

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

CHARTER SCHOOLS

3.16

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the highest quality of instruction and safety for all Charter School participating students and to maintain accountability for the appropriate use of all allocated resources.

I. Eligibility to Apply

- A. A proposal for a new charter school may be made by an individual, teachers, parents, group of individuals, or any legal entity organized under the laws of the state of Florida. The school shall organize as a nonprofit organization prior to receiving approval as a charter school with the School Board.
- B. The principal, teachers, parents and/or the school advisory council at an existing public school may submit a proposal for converting the school to a charter school, provided that they demonstrate the support of at least fifty percent (50%) of the teachers then currently employed at the school and fifty percent (50%) of the parents whose children are then currently enrolled in the school.
- C. Private schools, parochial schools and home education schools are not eligible for charter status. A charter school may not be affiliated with a nonpublic sectarian school or religious institution and shall be nonsectarian in programs, admission policies, employment practices and operations.

II. Number of Schools

There shall be established no more than three (3) newly created charter schools and three (3) existing public schools converted to charter at any one time in the School District.

III. Timelines for Approving Charter Schools

Until such time as three (3) new charter schools and three (3) existing public schools have converted to charter status the School Board shall annually accept applications on or before September 1, the final window period, and staff shall provide technical assistance to organizations and individuals submitting proposals.

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

3.16 (Continued)

The School Board shall be a majority vote of the full Board, approve or deny a formal application no later than sixty (60) days after receiving the completed application during the submission period, following a public hearing to ensure community input.

IV. Application

The application does not constitute the charter which will be considered the Proposals for charter schools shall be submitted on a standard application format approved by the School Board for this purpose. No proposal will be accepted until the application is complete and all appropriate signatures are obtained. The application does not constitute the charter which will be considered the legal contract between the School Board and the school organizational body, but shall include a draft of a proposed charter for School Board review.

- A. The application shall include proof of insurability from an adequate rated insurer with a policy of no less than one million dollars (\$1,000,000) for Errors and Omissions and General Liability coverage to include but not limited to prior Acts, Sexual Harassment, Civil Rights and Employment Discrimination, Breach of Contract, Insured vs. Insured, Consultants and Independent Contractors. Additionally, coverage for Property and Casualty equal to replacement costs for school structures and contents, automobile and workers' compensation shall also be provided.
- B. The application shall include an indemnification or hold harmless agreement releasing the School Board of all liability for actions by the charter school governing body or its employees.
- C. The applicants and members of the governing body of the proposed charter school shall submit with the application a complete set of fingerprints taken by an authorized law enforcement officer or by an employee of the School District who is trained to take fingerprints. These fingerprints shall be submitted to the appropriate state and federal law enforcement agencies for processing with the cost borne by the applicant and charter school governing body members.

V. Elements of the Charter

- A. The following elements shall be required to be included in the school's charter agreement with the School Board:

3.16 (Continued)

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- School vision and mission
- Students to be served (ages, grades, current school of zone and projected FEFP categories)
- Student criteria for admissions, selection process and dismissal procedures
- Marketing/recruitment plan
- FTE enrollment verification process
- Focus of the curriculum
- Instructional methods to be used, including service to ESE, ADA and ESOL students
- Current baseline standard of student achievement, outcomes to be achieved and method(s) of measurement
- Methods used to identify the educational strengths and needs of students and how well goals are met by the students
- Participation in the statewide assessment program
- Method for determining that a student has met graduation or promotion requirements
- Code of Student Conduct consistent with District policies and discipline code
- Conflict resolution strategies for students, parents and staff
- Annual progress reports to include state required information
- Method for achieving racial and ethnic balance of student population
- Insurance coverage at specified limits no less than one million dollars (\$1,000,000) for errors and omissions and general liability and property equal to replacement costs of all structures and contents

3.16 (Continued)

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- Indemnification or hold harmless agreement
- Length of agreement, not to exceed three (3) years
- Provision for cancellation of the agreement for insufficient progress
- Facilities to be used and their location and evidence of all codes having been met
- Qualifications of teachers which must be disclosed to parents
- Staff selection process, including fingerprinting and criminal background check
- Professional development plan
- Status as a private or public employer
- Staff status related to certification or subcontracting
- Articles of incorporation and governance structure, including names, addresses, financial disclosure to include the same requirements as in Florida Statutes, School Board members, and background checks for governing body
- Implementation of timetable
- Alternative arrangements for students and teachers at a converting public school who choose not to participate
- Internal financial controls and audit process
- Proposed budget including salary and benefits of staff, and letter of credit or other funds to cover start-up costs
- Renewal and modification of the agreement
- Nature of parent involvement

3.16 (Continued)

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- Transportation, food service or other plans and agreements with the District or other contractors
 - Methods for resolving conflict between School Board and governing body of the charter school
 - Program evaluation and reporting plan
- B. Method of identification and acquisition of appropriate technologies needed to improve education and administration performance. Means for promoting safe, ethical, and appropriate uses of technology which comply with legal and professional standards.
- C. The District shall provide academic student performance data to charter schools for each of their students coming from the District, as well as rates of academic progress of comparable student populations in the District school system.
- D. The strategies that will be used to recruit, hire, train, and retain qualified staff to achieve best value.
- E. The governing body shall exercise continuing oversight over charter school operations.
- VI. Approval
- A. The School Board shall receive all completed applications for a charter school received on or before September 1, the final application window period. The School Board shall by a majority vote of the full Board approve or deny a formal application no later than sixty (60) days after receiving the completed application during the submission period, following a public hearing to ensure community input.
- B. If the Board denies an application for a conversion charter, the board shall provide notice of denial to the applicants in writing within thirty (30) days after the meeting at which the board denied the application. The notice must specify the exact reasons for denial and must provide documentation supporting those reasons.

3.16 (Continued)

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

VII. Selection Criteria

The School Board shall consider, but is not limited to using the following criteria to evaluate applications for charter school approval.

- A. Quality and breadth of instructional program.
- B. Safeguards for the physical and emotional safety of students to be served.
- C. Innovativeness of approach to teaching and learning.
- D. Representativeness of student population and impact upon other schools
- E. Soundness of the financial plan, including sufficient start-up funds or line of credit equivalent to three (3) months operating costs.
- F. Adequacy of insurance to include property and casualty, general liability, automobile, workers' compensation and errors and omissions, including specific coverage for civil rights and employment discrimination claims, and indemnification of the School Board.
- G. Qualifications and diversity of staff, governing body and organizers including criminal background checks, fingerprinting and bonding as necessary.
- H. Adequacy of facilities.
- I. Extent of parent involvement.
- J. Representativeness of governance structure including full financial disclosure on the forms required of the School Board by all members of the governing body.
- K. Level of student performance expectations relative to state education and other significant goals.
- L. Sufficiency of elements required in the charter by law or policy.

3.16 (Continued)

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

VIII. Causes for Non-renewal or Termination

- A. At the end of the term of a charter, the School Board may choose not to renew the charter for any of the following grounds:
 - 1. Failure to meet the requirements for student performance stated in the charter;
 - 2. Failure to meet generally accepted standards of financial management;
 - 3. Violation of law; or
 - 4. Other good cause shown.
- B. During the term of a charter, the School Board may terminate the charter for any of the grounds listed in paragraph VIII. A. or if the health, safety, or welfare of the student(s) is threatened.
- C. At least ninety (90) days prior to renewing or terminating a charter, unless a state of emergency exists, the School Board shall notify the governing body of the school of the proposed action in writing, detailing the grounds for the action and stipulating that a request for an informal hearing may be requested within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the notice. The School Board shall conduct an informal hearing within thirty (30) days after receiving a written request. The charter school's governing body may, within fourteen (14) days after receiving the School Board's decision to terminate or refuse to renew the charter, appeal the decision to the State Board of Education.
- D. In the event a charter is not renewed or is terminated, the School District may assume the operation of the school, or the school shall be dissolved and students assigned to other public schools. All unencumbered funds, as well as property and improvements, furnishings and equipment purchased with public funds shall automatically revert to full ownership of the School Board.
- E. If a charter is not renewed or is terminated, the governing body of the school is responsible for all debts of the charter school.

3.16 (Continued)

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

The District shall not assume the debt from any contract for services made between the governing body of the school and a third party, except for a debt that is previously detailed and agreed upon in writing by both the governing body of the school and the School Board and that may not reasonably be assumed to have been satisfied by the District.

IX. Tuition Prohibition

A charter school shall not charge tuition or fees, except those fees normally charged by other public schools.

Rule Exemptions - A charter school shall be exempt from all School Board policies except those pertaining to health, safety, and civil rights, financial records and accountability related to student enrollment report and financial audits, and collective bargaining agreements if the staff chooses to remain part of the District bargaining unit(s).

X. Personnel Options

- A. Charter school employees may bargain collectively as a separate unit or as part of the existing applicable District collective bargaining unit(s).
- B. If teachers at a charter school choose to be part of a professional group that subcontracts with the charter school to operate the instructional program under the auspices of a partnership or cooperative that they collectively own, they shall not be considered public employees.
- C. Employees of the School District may take leave for up to three (3) years to accept employment in a charter school upon the approval of the School Board and shall maintain seniority accrued in the School District. They may continue to be covered by the benefit program of the School District only if the charter school and the School Board agree to the arrangement and its financing.
- D. Teachers employed or under contract to a charter school shall be certified as required by Florida Statutes or if not certified, contracted with according to the provisions defined in Florida Statutes.
- E. All governing board members and employees of a charter school shall be fingerprinted as provided for in Florida Statutes.

3.16 (Continued)

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- F. The governing body of a charter school may elect to participate in the Florida Retirement System after proper application under Florida Statutes.

XI. Funding

Students enrolled in a charter school shall be funded the same as students enrolled in a basic or special program in any other public school in the District.

- A. Each charter school shall report its student enrollment to the District School Board as required by Florida Statutes and School Board policy and procedures. The School Board shall include each charter school's enrollment in the District's report of students.
- B. Charter schools whose students or programs meet the eligibility criteria in law shall be entitled to their proportionate share of all Florida Education Finance Program and General Appropriate Act funds, state and local gross and discretionary funds, categorical program funds and federal funds. Total funding for each charter school will be recalculated during the year to adjust for the actual weighted full-time equivalent and eligible students reported by the school and the revised calculations under the Florida Education Finance Program, following the October and February Full Time Equivalent (FTE) counts.
- C. Any administrative fee charged by the School District to the charter school shall be no more than the actual cost of administering the contract between the charter school and the School District or five percent (5%) of the available funds defined above, whichever is the lesser amount. Administering the contract includes providing technical assistance, monitoring policy compliance and processing financial, student and other records or required reports. This does not include contract(s) for other specific services to staff or student participation in the benefit packages or other special programs. The fees for these services will be negotiated and will be determined on an actual cost basis.
- D. The School District shall make every effort to ensure that charter schools receive timely and efficient reimbursement with payment issued no later than thirty (30) working days after receipt of an invoice, or pay penalty of one percent (1%) interest per month.

3.16 (Continued)

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Under no circumstances will the School District advance funds before a charter school is open, but the School Board may approve a charter before the applicant has secured space, equipment or personnel if the applicant indicates approval is necessary for it to raise working capital.

XII. Facilities Requirement

A charter school shall utilize facilities which comply with the State Uniform Building Code for Public Educational Facilities Construction adopted pursuant to Florida Statutes, or with applicable state minimum building codes pursuant to Florida Statutes, and state minimum fire protection codes pursuant to Florida Statutes and Comprehensive Land Use plan as adopted by the authority in whose jurisdiction the facility is located. A lease agreement and evidence that all applicable codes have been met shall be provided no less than three (3) weeks prior to the opening of the school year or the school will not be permitted to be open to students.

XIII. Length of the School Year

A charter school shall provide instruction for at least one hundred eighty (180) days and may provide instruction for additional days. Reimbursement for additional days of instruction will be subject to the limits of the Florida Education Finance Program, General Appropriations Act and other rule or programs that restrict funding to the School District. Upon approval of a charter application, the initial startup must be consistent with the beginning of the school year calendar(s) adopted by School Board.

XIV. Monitoring and Review

The Superintendent, or designee, and the District internal auditor shall have ongoing responsibility for monitoring the health, safety and well being of students and the fiscal responsibility of all approved charter schools. The Superintendent, the Superintendent's designee, the District internal auditor and all School Board members shall have free and open access to the charter school at all times. Annually, no later than forty-five (45) calendar days following the end of the regular school term, the governing body of the charter school shall submit the following for School Board review:

- A. The charter school's progress towards achieving the goals outlined in its charter;

3.16 (Continued)

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- B. The charter school's annual report to parents pursuant to Florida Statutes;
- C. An annual financial audit report obtained by the school reflecting generally accepted financial accounting standards;
- D. Salary and benefit levels of school employees; and
- E. Any other information provided by the school, the Superintendent or the internal auditor.

Upon receipt of the required annual report, the School Board shall provide to the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives an analysis and comparison of the overall performance of charter school students, to include all students whose scores are counted as part of the norm-references assessment tests, versus comparable public school students in the District as determined by norm-references assessment tests currently administered in the School District, and, as appropriate, the Florida Writes Assessment Test, Grade Ten Assessment Test, and the High School Competency Test.

XV. Appeal Process

- A. An applicant may appeal any denial of an application for a charter school to the State Board of Education no later than thirty (30) days after the School Board's final decision. The State Board must accept or reject the decision of the School Board no later than thirty (30) days after an appeal is filed, and remand the application with its written recommendation to the School Board.
- B. The School Board shall act upon the recommendation of the State Board of Education no later than thirty (30) days after it is received. The School Board may fail to act in accordance with the recommendation of the State Board only for good cause, articulated in written findings, arising from competent, substantial evidence that approving the State Board's recommendation would be contrary to law or contrary to the best interests of the pupils or the community.
- C. The School Board's action on the State Board's recommendation for an application for a charter school is final action subject to judicial review.

3.16 (Continued)

CHAPTER 3.00 - SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

- D. A governing body may appeal the School Board's decision to not renew or terminate a charter school following the same steps described in (XV) (A) –(C) above.

XVI. Immunity

For the purposes of tort liability, the governing body and employees of a charter school shall be governed by Florida Statutes. The School Board shall assume no liability for actions of the governing body of the charter schools or its employees.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 1001.41, 1001.42, F.S.
LAW(S) IMPLEMENTED: 1001.02, 1001.43, 1002.33, F.S.
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RULE(S): 6A-6.0781
HISTORY: **ADOPTED:** June 16, 1997
REVISION DATE(S): 12-26-74, 12-25-74, 02-08-82, 01-14-02, 12-08-03; 01-16-07
FORMERLY: 3.32