



DeKalb County School District Start-Up Charter Petition Evaluation Forms

These tools are to be used by individuals of the DeKalb County School District Charter School Petition Review Committee (Raters') while reviewing charter school applications. They are based upon DeKalb County School District Board of Education Policy and the Georgia Department of Education (GADOE) Charter School Petition Application and process.

- Part I: The Initial Compliance Checklist – completed by the Charter Coordinator. These items ensure the minimum application components have been submitted. Petitions, which do not demonstrate minimum compliance, will be withdrawn from the process. Withdrawn petitions will not be returned to the petitioner.
- Part II: Initial Feedback Form– completed by the individual raters. The seven components of a charter school are assessed. Raters are encouraged to give feedback to the petitioner on each of the petition areas. This feedback is shared with the petitioner in the Initial Memo. The petitioner is free to make changes to the petition after reviewing the Initial Memo.
- Part III: Governing Board Interviews- completed by the Raters' Committee. The Governing Board of the petitioning school will interview with the raters' committee to ascertain the board's capacity. Additionally, petitioners may ask the committee members to clarify the feedback in the Initial Memo. The committee will take notes from the interview on their Governing Board Capacity Interview Rubric.
- Part IV: Review of Revised Petition. The petitioners will have the opportunity to make revisions to their application based on the Initial Memo and the discussion during the Interview. The raters will read through the revised petition and will use the Final Evaluation Rubric to make comments regarding the revisions.
- Part V: Final Evaluation Rubric – completed by the Raters' Committee. The raters will meet to evaluate the most recent version of the petition in alignment with the Standards of each Component. The Raters Committee will make a recommendation to the DCSD Superintendent for each petition of Approval, Conditionally Approval, or Denial.

The DeKalb County School District Board of Education (DBOE) will receive copies of all these communications as well as the complete petition in order to fully inform their decision.

Petitioners are reminded that all interactions in this process are public documents and may be requested by the public under the Open Records process.



PART I: INITIAL COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

Charter petitions must demonstrate all of the following formatting requirements:

- An Application Package includes an original and two copies of the following items:
- APPLICATION COVER SHEET** (Use the form on page 7; the form may not be altered in any way).
- CHARTER APPLICATION** (Your answers to the questions posed on pages 8-18). The Application is limited to 80 double-spaced pages using an 11-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins with a header showing the school's name and a footer showing consecutive page numbers and the submission date. (The GaDOE application is limited to 75 double-spaced pages.) The original must be signed in blue ink. Stamped signatures will not be accepted.
- ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET** (Use the Assurances Form and Signature Sheet below on pages 22-24; the Form and the Sheet may not be altered in any way). The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted. Electronic copy of assurances must be signed. Blank copies will not be accepted.
- DOCUMENTATION OF VOTE – FOR CONVERSIONS ONLY** (Use the form on page 25) The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted.
- EXHIBITS** (See list of required Exhibits below on page 19). Required Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible. All Exhibits must be tabbed both electronically and physically.
- Your complete petition must include all of the following at the time of submission:**
- Your Application Package must be bound with a rubber band and use dividers for sections, exhibits, and appendices.
- Your Application Package must also include 10 USB drives that includes a:
 - Microsoft Word version of your Application Cover Sheet
 - Microsoft Word versions of your Application and Exhibits
 - Exhibits and Appendices should be hyperlinked within the Application.
 - PDF Version of your Application Packet in the following order: Cover Sheet, Application, signed Assurances Form, and Exhibits
 - PDF version of your Locally-Approved Charter School Partners Roles and Responsibilities chart
 - Excel version of your completed Budget Templates



DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATION EVALUATION
RATINGS AND SAMPLE SCORING CRITERIA

Within each subsection, specific criteria define the expectations for a well thought out response that “Meets the Standard.”

INSTRUCTIONS TO RATERS

Raters should use objective language and complete sentences in their comments on the strengths and weaknesses of each section of the petition. Please also remember that all documents, including your individual review, may at some time be available to the public, pursuant to open records request.

For example,

Strengths of the academic plan

“The plan aligns with the overall mission and vision because . . .”

“The chosen curriculum is research based and proven effective with the targeted population of students because . . .”

Weaknesses of the academic plan

“The curriculum and daily schedule do not align with the mission and vision because . . .”

“The discipline plan does not include provisions for students with disabilities.”

Strengths of the operations plan

“The governing body is diverse and will be able to support the school effectively.”

“The plan to recruit school leaders and teachers is robust and aligns with the mission of the school.

Weaknesses of the operations plan

“The governing board is composed of only two people who do not have sufficient credentials to support school leadership.”

“The staffing projections do not align with the number of students or the stated mission of the school.”

Strengths of the financial plan

“The financial plan is sound and the assumptions are consistent with the mission and vision of the proposed school.”

“The budget assumptions include contingencies for high-dollar special needs students and funds are allocated in the budget document for such contingencies.”

Weaknesses of the financial plan

“The budget assumptions include a line of credit from XYZ bank, but there is no proof such an agreement exists, and no plan to repay the line of credit when it is accessed.”

“The proposed school assumes two buses in the first year, but there is no accompanying line item in the budget that allocates funds for purchasing buses nor is there any indication of salary and training for bus drivers.”



Step by step instructions for raters

1. Fill in your name and the name of the proposed school on the following page. Click once on the grey boxes to begin typing.
2. For each required subsection of the application, you should do the following during your initial individual analysis of the petition:
 - a. Select a rating for that subsection. Click once on the gray box to select. If you are not able to check the box, **please HIGHLIGHT your selection.**
 - b. Use the “Strengths” area to identify notable positive aspects of the response. Be sure to include page references where applicable.
 - c. Use the “Concerns/Questions” area to identify weaknesses and areas that should be explored during the revision or Governing Board interview. Again, reference relevant page numbers.
 - d. Use the “Possible Interview Questions” as a place to document any questions that you might benefit from being asked with the Governing Board Interview.
3. During the Governing Board Interviews:
 - a. Using the Governing Board Capacity Interview Rubric, take notes on information discovered or confirmed in the comment section related to each subsection. In order to capture your thoughts, reactions and the responses, we ask that you type directly into the form during the interview.
 - b. Upon the completion of the Governing Board Capacity Interview, choose a final rating within the rubric for each subsection using your notes as a tool.
 - c. If you are not able to check the box, **please HIGHLIGHT your selection.**
4. Revised Petition Review:
 - a. Using the Final Evaluation Rubric, use the comment section to record specific commentary based on the weighted categories.
 - b. As a group, we will then discuss the petition, and rater’s will rate each section on the rubric individually. Once each individual has rated each section, we will average the scores of each section and determine a final recommendation based on the rubric.
 - c. If you are not able to check the box, **please HIGHLIGHT your selection.**

Your comments and evidence are as significant as your rating. Please also remember that all documents, including your individual review, may at some time be available to the public.



PART II: INITIAL FEEDBACK FORM

Overview:

The system and the petitioner value the expertise of the subject matter experts whom comprise the Charter School Review Committee. To preserve the safety and to ensure that other parties apply no un-due pressure, raters' identities are kept completely anonymous.

Using the knowledge and experiences of the Charter Review Committee, they will provide the following to the petitioners:

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

The purpose of this feedback is to provide the petitioner with suggestions for improvement and/or indications of serious concerns. The intent is to assist the petitioner in creating the best possible petition for the DBOE to consider. The petitioner may revise the petition in light of this feedback. Petitioners are not obligated to follow the suggestions of the Review Committee.

The feedback shall be typed within the proper field of the feedback forms provided to the Committee by the Charter Coordinator.

The Charter Coordinator will vet the responses, compile them in the DCSD Initial Memo, and share the feedback with the petitioner.

Petitioners can decide to follow the committee's suggestions completely, partially, or ignore the suggestions.

The petitioner shall:

1. Respond to each feedback item in writing using the response form supplied by the Charter Coordinator.
2. Alter the petition using the Revision Tool in Word to reflect any changes made and resubmit electronically to the Charter Coordinator.



Ratings and Criteria Overview

Evaluators will use the following criteria to rate applicant responses within the Charter Application. Within each section, specific criteria define the expectations for a strong response that “Meets the Standard.” Evaluators will rate responses by applying the following guidance:

Meets the Standard:

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

Partially Meets the Standard:

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

Does Not Meet the Standard:

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

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



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE COMMITTEE DOES NOT RATE THIS SECTION SEPARATELY. IT PROVIDES THE COMMITTEE WITH A REFERENCE FOR OTHER SECTIONS OF THE APPLICATION, WHICH WILL BE ASSESSED, IN PART FOR THE QUALITY OF ALIGNMENT WITH THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

SECTION 1 ACADEMIC PROGRAM

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

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

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

For High Schools Only:

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

Initial Application Review		
<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standard
Strengths		Page
Concerns/Questions		Page
Possible Interview Questions		Page



SECTION 2 STATE-AND FEDERALLY MANDATED SERVICES

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

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

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

Initial Application Review		
<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standard
Strengths		Page
Concerns/Questions		Page
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SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT METHODS & ACADEMIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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

- A strong description of Assessment Methods will have the following characteristics:**
- Quality interim assessments that are aligned with (each) school’s curriculum, performance goals, and state standards.
 - Effective plan (including qualified personnel) and system for measuring and evaluating academic progress – of individual students, student cohorts, each school, and the network as a whole – throughout the school year, at the end of each academic year, and for the charter term.
 - Comprehensive, effective plan (including qualified personnel) and system for collecting and analyzing student academic achievement data, using the data to refine and improve instruction – including providing training and support to school leadership and teachers – and reporting the data to the school community. This should include identification of the student data system to be used, as well as qualified personnel who will be responsible for managing and interpreting the data for teachers and leading or coordinating data-driven professional development.
 - Thoughtful, appropriate corrective actions the school will take they falls short of the charter contract goals at any level, including explanation of what would trigger such actions and who would implement them.

Initial Application Review		
<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standard
Strengths		Page
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SECTION 4 SCHOOL GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

The component should clearly explain how the governing board would function as a legal public entity using DeKalb County taxpayer monies and serving DeKalb County students, families and communities.

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

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

Initial Application Review

<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standard
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Strengths	Page
Concerns/Questions	Page
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SECTION 5 FISCAL FEASIBILITY AND CONTROLS & FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

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

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

- Draft financial procedures policy or other reasonable assurance that the operator will have sound systems, policies and processes for financial planning, accounting, purchasing, and payroll, including a description of how it will establish and maintain strong internal controls, ensure compliance with all financial reporting requirements, and conduct independent annual financial and administrative audits.

- Evidence that the school’s leadership has a strong understanding of the appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities among the administration and governing board regarding school finance.

- Evidence that the school will ensure financial transparency, including plans for public adoption of the school’s budget and public dissemination of its annual audit and an annual report.

- Sound criteria and procedures for selecting contractors for any administrative services and the acquisition of liability insurance.

- Complete, realistic, and viable start-up and five-year operating budgets.

- Detailed budget narrative that clearly explains reasonable, well-supported revenue and cost assumptions, including grant/fundraising assumptions, including identifying the amount and sources of all anticipated funds, property, or other resources (noting which are secured vs. anticipated, and including evidence of firm commitments where applicable).

- Sound contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated.

- Individual and collective qualifications for implementing the Financial Plan successfully, including capacity in areas such as financial management, fundraising and development, accounting, and internal controls.

Initial Application Review

<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standard
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Strengths	Page
Concerns/Questions	Page
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SECTION 6 SCHOOL OPERATIONS & CONTRACTS WITH CHARTER PARTNERS/ EDUCATION SERVICE PROVIDERS

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

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

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

Initial Application Review		
<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standard
Strengths		Page
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SECTION 7 FACILITIES

The component should clearly explain the proposed facility.

A strong description of the Facilities Plan will have the following characteristics:

- Sound plan and timeline for identifying, financing, renovating, and ensuring code compliance for a facility that will meet the requirements of the educational program and anticipated student population.

Initial Application Review		
<input type="checkbox"/> Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Partially Meets Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Does Not Meet Standard
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