvement concerns.

This site allows instructional staff, principals, school-improvement teams, parents, community groups, and students to effectively use data in their school-improvement efforts. The tools on this site have been successfully used and, in many cases, designed by your peers. They do not require a specialized expertise in statistical analysis.

These tools are not intended to solve all of your school's problems, but they can help you think about a particular issue in your school or district in a new way. The tools come in a wide variety. Some are designed by researchers and are statistically valid and reliable; some are designed by students to address a particular classroom issue.

Focus:

- Leadership
- Community Connections
- Professional Development
- School Organization
- School Climate
- Student Supports
- Comprehensive School Improvement

(Annenberg Institute Website 12/04)

2. ***Building Excellent Schools***

<http://www.buildingexcellentschools.org/>

262 Washington Street, 7th Floor

Boston, MA 02108

(617) 227-4545 Fax (617) 227-4551

Email: bes@buildingexcellentschools.org

The Building Excellent Schools Fellowship began as a strategic maneuver to dramatically enhance the quality of charter schools being launched in Massachusetts. During its first three years, Fellows garnered 9 of the 13 charters (70%) approved by the Massachusetts Board of Education. Building on this success and the demand for improved charter school initiatives across the country, the Fellowship welcomed its first national participants from New Jersey, New York, and Washington, DC. in 2003. During the 2004-2005 program year, the Fellowship is also training individuals from Indianapolis,

IN, and Colorado.

Many of these Fellows are supported through sponsoring organizations, including non-profit charter school resource centers and supporting agencies that do not operate training programs for school founders.

The Building Excellent Schools governance services draw on more than 10 years of experience in the national charter school movement. Having observed the variety of challenges and obstacles early charter schools faced, Building Excellent Schools staff have been able to help charter schools with issues related to the following:

- Transitioning from a founding board to a Board of Trustees
- Officer Selection
- Policies and by-laws
- Committees
- Problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Recruitment and hiring

Brokering

Building Excellent Schools staff and adjunct faculty balance their knowledge of individual charter schools with knowledge of the broad landscape of available resources and experts. These efforts insure that charter school leaders receive support and guidance from qualified and knowledgeable sources. In addition, the efforts of Building Excellent Schools staff save these leaders the time and energy it would require to locate and secure these resources on their own. Harkening back to the organization's mission, this saved time translates into more resources being allocated to, and spent on, advancing student achievement.

Consulting Services

Building Excellent Schools focuses on a charter school's start-up phase, which we define as the length of time between dream and year three of operation. Based upon our years of experience in the field, we believe that this is the period in which targeted, individualized and intensive work with schools will yield the most fruitful results. Once Fellows receive their charter and begin the implementation work of launching a high-quality charter school, they can chose from the host of à la carte consultation services that Building Excellent Schools offers.

(BES Website 12/04)

3. Center for Education Reform

www.edreform.com

1001 Connecticut Ave, NW Suite 204
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 822-9000 Fax (202) 822-5077
Email: <mailto:cer@edreform.com>

The Center for Education Reform provides research and technical assistance advocates for school choice, for local charter school campaigns, through publications, charter school statistics, calendars, school choice resources, state contacts, legislative resources.

The Center supports several reform initiatives, with charter schools in particular. Charter school resources including an overview of charter schools state laws, a national charter school directory, and a charter school development guidebook.

Founded in 1993 to translate ideas into action, CER combines education policy with grassroots advocacy to work deep within the nation's communities to foster positive and bold education reforms. Today, this premiere national group serves as a full-service education reform engine working in over 40 states.

CER advocates reforms that produce high standards, accountability and freedom, such as strong charter school laws, school choice programs for children most in need, common sense teacher initiatives, and proven instructional programs. Its Washington, DC-based team and state/local partners advance the mission by:

- Making parents better advocates for their children
 - Giving lawmakers knowledge they need to make smart decisions
 - Providing school-based reformers the tools to promote positive change
 - Building and strengthening education reform leaders in the states
- (Center For Education Reform Website 12/04)

4. **Center For Education and Work: University of Wisconsin/Madison**

Charter Schools and Real World Practices Project

www.cew.wisc.edu/charterschools/

Center on Education and Work

School of Education

University of Wisconsin-Madison

1025 W. Johnson St. Rm. 964

Madison, WI 53706-1796

Phone: 608-263-6786 or 800-466-0399

E-Mail: Jake Blasczyk, Project Director blasczyk@education.wisc.edu

An online resource to support charter high schools including school profiles and practices, surveys, reports and publication.

The Center on Education and Work (CEW) of the University of Wisconsin-Madison seeks to enhance the quality of education through applied research and assistance.

Charter High Schools & Real-World Practices is an applied research project that was conducted by the Center on Education and Work (CEW) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison between 2001 and 2003. Its focus was charter high schools with programs that place learning in a real-world context.

Such schools connect students to the world beyond the classroom using a variety of strategies and instructional practices. Some examples of practices include:

- Placement in real-world settings.
- Instruction that brings the outside world into classrooms.
- Learning opportunities beyond the use of conventional classrooms or textbooks.
- Demonstration of mastery under conditions similar to those in the community and professional world.

This Web site shares the results of CEW's research and provides resources for schools interested in adopting similar real-world practices.

(CEW Website updated 12/04)

5. ***Center for School Reform***

www.pioneerinstitute.org

Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research
85 Devonshire Street
Boston, MA 02109
617-723-2277 Fax: 617-723-1880

The Center for School Reform seeks more school choice for parents and an accountable system of public education for all students. The Center's work builds on Pioneer's legacy as a leader in the charter public school movement and champion of greater academic rigor in Massachusetts' schools. Current initiatives promote [choice and competition](#), [school-based management](#) and [math and science education](#)

Pioneer is a non-partisan think tank advancing the core values of an open society—individual freedom and responsibility, prosperity, and limited, accountable government.

Pioneer explores market approaches to public policy commissions through peer-reviewed research and the generation and promotion of ideas

(Pioneer Institute Website 04/07)

6. ***Center on Reinventing Public Education***

<http://www.crpe.org/>

Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs
University of Washington
Box 353055
Seattle, WA 98195-3055
206.685.2214 Fax 206.221.7402

Email: crpe@u.washington.edu

Provides guides, working papers, models, and professional publications oriented to school innovation and reform including charter schools.

Examples of Publications available online include:

- [Accelerating Success: A Design Guide for Starting a New School Incubator:](#)
- [So You Want to Start a Charter School? Strategic Advice for Applicants: Recommendations from an Expert Workshop:](#)
- [The New Schools Handbook: strategic advice for successful school start-up in partnership with school district officials, staff and community members.](#)

The Center was founded in 1993 by the University of Washington's Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs.

From its beginning, one question has dominated the Center's work: How can urban school systems provide strong, coherent schools that create equal opportunity for all children?

Through a national program of research and analysis, the Center examines a range of alternatives that rethink and challenge the current system.

The Center pursues three areas of work in order to improve policy and decision-making in K-12 education: it conducts research on major issues in reform and governance, it develops new ideas and models, and it designs tools and guides for communities that are exploring alternative ways of providing public education. In all three areas, the center looks at the role institutional arrangements play in determining the quality of public education.

(Center For Reinventing Public Education Website 12/04)

7. Charter Schools Development Center (California)

<http://www.cacharterschools.org/>

Charter Schools Development Center
7750 College Town Drive, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95826
916-278-6069 Fax: 916-278-4094
Email: CSDC@chartercenter.org

The [Charter Schools Development Center](#) (California State University's Institute for Education Reform) provides technical assistance for the charter school reform movement through research and workshops; publications that include school data, model guides and toolkits, grant resources for chartering agencies, applicants and schools.

The Charter Schools Development Center (CSDC) provides experienced and expert technical assistance, training, and resources to charter school developers, operators, charter-granting agencies, and policy makers in California, nationally, and internationally.

CSDC's diverse menu of charter school services includes:

- [Information Services](#), including *Charter Currents* and expert, timely "hot line" advice
- A package of [Accountability Services](#) from charter development/approval to renewal
- [Development Services](#) to assist those who are planning a charter school
- Governing board trainings, educational program assistance, and other in-depth [consulting services](#)
- Comprehensive, intensive [workshops](#) ranging from introductory to highly technical topics
- An extensive library of charter school [publications](#), including CSDC's Tool Kits™
- The [Charter School Leadership Institute](#), an intensive, six-day "boot camp" for both new and veteran charter school leaders
- The [Charter School Leadership Summit](#), a three-day conference addressing critical charter school issues

CSDC staff has extensive, "hands-on" experience in both charter school policy and school-based practice. Our in-depth and practical expertise addresses the most challenging aspects of charter school planning, operations, and oversight including:

- How to plan and start a charter school
- Defining and measuring student and school performance
- Roles and responsibilities of charter-granting agencies
- Charter school finance, facilities, and operations
- School governance, personnel, and leadership
- Charter school law and policy
- Special Education
- Charter school accountability and renewal

Our goal is to help public education change from a highly regulated, process-based system to one that allows and encourages schools to be more creative, performance-based centers of effective teaching and learning. We aim to achieve this by providing technical assistance to the charter school reform movement in California, nationally, and internationally.

(CSDC Website 12/04)

8. **Charter Schools Development Corporation (Washington, D.C.)**

www.csdc.org

Charter Schools Development Corporation

7272 Park Circle Drive, Suite 265

Hanover, MD 21076

Tel: 443-561-1280

Fax: 443-561-1281

Email: <mailto:info@csdc.org>

CSDC provides charter schools with the information, procedures, and resources for acquisition and financing of educational facilities and capital improvements; as well as assistance in making capital and credit available. CSDC provides a variety of financial and technical services, including credit enhancement and loan guarantees.

The Charter Schools Development Corporation's (CSDC) mission is to promote excellence, innovation, and parental choice in public education by assisting public charter schools with their facilities financing needs. CSDC also strives to improve public policy to make charter school laws more conducive to financing charter school capital. CSDC's unique approach to promoting excellence in public education begins with a cutting-edge credit enhancement program designed to leverage private financing for charter school facilities.

Using Washington, DC as a model for the nation, CSDC will:

- provide credit enhancement (debt service/first loss reserve fund/equity substitute/etc.) to lending institutions to strengthen the credit and additionally secure public charter school facilities loans; and
- help charter schools obtain the lowest possible cost of financing in order free up more dollars for the classrooms.

CSDC is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) District of Columbia non-profit corporation and emerging national leader in promoting excellence, innovation and parental choice in public education by assisting public charter schools with the acquisition and financing of educational facilities and related capital improvements. CSDC provides a variety of financial and technical services, including credit enhancement and loan guarantees, intended to make capital and credit more available and affordable to public charter schools, the fastest growing sector of our nation's educational system. CSDC is dedicated to helping charter schools solve their facility needs, using the District of Columbia as a model for public-private partnerships that can be readily replicated and expanded nationwide.

In October 1998, CSDC successfully secured a federal appropriation to design a credit enhancement program to leverage private financing for charter school facilities using the District of Columbia as a model for a national approach. CSDC's intensive market research and analysis with charter schools, banks and other lenders helped shape the creation and design of a credit enhancement program.

To date, CSDC has worked with approximately 18 charter schools in 9 states, including the District of Columbia. Charter schools interested in participating in CSDC's program are encouraged to work with their local lender or banking partner to obtain a tentative loan commitment that requires credit enhancement. The bank term sheet serves as your application to CSDC. For those charter schools that do not have an interested lender, or even a project plan or financing package, CSDC can help by referring the schools to its strategic banking and real estate partners.

(CSDC Website 12/04)

9. **CORD (Center for Occupation Research and Development)**

www.cord.org/

P.O. Box 21689
Waco, TX 76702-1689
254-772-8756 Fax 254-772-8972

This national nonprofit advocates and supports innovative change and reform in education to prepare students for greater success in careers and higher education. CORD assists educators in secondary schools and colleges through new curricula, teaching strategies, professional development, and partnerships with community leaders, families, and employers. Services provided include technical support, online courses, CORD's initiatives include curriculum design, developing new learning tools, delivering professional development, creating applications of educational technology, and conducting educational research and evaluation.

CORD has led the development of nationally recognized curriculum materials and supporting resources for teachers and students. Our mathematics, science, and advanced technology curricula present subject matter in context by emphasizing the relationship of course content to real-life situations.

In recent years, we have expanded from print resources to multimedia tools that build on our belief that all students can learn if taught in a manner appropriate to their individual learning styles. Students and educators are also benefiting from the research work CORD has done in the development of curriculum integration frameworks based on academic, occupational, and employability standards. Signature projects such as the development of the Curriculum Integrator system and the Academy of Information Technology are examples of CORD's expertise in this area.

CORD offers workshops in contextual learning, curriculum integration, and learning technologies at its Roney Teaching Center in Waco, Texas, on campuses nationwide, and via distance education media such as videoconferencing and web-based instruction. Our master trainers prepare teachers to connect academic concepts with real-world applications, to use innovative teaching strategies, and to facilitate active learning in classrooms of diverse learners. We also manage professional development networks such as the Missouri Interactive Learning Network and the CORD Contextual Teaching Fellows program.

(CORD Website 12/04)

10. Educational Excellence Network

www.edexcellence.net

Thomas B. Fordham Foundation
1627 K Street, NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: 202-223-5452
Fax: 202-223-9226

Email: backtalk@edexcellence.net

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation provides support to education reform and the charter school movement through technical support, research, publications, and projects of national scope in elementary and secondary education reform. The web site highlights charter school

research reports, as well as information on accountability, teacher quality, and other initiatives.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation based in Washington, D.C., supports research, publications, and action projects of national significance in elementary/secondary education reform, as well as significant education reform projects in Dayton, Ohio and vicinity.

In November 1996, the Foundation also assumed primary sponsorship of the [Educational Excellence Network \(EEN\)](#), a fifteen-year-old umbrella organization for the promotion of sound education reforms and the dissemination of reliable information and ideas about education.

The Foundation welcomes the "reinvention" of K-12 education to include such alternatives as charter schools, contract-management, student scholarships, and other strategies for stimulating more education choices, greater competition and real consumer empowerment. The Web is a joint venture of the EEN, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, and Hudson Institute.

(Thomas B Fordham Foundation Website 12/04)

11. Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University

<http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/charter/whatspublic.html>

The Evaluation Center
4405 Ellsworth Hall
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5237
(269) 387-5895 Fax: (269) 387-5923
Email: <mailto:eval-center@wmich.edu>

The Evaluation Center produces evaluation tools and publication for charter schools.

The Evaluation Center's mission is to advance the theory, practice, and utilization of evaluation. The Center's principal activities are research, development, dissemination, service, instruction, and national and international leadership in evaluation.

(Evaluation Center Website 12/04)

12. High Schools that Work

<http://www.sreb.org/programs/hstw/hstwindex.asp>

Southern Regional Education Board
High Schools That Work
592 10th St. N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30318-5790

Phone: (404) 875-9211
Fax: (404) 872-1477
Email: <mailto:info@sreb.org>

More than 1,100 HSTW sites use the organization's framework of goals and key practices to raise student achievement. The Organization provides research, publications, materials, outstanding practices, profiles of worksite learning, and technical assistance.

High Schools That Work is the nation's first large-scale effort to engage state, district and school leaders and teachers in partnerships with students, parents and the community to improve the way high school students are prepared for work and further education.

HSTW provides a framework of goals, key practices, and key conditions for accelerating learning and setting higher standards. It recommends actions that provide direction to schools as they work to improve academic and career/technical instruction at schools and at work sites. These recommendations meet the criteria for comprehensive school reform.

The *HSTW* effort is based on the belief that, in the right school environment, most students can learn complex academic and technical concepts. The initiative targets high school students *HSTW* began with 28 sites in 13 states when it was started in 1987 by the Southern Regional Education Board-State Vocational Education Consortium. Since then it has grown to more than 1,100 sites in 27 states, including Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia and West Virginia.
(HSTW Website 12/04)

13. Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS)

<http://www.incschools.org>

Illinois Network of Charter Schools
20 East Jackson Blvd., Suite 1300
Chicago, IL 60604
Phone: 312.235.0798
Fax: 312.235.0679
Email: <mailto:info@incschools.org>

The Illinois Network of Charter Schools (INCS) brings together students, parents, educators and administrators who all share a common goal: to improve the quality of public education by promoting and strengthening charter schools throughout the State of Illinois.

INCS works to strengthen charter schools and the communities they serve in a number of important ways:

- **Advocacy:** As the voice of charter schools throughout Illinois, INCS guides and informs public policy, advocating for public policies that will help charter schools grow and flourish.
- **Educating the public:** INCS helps increase public awareness of the value and benefits of charter schools.
- **Providing services to schools:** INCS provides a variety of services to charter schools to increase their cost-effectiveness and help them grow.
- **Helping parents and students:** INCS helps families find the best charter schools to suit their needs.

(INCS Website 04/07)

14. Laboratory for Student Success (LSS)

<http://www.temple.edu/lss>

Laboratory for Student Success (LSS)
The Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory at
Temple University Center for Research in
Human Development and Education
1301 Cecil B. Moore Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6091

Phone: (215) 204-3000

Fax: (215) 204-5130

LSS provides research, publications, and technical assistance especially designed for charter school developers, as well as other publications and training guides for technical assistance providers to charter schools. LSS provides an extensive list of links to educational services, resources, networks and organizations.

The Laboratory for Student Success works with teachers, parents, schools, state departments of education, community agencies, professional groups, and policymakers learning from and building on their diverse expertise and strategies for student achievement so that their successes are known and utilized by others in widespread efforts. LSS supports students in the mid-Atlantic region—Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC—and nationally.

LSS emphasizes THREE PRIORITY AREAS:

- [Educational Leadership](#)
- [Supporting Schools for High Achievement](#)
- [School–Family–Community Connections](#)

The [Advanced Technologies for Learning \(ATL\) Laboratory](#) at LSS is providing technical and instructional leadership to the educational community of the mid-Atlantic region in taking full advantage of emergent technologies for learning. ATL's multimedia and telecommunications center supports on-site, off-site, and on-line activity through which K-12 educators, administrators, and other community members can explore and evaluate practices and policies for technology integration, develop relevant skills and educational strategies, and create technology-enriched

resources for promoting student achievement.

[Community for Learning \(CFL\)](#) is a comprehensive school reform program that draws on over two decades of research on what makes schools work and what helps each student learn, even for those children who are faced with some of the most challenging circumstances. CFL builds on the strengths of diverse communities by redeploying existing resources and professional expertise to achieve the most positive impact on children's development and educational success. A centerpiece of the CFL program is an integrated design framework for a collaborative process of finding ways to sustain a high standard of academic achievement for each student.

Through its [Services to the Field](#) Program, the Laboratory facilitates the transformation of research-based knowledge into useful tools that can be readily integrated into the educational reform process. Working with teachers, school administrators, policymakers, parents, community agencies, and other public and private sector partners, the Laboratory assists in building the region's capacity for education by disseminating information on the research base and state-of-the-art classroom practices, and by providing assistance in implementing knowledge-based strategies that work to achieve the learning success of students.

(LSS Website 12/04)

15. Minnesota Charter School Resource Center at the Center for School Change at the Humphrey Institute (University of Minnesota)

<http://centerforschoolchange.org>

Hubert H. Humphrey Institute - Center for School Change
Humphrey Center 252
301 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455
(612) 625-7552 Fax: (612) 625-0104
Aaron North, Director
E-mail: <mailto:anorth@hhh.umn.edu>

Minnesota Charter School Resource Center focuses on support for developers of charter schools. Technical support included information on charter school community projects, research, and publications.

The Minnesota Charter School Resource Center helps increase student achievement and graduation rates for children throughout Minnesota. Founded upon work the Center for School Change has done over the past decade, the Minnesota Charter School Resource Center provides free, high quality technical assistance to people wishing to start and operate public charter schools.

The Minnesota Charter School Resource Center provides periodic meetings held at various times - all day, after school and evening - that offer help for people creating new schools. Participants learn about successful charter schools and talk with experts in charter school finance, governance,

curriculum development, assessment, evaluation, legal issues, and accountability. Additional conferences and workshops on vital issues will be held through continuing collaboration with the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS) - an organization that serves charter schools.

[Center for School Change publications](#) posted to the web include these topics: accountability, family involvement, and school facilities. The Minnesota Charter School Resource Center can advise on sources of business, technical, and accounting support, and provides tailored technical assistance to help developers refine their plans.

(Center For School Change Website 03/09)

16. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

<http://publiccharters.org/>

1101 14th Street, NW, Suite 801

Washington DC 20005

Phone: (202) 289-2700

fax: 202-289-4009

Email: info@publiccharters.org

Website includes complete state-by state directory of charter school resource centers, charter school state associations, state conference calendars, and up-to-date news.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is the national nonprofit organization committed to advancing the charter school movement. Our ultimate goal is to increase the number of high-performing charter schools available to all families, particularly low-income and minority families who currently don't have access to quality public schools. The Alliance provides assistance to state charter school associations and resource centers, develops and advocates for improved public policies, and serves as the united voice for this large and diverse movement.

(National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Website 04/07)

17. National Charter School Clearinghouse

<http://www.ncsc.info/>

National Charter School Clearinghouse

P. O. Box 11864

Tempe, AZ 85284-0032

(480) 907-5900

Email: <mailto:info@ncsc.info>

National Charter School Clearinghouse is a research-based organization that provides technical support, grant writing and funding information, as well as abstracts of updated charter school research, and charter school news.

The Clearinghouse publishes a monthly newsletter with highlighted research, pertinent state, and national conference information, funding resources. The website also includes a database of grant writers, online discussion groups, and articles on education reform.

The National Charter School Clearinghouse (NCSC) began as a Field Initiated National Activities Project funded by a grant from the U. S. Department of Education.

By creating a collaborative network to advance ideas, information, and technology between and among the members of the charter school community, NCSC will further the charter school initiative and promote educational reform in the United States.

NCSC works with the charter school community to provide:

- Interactive Website
- NCSC News: A near-monthly newsletter
- NCSC Charter School Service Directory: an online yellow pages for charter school products and services
- Compilation of Charter School Funding Resources and Research

NCSC is a unique addition to the charter school community offering:

- Database of Grantwriters
- Educational Resources
- FAQs
- Funding Sources: detailed information about federal, state, corporate, and private opportunities
- Listing of Employment Opportunities
- Source of orderly information for public policy makers, schools, think tanks, and others

PURPOSE:

1. To improve public charter schools' access to and understanding of federal and private funding.
2. To provide technical assistance, mentoring, and collaboration opportunities for public charter schools across the nation.
3. To collect, catalog, summarize, and disseminate research on issues relevant to public charter school operations to administrators, parents, and any other interested parties.

(NCSC Website 04/07)

18. National Charter Schools Institute (NCSI)

<http://www.nationalcharterschools.org>

2520 S. University Park Drive
Suite Box 11
Mount Pleasant, MI 48858
(989) 774-2999 Fax (989) 774-2591
Email: <mailto:info@nationalcharterschools.org>

This national organization offers wide-ranging services, technical support, and training to charter school community developers, administrators, boards, and other stakeholders. The Institute facilitates access to a library of publications and articles that includes education reform resources, teacher training information, school models for success, curriculum, and program information.

The National Charter Schools Institute is dedicated to increasing the effectiveness of charter public schools by strengthening their boards of directors, administrators and management leaders through its nationally recognized consulting practice, publications, assessments and board retreat program.

Since 2001, the National Charter Schools Institute has worked with authorizers, boards, school leaders, teachers, policymakers and others who are serious about identifying and implementing effective strategies that provide children with the world's best educational opportunities. The Institute helps charter schools improve student achievement and comply with applicable laws across the nation by identifying and implementing effective strategies. The Institute takes a hands-on approach to delivering practical solutions for daily problems through services such as its highly regarded board governance leadership training as well as:

- strategic planning
- organizational consulting
- marketing
- research
- professional development
- board policy development
- administrative guidelines
- forms development
- risk management
- curriculum alignment
- school improvement plans
- technical assistance.

(NCSI Website 04/07)

19. Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest (REL) formerly the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)

<http://www.ncrel.org/>

1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200
Naperville, IL 60563
630-649-6500 or 800-356-2735
Fax: 630-649-6700
E-mail: <mailto:info@ncrel.org>

NCREL provided information and research on best practices for education reform school improvement, technology in education, and problem solving. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory® (NCREL) was one of 10 federally funded laboratories whose contract to operate ended

in 2005. Learning Point Associates conducted the work of NCREL, and many of the resources developed under this contract remain accessible through this website. If you cannot find a resource that you have accessed in the past, it is because the information is either outdated or has been replaced

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded Learning Point Associates its fifth consecutive contract to operate a regional educational laboratory—this time called REL Midwest instead of the North Central—a new name for a new scope of work. Details about the new work to be conducted by all 10 regional educational laboratories will be available in the coming months on a Regional Educational Laboratory Network website.

(Learning Point Associates Website 04/07)

20. Small Schools Workshop

www.smallschools.com

1608 North Milwaukee Avenue
Ste. 912
Chicago, IL 60647
(773) 384-1030 FAX (773) 384-1226

The Small Schools Workshop is a group of educators, organizers and researchers based in the Fischler School of Education at Nova Southeastern University. The Small Schools Workshop collaborates with teachers, principals, parents, and district leaders to create new, small, innovative learning communities in public schools. In addition to providing direct assistance through partnerships with schools, the Small Schools Workshop actively participates in many initiatives to broaden and deepen recognition of the importance of school size to student learning and the role of small schools in furthering positive whole-school and systemic change.

[The Small Schools Workshop \(SSW\)](#) is a resource for public schools and school districts engaged in restructuring and whole-school improvement. The Workshop brings experience and expertise in elementary and secondary school redesign, curricular focus, and building professional teams by providing guidance and professional development to large public schools that are in the process of restructuring into smaller learning environments.

For many years, the Workshop has provided assistance to teachers, parents, and principals in creating these new, small innovative learning communities. Large factory model schools have been reorganized and re-cultured to create successful schools-within-schools. The Workshop has also supported start-up and charter school efforts from the proposal and planning stages to a continuum of school improvement.

(SSW Website 04/07)

21. US Charter Schools

http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/index.htm

US Charter Schools Website
c/o WestEd
730 Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

Email: <mailto:uscharterschools@wested.org>

US Charter Schools website provides resources and links for charter school statistics and research reports, planning guides, funding information, charter applications, and other useful documents for charter school developers, operators, technical assistance providers, and stakeholders, including a comprehensive section on starting and running a charter school.

Information includes contacts, chat groups of various subjects, including accountability, curriculum, special education along with state specific discussions

The US Charter Schools web site is a valuable source of information and knowledge for charter school developers, operators, parents, researchers, and policy makers. Specifically, this web site provides a wide range of information and links to [resources](#) to guide charter schools in every phase of their development, from start-up, to expansion, to renewal.

It also provides a "[Community Exchange](#)" environment that allows for discussion and the exchange of ideas between schools and various support providers. Lastly, the site's [State Profiles](#) contain contact information for resource centers to assist parents who are interested in learning more about and/or enrolling their children in a charter school.

The US Charter Schools Website is a place where charter school developers, authorizers, and operators can meet, exchange ideas, and access a valuable resource library. The Website provides a wide range of information and links to resources to guide charter schools in every phase of their development — from start-up, to expansion, to renewal.

USCharterSchools.org is the most widely used and comprehensive online resource available to charter schools today. It receives an average of 4,000 visits (80,000 hits) per day and has over 10,000 subscribers to its online newsletters:

- the weekly Charter Schools News Connection, and
- the monthly Resource Update

This Web site was established in 1997 and operated until September 18th, 2004 with support from the U.S. Department of Education. Currently, the site is neither supported nor endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education.

(US Charter Schools Website 04/07)

APPENDICES

- A. Senate Bill 75, Public School Charter Act of 2003
- B. Sample Mission and Vision Statements
- C. Sample Maryland Charter School Application
- D. "No Child Left Behind: The Impact of the New Title I Requirements on Charter Schools" US Department of Education, March 24, 2003
- E. Local School System Charter School Contacts
- F. MD Charter School Application Deadlines

SENATE BILL 75

Unofficial Copy
F1

2003 Regular Session
(3lr0658)

ENROLLED BILL

-- Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs/Ways and Means --

Introduced by **Senators Dyson, Hollinger, Colburn, DeGrange, Frosh,
Giannetti, Harris, Hooper, Kittleman, Lawlah, Mooney, and Stone**

Read and Examined by Proofreaders:

Proofreader.

Proofreader.

Sealed with the Great Seal and presented to the Governor, for his approval this
____ day of _____ at _____ o'clock, ____ M.

President.

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Public Charter School Act of 2003**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Public Charter School Program;
4 adding a certain definition; establishing certain authority in certain boards;
5 specifying certain charter school application requirements; prohibiting a ~~county~~
6 ~~board~~ public chartering authority from granting a charter to certain schools;
7 requiring a county board to review an application to establish a charter school
8 and render a decision within a certain time period; establishing a certain
9 appeals process; requiring the State Board of Education to render a certain
10 decision within a certain time period; authorizing the State Board of Education
11 to direct a county board to grant a charter under certain circumstances and
12 requiring the State Board to mediate a certain decision; establishing a certain
13 certification requirement; requiring a public charter school to comply with
14 certain provisions of law; authorizing a public charter school to apply for a
15 certain waiver; prohibiting the granting of a waiver from certain provisions of
16 law; providing for certain bargaining rights for certain employees; providing for

2

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1 the negotiation of certain amendments to certain collective bargaining
 2 agreements; requiring a county board to disburse a certain amount of money to
 3 a public charter school; authorizing certain boards to give educational materials,
 4 supplies, furniture, and other equipment to a public charter school; requiring
 5 county boards to develop a certain policy; establishing a certain liaison for the
 6 Program; requiring the State Department of Education to create and
 7 disseminate to each local board of education a certain model public charter
 8 school policy by a certain date; requiring the State Board of Education to submit
 9 a certain report on or before a certain date; defining certain terms; authorizing
 10 the State Board to act as the public chartering authority for restructured schools
 11 under certain circumstances; specifying certain procedures and requirements
 12 governing an application for a restructured school that seeks to become a charter
 13 school; specifying certain limitations and requirements for charter schools with
 14 regard to educational services for children with disabilities; requiring the State
 15 Board of Education to provide certain technical assistance to certain operators of
 16 charter schools; and generally relating to the Maryland Public Charter School
 17 Program.

18 BY repealing and reenacting, ~~with~~ without amendments,

19 Article - Education

20 Section 6-401(e) and 6-501(g)

21 Annotated Code of Maryland

22 (2001 Replacement Volume and 2002 Supplement)

23 BY adding to

24 Article - Education

25 Section 9-101 through ~~9-106-9-109~~ 9-110, inclusive, to be under the new title

26 "Title 9. Maryland Public Charter School Program"

27 Annotated Code of Maryland

28 (2001 Replacement Volume and 2002 Supplement)

29 **SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF**

30 **MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:**

31 **Article - Education**

32 6-401.

33 (e) "Public school employer" means a county board of education ~~for~~; the
 34 Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, ~~OR A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL, AS~~
 35 ~~DEFINED IN TITLE 9 OF THIS ARTICLE.~~

36 6-501.

37 (g) (1) "Public school employer" means the county board in each county, ~~OR~~
 38 ~~A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL, AS DEFINED IN TITLE 9 OF THIS ARTICLE.~~

3

SENATE BILL 75

1 (2) "Public school employer" includes the Baltimore City Board of School
2 Commissioners.

3 TITLE 9. MARYLAND PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM.

4 9-101.

5 (A) THERE IS A MARYLAND PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM.

6 (B) THE GENERAL PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO ESTABLISH AN
7 ALTERNATIVE MEANS WITHIN THE EXISTING PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM IN ORDER TO
8 PROVIDE INNOVATIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND CREATIVE EDUCATIONAL
9 APPROACHES TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS.

10 9-102.

11 IN THIS TITLE, "PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL" MEANS A PUBLIC SCHOOL THAT:

12 (1) IS NONSECTARIAN IN ALL ITS PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND
13 OPERATIONS;

14 (2) IS A SCHOOL TO WHICH PARENTS CHOOSE TO SEND THEIR
15 CHILDREN;

16 (3) IS OPEN TO ALL STUDENTS ON A SPACE-AVAILABLE BASIS AND
17 ADMITS STUDENTS ON A LOTTERY BASIS IF MORE STUDENTS APPLY THAN CAN BE
18 ACCOMMODATED;

19 (4) IS A NEW PUBLIC SCHOOL OR A CONVERSION OF AN EXISTING
20 PUBLIC SCHOOL;

21 (5) PROVIDES A PROGRAM OF ELEMENTARY OR SECONDARY
22 EDUCATION OR BOTH;

23 (6) OPERATES IN PURSUIT OF A SPECIFIC SET OF EDUCATIONAL
24 OBJECTIVES;

25 (7) IS TUITION-FREE;

26 (8) IS SUBJECT TO FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS PROHIBITING
27 DISCRIMINATION;

28 (9) IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE HEALTH AND SAFETY
29 LAWS; ~~AND~~

30 (10) IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE INDIVIDUALS
31 WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 20 U.S.C. 1400 ET SEQ. § 9-107 OF THIS TITLE;

32 (11) OPERATES UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE PUBLIC CHARTERING
33 AUTHORITY FROM WHICH ITS CHARTER IS GRANTED AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH
ITS

4

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1 CHARTER AND, EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN § 9-106 OF THIS SUBTITLE, THE PROVISIONS
2 OF LAW AND REGULATION GOVERNING OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS;

3 (12) REQUIRES STUDENTS TO BE PHYSICALLY PRESENT ON SCHOOL
4 PREMISES FOR A PERIOD OF TIME SUBSTANTIALLY SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH OTHER
5 PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS SPEND ON SCHOOL PREMISES; AND

6 (13) IS CREATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS TITLE AND THE
7 APPROPRIATE COUNTY BOARD POLICY.

8 9-103.

9 (A) THE PRIMARY PUBLIC CHARTERING AUTHORITY FOR THE GRANTING OF
10 ~~CHARTERS~~ A CHARTER SHALL BE ~~THE~~ A COUNTY BOARD'S BOARD OF EDUCATION.

11 (B) THE SECONDARY PUBLIC CHARTERING AUTHORITY FOR THE GRANTING
12 OF ~~CHARTERS~~ A CHARTER SHALL BE THE STATE BOARD ACTING IN ITS APPEAL
13 REVIEW CAPACITY OR AS THE PUBLIC CHARTERING AUTHORITY FOR A
14 RESTRUCTURED SCHOOL IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 9-104(A) OF THIS SUBTITLE.

15 ~~(C) THE STATE BOARD MAY CREATE ADDITIONAL PUBLIC CHARTERING~~
16 ~~AUTHORITIES.~~

17 9-104.

18 (A) (1) AN APPLICATION TO ESTABLISH A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL SHALL
19 BE SUBMITTED TO THE COUNTY BOARD OF THE COUNTY IN WHICH THE CHARTER
20 SCHOOL WILL BE LOCATED.

21 (2) AN APPLICATION TO ESTABLISH A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL MAY BE
22 SUBMITTED TO A COUNTY BOARD BY:

23 (I) THE STAFF OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL;

24 (II) A PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF A STUDENT WHO ATTENDS A
25 PUBLIC SCHOOL IN THE COUNTY;

26 (III) A NONSECTARIAN NONPROFIT ENTITY;

27 (IV) ~~AN~~ A NONSECTARIAN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN
28 THE STATE; OR

29 (V) ANY COMBINATION OF PERSONS SPECIFIED IN ITEMS (I)
30 THROUGH (IV) OF THIS PARAGRAPH.

31 (3) A ~~COUNTY BOARD~~ PUBLIC CHARTERING AUTHORITY MAY NOT
32 GRANT A CHARTER UNDER THIS TITLE TO:

33 (I) A PRIVATE SCHOOL;

34 (II) A PAROCHIAL SCHOOL; OR

5

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1 (III) A HOME SCHOOL.

2 (4) (I) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS
3 PARAGRAPH, THE COUNTY BOARD SHALL REVIEW THE APPLICATION AND RENDER A
4 DECISION WITHIN 120 DAYS OF RECEIPT OF THE APPLICATION.

5 (II) FOR A RESTRUCTURED SCHOOL:

6 1. THE COUNTY BOARD SHALL REVIEW THE APPLICATION
7 AND RENDER A DECISION WITHIN 30 DAYS OF RECEIPT OF THE APPLICATION;

8 2. THE COUNTY BOARD MAY APPLY TO THE STATE BOARD
9 FOR AN EXTENSION OF UP TO 15 DAYS FROM THE TIME LIMIT IMPOSED UNDER ITEM
10 1 OF THIS SUBPARAGRAPH;

11 3. IF AN EXTENSION IS NOT GRANTED, AND 30 DAYS HAVE
12 ELAPSED, THE STATE BOARD MAY BECOME A CHARTERING AUTHORITY; AND

13 4. IF AN EXTENSION HAS BEEN GRANTED, AND 45 DAYS
14 HAVE ELAPSED, THE STATE BOARD MAY BECOME A CHARTERING AUTHORITY.

15 (B) (1) IF THE COUNTY BOARD DENIES AN APPLICATION TO ESTABLISH A
16 PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL, THE APPLICANT MAY APPEAL THE DECISION TO THE
17 STATE BOARD, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 4-205(C) OF THIS ARTICLE.

18 (2) THE STATE BOARD SHALL RENDER A DECISION WITHIN 120 DAYS OF
19 THE FILING OF AN APPEAL UNDER THIS SUBSECTION.

20 (3) IF THE COUNTY BOARD DENIES AN APPLICATION TO ESTABLISH A
21 PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AND THE STATE BOARD REVERSES THE DECISION, THE
22 STATE BOARD MAY DIRECT THE COUNTY BOARD TO GRANT A CHARTER AND SHALL
23 MEDIATE WITH THE COUNTY BOARD AND THE APPLICANT TO IMPLEMENT THE
24 CHARTER.

25 9-105.

26 A MEMBER OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF OF A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
27 SHALL HOLD THE APPROPRIATE MARYLAND CERTIFICATION.

28 9-106.

29 (A) SUBJECT TO SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, A PUBLIC CHARTER
30 SCHOOL SHALL COMPLY WITH THE PROVISIONS OF LAW AND REGULATION
31 GOVERNING OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

32 (B) SUBJECT TO SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION, A WAIVER OF THE
33 REQUIREMENTS UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION MAY BE SOUGHT
34 THROUGH AN APPEAL TO THE STATE BOARD.

35 (C) A WAIVER MAY NOT BE GRANTED FROM PROVISIONS OF LAW OR
36 REGULATION RELATING TO:

6

SENATE BILL 75

1 (1) AUDIT REQUIREMENTS;

2 (2) THE MEASUREMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT,
3 INCLUDING ALL ASSESSMENTS REQUIRED FOR OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND OTHER
4 ASSESSMENTS MUTUALLY AGREED UPON BY THE PUBLIC CHARTERING AUTHORITY
5 AND THE SCHOOL; OR

6 (3) THE HEALTH, SAFETY, OR CIVIL RIGHTS OF A STUDENT OR AN
7 EMPLOYEE OF THE CHARTER SCHOOL.

8 9-107.

9 (A) A PUBLIC CHARTERING AUTHORITY MAY NOT GRANT A CHARTER TO A
10 PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL WHOSE OPERATION WOULD BE INCONSISTENT WITH ANY
11 PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVE, COURT ORDER, OR FEDERAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN
12 GOVERNING SPECIAL EDUCATION THAT IS APPLICABLE TO THE STATE.

13 (B) A PUBLIC CHARTERING AUTHORITY SHALL ENSURE THAT THE
14 AUTHORIZING PROCESS FOR A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AND THE CHARTER
15 APPLICATION ADDRESS THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COUNTY BOARD
16 AND THE APPLICANTS AND OPERATORS OF THE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL WITH
17 RESPECT TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES.

18 (C) THE PUBLIC CHARTERING AUTHORITY SHALL ENSURE THAT, PRIOR TO
19 OPENING A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL, THE OPERATORS OF THE SCHOOL ARE
20 INFORMED OF THE HUMAN, FISCAL, AND ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY NEEDED TO
21 FULFILL THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO CHILDREN WITH
22 DISABILITIES.

23 (D) THE STATE BOARD SHALL PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE
24 OPERATORS OF A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL TO HELP THE SCHOOL MEET THE
25 REQUIREMENTS OF FEDERAL AND STATE LAWS, INCLUDING 20 U.S.C. § 1400, ET SEQ.
26 AND § 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794.

27 9-107: 9-108.

28 (A) EMPLOYEES OF A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL:

29 (1) ARE PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES, AS DEFINED IN §§ 6-401(D) AND
30 6-501(F) OF THIS ARTICLE;

31 (2) ARE EMPLOYEES OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYER, AS DEFINED IN §§
32 6-401(E) AND 6-501(G) OF THIS ARTICLE, IN THE COUNTY IN WHICH THE PUBLIC
33 CHARTER SCHOOL IS LOCATED; AND

34 (3) SHALL HAVE THE RIGHTS GRANTED UNDER TITLE 6, SUBTITLES 4
35 AND 5 OF THIS ARTICLE.

36 (B) IF A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT UNDER TITLE 6, SUBTITLE 4
37 OR 5 OF THIS ARTICLE IS ALREADY IN EXISTENCE IN THE COUNTY WHERE A PUBLIC

7

SENATE BILL 75

1 CHARTER SCHOOL IS LOCATED, THE EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION AND THE PUBLIC
2 CHARTER SCHOOL MAY MUTUALLY AGREE TO NEGOTIATE AMENDMENTS TO THE
3 EXISTING AGREEMENT TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF THE PARTICULAR PUBLIC
4 CHARTER SCHOOL.

5 ~~9-108. 9-109.~~

6 (A) A COUNTY BOARD SHALL DISBURSE TO A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AN
7 AMOUNT OF COUNTY, STATE, AND FEDERAL MONEY FOR ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE,
AND
8 SECONDARY STUDENTS THAT IS COMMENSURATE WITH THE AMOUNT DISBURSED
9 TO OTHER PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE LOCAL JURISDICTION.

10 (B) THE STATE BOARD OR THE COUNTY BOARD MAY GIVE SURPLUS
11 EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS, SUPPLIES, FURNITURE, AND OTHER EQUIPMENT TO A
12 PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL.

13 ~~9-109. 9-110.~~

14 (A) (1) EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL DEVELOP A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
15 POLICY AND SUBMIT IT TO THE STATE BOARD.

16 (2) THE POLICY REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION
17 SHALL INCLUDE GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING:

18 (I) EVALUATION OF PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS;

19 (II) REVOCAION OF A CHARTER;

20 (III) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS; AND

21 (IV) FINANCIAL, PROGRAMMATIC, OR COMPLIANCE AUDITS OF
22 PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS.

23 (B) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DESIGNATE A STAFF PERSON TO FUNCTION AS
24 A CONTACT PERSON FOR THE MARYLAND PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM.

25 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the State Department
26 of Education shall create and disseminate to each local board of education model
27 public charter school policy language which can be used to create a public charter
28 school policy as required by this Act. Each local board of education shall submit its
29 public charter school policy to the State Board of Education by November 1, 2003.

30 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That on or before October 1,
31 2006, based on information gathered from each local board of education, the Board of
32 School Commissioners of Baltimore City, and the public, the State Board of Education
33 shall submit to the General Assembly, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State
34 Government Article, a report including an evaluation of the public charter school
35 program. The report shall address the advisability of the continuation, modification,
36 expansion, or termination of the program.

8

SENATE BILL 75

- 1 SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
- 2 ~~October~~ July 1, 2003.

Appendix B – Sample Mission and Vision Statements

The Maryland Charter School Network has been assisting founding groups in applying for charters since 2001. We are including Mission and Vision statements from three of the schools that we have assisted. The **Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School**, which has been operating since 2002 and **City Neighbors Charter School** and **Patterson Park Public Charter School**, which opened in 2005.

City Neighbors Charter School

Mission Statement

The mission of City Neighbors Charter School (CNCS) is to provide an extraordinary public school education with high academic achievement for all students. Our ultimate goal for our school is that through innovative curriculum, parental involvement and community outreach, the students leave enlivened, with deep awareness of themselves, their families and the outside community, and with the capacity to be good citizens.

Vision Statement

The CNCS vision is to design a school whose classrooms serve as individual model communities where issues are discussed, differences in perspectives are welcomed and children work cooperatively, rather than competitively. The CNCS governance model – including parents, business and community leaders, teachers, students and School Director – reflects our commitment to cooperative governance, based on the principles of human dignity, consensus, and freedom. Our belief and experience is that when given a strong structure to support generative thinking and meaningful activities to perform, all children and adults strive for excellence. Because of this focus, CNCS' impact on the lives of students and families and the community will be powerful, positive and long lasting.

Patterson Park Public Charter School

Mission Statement

The mission of PPPCS is to develop well educated, community-minded children by providing high-quality, community-based education that capitalizes on the diversity of nearby neighborhoods and the resources of Patterson Park. Central to this mission is a school culture based on students, staff, parents, and guardians functioning as one community. We envision parents, guardians and community members devoting time to help with the school's policies, educational agenda, and community building ambitions.

Vision Statement

Our vision for educating students at Patterson Park Public Charter School (PPPCS) is to unite students, parents, educators, and the Patterson Park area through an educational environment that rewards creativity and builds community ties. Strong academic standards and community/arts-related partnerships will encourage PPPCS students to become independent and responsible thinkers. PPPCS aspires to socioeconomic, racial and ethnic diversity in its student population and will incorporate the many attendant cultures into its curriculum and daily life.

Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School**Mission Statement**

The Monocacy Valley Montessori School is a small, intimate and democratic learning community where children learn actively, think critically, and solve problems creatively. Students' innate desire to learn is fostered using the Montessori approach: a prepared environment, hands-on materials, mixed age classes, and self-directed learning. We empower students to become responsible, confident, caring citizens who possess strong academic skills and an enduring love of learning


Appendix C—Sample Maryland Charter School Application

Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Public Charter Schools

Information & Application Booklet

Program Contact
Director of Alternative Education
410.222.5193



**CTRL+Click here to
link to the Anne
Arundel County
Charter School
application that is
available on the
Internet.**
[http://www.aacps.org/html/schol/c
harterappl.pdf](http://www.aacps.org/html/schol/c
harterappl.pdf)

Appendix D—NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND



The Impact of the New Title I Requirements on Charter Schools

[Non-Regulatory Guidance](#)



CTRL+Click here to link to US DOE Non-Regulatory Guidance that is available on the Internet.

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/charterguidance03.doc>

July, 2004

Appendix E—Local School System Charter School Contacts

Allegany County Board of Education

Mrs. Sheree Witt
Executive Director, Student Services
301-759-2064
switt@allconet.org

Anne Arundel County Public Schools

Ms. Kathy Lane
Director, Alt. Education & Safe Schools
410-222-5913
klane@aacps.org

Baltimore City Public Schools

Ms. Tammy Nielsen
Charter and New Schools
410-396-8550
tjnielsen@bcps.k12.md.us

Baltimore County Public Schools

Ms. Sonya Karwacki
Executive Director, Special Programs
410-887-2280
skarwacki@bcps.org

Calvert County Public Schools

Ms. Deborah Grinnage-Pulley
Executive Director of School Operations
410-535-7804
pulleyd@calvertnet.k12.md.us

Caroline County Public Schools

Ms. Tina Brown
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
410-479-3252
Tina_Brown@mail.cl.k12.md.us

Carroll County Public Schools

Mr. Stephen Guthrie
Assistant Superintendent of Administration
410-751-3127
shguthr@k12.carr.org

Cecil County Public Schools

Dr. D'Ette Devine
Executive Director for Staff Relations
410-996-5440
ddevine@ccps.org

Charles County Public Schools

Mr. Eric Schwartz
Lawyer
301-934-7230
eschwartz@ccboe.com

Dorchester County Board of Education

Dr. Henry Wagner
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
410-221-1111 x1033
wagnerh@dcpsmd.org

Frederick County Board of Education

Dr. Michele Krantz
Charter School Liaison
240-344-8024
michele.krantz@fcps.org

Garrett County Board of Education

Dr. Sue Waggoner
Executive Director of Instruction
301-334-8937
swaggoner@ga.k12.md.us

Harford County Public Schools

Ms. Eric. Cromwell
Coordinator of Accelerated Learning Programs
410-588-5354
Eric.Cromwell@hcps.org

Howard County Public Schools

Mr. Fran Albert
Policy and Charter School Specialist
410-313-6870
fran_albert@hcpss.org

Kent County Public Schools

Mr. Anthony D. Pack
Superintendent
410-778-7113
mcooke-wilson@kent.k12.md.us

Montgomery County Public Schools

Ms. Lori-Christina Webb
Executive Asst – Off of Deputy Supt
301-279-3126
Lori-Christina_Webb@mcpsmd.org

Prince George's County Public Schools

Mr. Derek Mitchell
Executive Director, New and Charter Schools
301-952-6772
dmitchell@pgcps.org

Queen Anne's County Board of Education

Dr. Diane Larrimore
Coordinator of Media and Online Learning
410-758-2403
larrimod@qacps.k12.md.us

St. Mary's County Public Schools

Ms. Kelly Hall
Director of Elementary Education
301-475-5511 Ext. 249
kmhall@smcps.org

Somerset County Public Schools

Mr. Conal Turner
Director of Administrative Services
410-621-1616
cturner@somerset.k12.md.us

Talbot County Public Schools

Mrs. Lynne Duncan
Supervisor, Student Services
410-822-0330 x119
lduncan@tcps.k12.md.us

Washington County Board of Education

Mr. Dale Bannon
Director of System Development
301-766-2937
bannodal@wcboe.k12.md.us

Wicomico County Board of Education

Mr. Kim Miles
Director of Secondary Instruction
410-677-4584
kmilesr@wcboe.org

Worcester County Board of Education

Mr. Ed Barber
Assistant Superintendent, Administrative
Services
410-632-5074
ebarber@mail.worcester.k12.md.us

Appendix F—MD Charter School Application Deadlines

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Allegany County Board of Education</i> Rolling Basis | <i>Howard County Public Schools</i> Intent form and Prospectus due by May 1, application due by August 1 |
| <i>Anne Arundel County Public Schools</i> Rolling | <i>Kent County Public Schools</i> Rolling Basis |
| <i>Baltimore City Public Schools</i> September 1 | <i>Montgomery County Public Schools</i> March 1 |
| <i>Baltimore County Public Schools</i> Concept proposal must be received by January 1 of the year preceding the proposed opening of the school | <i>Prince George's County Public Schools</i> September 9, 3:00 p.m. |
| <i>Calvert County Public Schools</i> Rolling Basis | <i>Queen Anne's County Board of Education</i> Letter of Intent January 1, concept proposal due February 1 |
| <i>Caroline County Public School</i> Rolling Basis | <i>Somerset County Public Schools</i> February 1 |
| <i>Carroll County Public Schools</i> Rolling Basis | <i>St. Mary's County Public Schools</i> Rolling Basis |
| <i>Cecil County Public Schools</i> October 15 | <i>Talbot County Public Schools</i> January 1 |
| <i>Charles County Public Schools</i> Rolling Basis | <i>Washington County Board of Education</i> Letter of Intent to apply- September 1. Concept Proposal (Outline of Application)-November 1. Final Application due May 1 for a proposed opening in 16 months. |
| <i>Dorchester County Board of Education</i> September 1 | <i>Wicomico County Board of Education</i> Rolling Basis |
| <i>Frederick County Board of Education</i> Concept proposal must be received by January 1 of the year preceding the proposed opening of the school | <i>Worcester County Board of Education</i> Rolling Basis |
| <i>Garrett County Board of Education</i> Rolling Basis | |
| <i>Harford County Public School</i> September 26 | |



Maryland Charter School Network

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