



QUALITY SCHOOL STANDARDS

Standard I

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A quality charter school promotes student learning through implementation of a clear mission and vision and high expectations for every student. It provides a research-based curriculum and effective instructional methods. It allocates resources effectively. The school achieves clear, measurable program standards and school academic objectives, including meeting its stated performance standards, differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all learners, and increasing student achievement.

Objectives

- 1) The school achieves clear, rigorous, measurable program standards and student learning objectives.**
 - a) The charter clearly articulates curricular content and performance standards, including the minimum student performance required for advancement or graduation.
 - b) The school meets stated academic performance objectives as stated in the charter.
 - c) The school makes adequate yearly progress in meeting academic goals as defined by NCLB.
- 2) The school develops, articulates, and coordinates research-based curriculum and clearly defined expectations for student learning, including essential and enduring knowledge and skills that are consistent with the school's purpose and charter.**
 - a) The school utilizes a coherent, research-based curriculum.
 - b) The curriculum is reviewed at regular intervals and revised as necessary.
- 3) The school supports instruction that is research-based and reflective of best practices.**
 - a) The school establishes expectations and provides opportunities for student engagement in the learning process, including opportunities for students to apply higher order thinking skills.
 - b) Teachers utilize resources for learning experiences beyond the limits of the textbook and classroom including technology and community resources.
- 4) The school allocates appropriate resources in the way of scheduling, curricular materials, instructional services, staff, staff development, and facilities to promote high levels of student achievement.**
 - a) The school allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning.
 - b) Adequate teacher planning, collaboration, and reflection time is allocated.
 - c) The school coordinates and ensures ready access to instructional technology, information and media services, and materials necessary to facilitate effective instruction.
 - d) Instructional supports for gifted, special needs, remedial and English language learners are fully implemented.
 - e) The school supports professional development that is aligned with charter goals and staff needs.
 - f) The school utilizes the facility space and resources to effectively implement the instructional program.



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- 5) The school implements a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student achievement and school effectiveness.**
- a) The school establishes and implements a comprehensive assessment system, aligned with the school's expectations for student learning, that yields information which is reliable, valid, and unbiased.
 - b) A system is in place to measure and report on-going progress of students.
 - c) The school demonstrates growth in student performance that is supported by qualitative and quantitative measures.
 - d) Achievement gaps among student sub-groups are identified and regularly addressed through differentiated instruction to meet the diverse needs of all learners.
 - e) The school ensures that student assessment data are used to make decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning.
 - f) The school provides a system of communication which uses a variety of methods to report student performance.
 - g) The school uses comparison and trend data from comparable schools and systems to evaluate student performance and school effectiveness.
 - h) The school maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student information system in accordance with state and federal regulations.

Evidence

- Charter performance objectives
- Standardized Test Scores
- AYP Status
- Curriculum Support Documents (e.g., curriculum maps, etc.)
- Narrative of Assessment Program (formative, summative, documents, etc.)
- Narrative Describing Support Programs (delivery models)
- Hi-lights of success or other qualitative evidence



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Standard II

GOVERNANCE AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

A quality charter school is governed and led by competent individuals who are responsible stewards of the charter’s mission and vision and of public funds and trust. The Governing Board and school leader(s) carry out their duties in a professional, responsible, and ethical manner at all times and use their influence and authority for the primary purpose of achieving student success.

Objectives

- 1) The Governing Board and school leader(s) effectively communicate and engage stakeholders in the mission and vision of the school**
 - a) The school has developed policies and practices that clarify the responsibilities and relationships among the Governing Board members, key leaders, staff, students, and parents.
- 2) The Governing Board is comprised of a diverse group of competent individuals reflecting the school community.**
 - a) The Governing Board consists of individuals with broad backgrounds, education, and experience that support the critical functions of the school such as finance, legal, human resources, marketing, fundraising, policy, et. al.
 - b) The Governing Board has a process or system in place for replacing board members and succession planning for officers and leadership that ensures continuity of mission, vision, and board capacity.
- 3) The Governing Board conducts regular meetings following the Open Meetings Act O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 through 50-14-6 that address critical issues and responsibilities related to school governance such as academic achievement, fiscal health, and policy.**
 - a) Governing Board meetings focus on critical areas such as academic achievement, fiscal health, and policy.
 - b) The Governing Board demonstrates transparency by following all Open Meetings Act requirements such as provision of notice of meetings, public access to meetings, and public access to meeting minutes.
- 4) The Governing Board creates and communicates sound and comprehensive policies related to critical matters such as governance, human resources, fiscal management, operations, discipline, safety, and facility.**
- 5) The Governing Board ensures compliance with non-profit requirements related to conflicts of interest.**
 - a) The Governing Board members execute a Conflict of Interest agreement each year.
 - b) The Governing Board keeps on file or in board meeting minutes full disclosure statements when potential conflicts arise with respect to conversation or business.



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- c) Members of the Board are not closely affiliated with one another (e.g. business relationships, family, or close personal relationships) which may present a potential conflict of interest.
- 6) The Governing Board engages in regular development and self assesses its performance.**
- a) The Governing Board both formally and informally builds capacity through reading professional literature applicable to governance of a public charter school, attending trainings, conferences, or seminars.
 - b) The Governing Board has a formal self assessment process.
 - c) The Governing Board implements policies and procedures providing for orientation and training to new members.
- 7) The Governing Board has a systematic procedure for communicating expectations of the school leader(s), including performance monitoring, professional development, and assessment.**
- a) The Governing Board recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership authority of the school.
 - b) The Governing Board communicates expectations of the school leader(s) at the beginning of each school year.
 - c) The Governing Board regularly, both formally and informally, monitors the performance of the school leader and communicates performance in a timely manner.
 - d) The Governing Board facilitates leadership development opportunities for the school leader (s) consistent with established expectations and levels of competency and performance.
 - e) The Governing Board maintains appropriate documentation of school leader expectations, formal and informal observations and assessments, development, and communications related to performance.
- 8) The school leader(s) engage the staff in regular collaborative meetings to address critical issues and responsibilities related to school administration such as pedagogical practices, student growth and achievement, and school procedures.**
- 9) The school leader(s) creates clear procedures following school policy related to critical matters such as human resources, financial accounting, operations, discipline, instruction, safety, and facility.**
- 10) The school leader(s) provides a systematic analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness and provides direction, assistance, and resources to align, support, and enhance all parts of the school in meeting organizational and student performance goals.**
- 11) The school leader(s) engages in regular professional development and reflective practices.**
- a) The school leader(s) both formally and informally builds capacity through reading professional literature applicable to governance of a public charter school, attending trainings, conferences, or seminars.



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Evidence

- Board Constitution (including roles, background, experience, relationships)
- By-laws
- Board Minutes (or website link)
- Conflicts of Interest Policy and agreement (signed and executed yearly by all board members)
- Board Development Summary
- Staff Meeting Minutes or Other Documentation
- School Leader(s) Professional Development Summary
- School Leader Evaluation Tool
- School Leader Monitoring and Evaluation Summary



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Standard III

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

A quality charter school fulfills its fiduciary responsibility for public funds and maintains transparent fiscal practices and records according to non-profit, state, and local regulatory and reporting requirements.

Objectives

- 1) **The Governing Board and school leader(s) monitor immediate and long-range financial plans to effectively implement the school’s educational program and ensure financial stability.**
- 2) **The school conducts a comprehensive budget process.**
 - a) The school follows a year-long budget planning timeline.
 - b) All stakeholders participate in the budget process.
 - c) Projected revenue calculations are accurately determined.
 - d) Projected expenditures are determined based on historical data or real data collected
 - e) Annual review of the status of significant operating costs, including employee salaries, benefits, facility, etc., are conducted.
- 3) **Financial reports are regularly prepared by the school leader(s) and presented to the Governing Board for oversight and use in short range and long range financial planning.**
 - a) Budget to actual reports are regularly reviewed and carefully monitored.
 - b) Balance sheets are regularly reviewed and carefully monitored.
 - c) Cash flow statements are regularly reviewed and carefully monitored.
 - d) Income and expense statements are regularly reviewed and carefully monitored.
- 4) **Accounts payable obligations are up-to-date, appropriately described, and disclosed in financial statements.**
- 5) **An annual audit is conducted by an independent certified public accountant (CPA).**
 - a) The audit is performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards to ensure that the school’s finances are being managed in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and practices.
 - b) The school receives a school-specific audit report that includes financial statements and audit findings/conclusions specific to the school.
 - c) The audit report includes a management letter commenting on areas of possible improvements (if any) in structures, procedures, and management practices of the school, as well as any factors that would prevent them from issuing an unqualified opinion on the financial statements.



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- d) The Governing Board reviews the audit report and responds to any audit findings and designs a corrective action plan to address these findings.
- e) The audit report is free of material findings or conclusions.
- f) Audit reports are provided in a timely manner to all authorizing bodies and accessible to all stakeholders in accordance with the provisions of the Open Records Act O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 through 50-18-76.

6) The school has a specified Chief Financial Officer who has credentials that are compliant with State Board Rule.

- a) CFO has a baccalaureate or higher degree in business, accounting, finance from an accredited college or university and a minimum of four years experience in a field related to business or finance; or CFO has documented experience of ten or more years in the field of business and financial management.

7) The school remains fiscally sustainable.

- a) Enrollment levels are maintained or show controlled growth.
- b) Staff, leadership, and board retention is maintained at a stable level indicative of a positive school culture and effective governance and management.

Evidence

- Annual audit and management letter
- Form 990
- CFO resume
- Summary of process Board utilizes for reviewing financials (type of reports, frequency)
- Summary of budget process and timeline
- Enrollment trends
- Staff, leadership, and board retention rates



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Standard IV

OPERATIONS, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

A quality charter school operates effectively and efficiently through the appropriate use of resources. The school engages in a process of continuous self-improvement in order to increase the effectiveness of its educational program and ability to meet its mission and charter performance objectives.

Evidence

- 1) The school creates, monitors, and enforces sound and comprehensive policies and procedures.**
 - a) A policy manual including core areas such as board, human resources, financial, instruction, and plant operations, is reviewed yearly, modified as needed, and made available to all stakeholders.
 - b) Additional procedural manuals such as employee handbooks and parent or student handbooks are reviewed yearly and made available to appropriate parties.
- 2) The school establishes and implements processes to recruit, employ, retain, and mentor qualified professional and support staff to fulfill assigned roles and responsibilities.**
- 3) The school establishes and implements a process to assign professional and support staff based on school needs and staff qualifications as may be required by federal and state law and regulation (e.g., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience).**
 - a) The school leader(s) ensures that qualified staff is sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school and to meet federal and state law and regulations, if applicable.
- 4) The school establishes and implements a process to design, evaluate, and improve professional development, and ensures participation by all faculty and staff.**
- 5) The school implements processes and plans for maintaining and improving sites, facilities, and equipment.**
- 6) The school provides technology infrastructure and equipment that is sufficient to accomplish the school's goals.**
- 7) The school provides and coordinates support services that meet the health, counseling, nutrition, and transportation needs of all students.**
 - a) The school provides counseling services that sufficiently address mental, social, and behavioral needs of students.
 - b) The school implements a transportation plan that supports the school's mission, ensures



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accessibility for all students, and complies with all federal and state safety and insurance requirements.

- c) The school implements a nutrition program that supports the school's mission, ensures all students have access to basic nutrition, and complies with all federal and state nutrition requirements.

8) A system is implemented that regularly monitors and evaluates the success of the school's programs and services, success against performance objectives, and stakeholder satisfaction.

- a) The school leader(s) collects achievement data and utilizes the data for school improvement planning.
- b) The school seeks input from stakeholders (e.g., surveys, focus groups, etc.) in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance against performance objectives.
- c) School leader(s) participates in preparation of the annual report.
- d) School leader(s) creates a yearly School Improvement Plan.
- e) School leader(s) creates a yearly Staff Development Plan.

Evidence

- Policy manual (table of contents only)
- Procedural handbook (table of contents only)
- School Improvement Plan
- Staff Development Plan
- Technology summary
- Transportation Plan (include vendors, methods, insurance, etc.)
- Food Service Plan (include vendors, methods, insurance, etc.)
- Summary of Fitness Program
- Summary of Counseling Services



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Standard V

LEGAL & REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

A quality charter school operates following all federal, state, and local legal and regulatory requirements.

Objectives

- 1) Policies adopted by the school are reviewed by legal counsel to ensure compliance with all federal, state, and local legal and regulatory requirements.
- 2) The Governing Board and school leader(s) have a cogent understanding of the laws that govern charter schools and monitor the trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which charter schools operate.
- 3) The Governing Board follows a fully adopted set of bylaws that addresses conflicts of interest, meeting protocols and procedures, and a formal delineation of roles and authorities within a charter school including transition plans (board, leadership, etc.).
- 4) The Governing Board ensures compliance with all charter contract requirements.
- 5) The Governing Board ensures compliance with all federal, state, and local laws, regulations, standards, and mandates.
- 6) The Governing Board ensures compliance with all IRS non-profit regulations.
- 7) The school has a clearly defined grievance and conflict resolution procedures for students, parents, and staff that are communicated to all stakeholders.
- 8) The school maintains access to legal counsel to advise or obtain information about legal requirements and obligations.

Evidence

- By-Laws
- Whistleblower Policy
- Document Retention and Destruction Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Name of legal counsel and contact information
- Grievance and Conflict Resolution Policy



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Standard VI

SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

A quality charter school assures the safety of all staff, students, parents, and visitors and proactively manages risk to the organization.

Objectives

- 1) The school maintains adequate insurance or equivalent resources to protect its financial stability and administrative operations.
- 2) The school ensures the safety of the students and protection of school assets by employing criminal background checks on board members, staff members, contractors, and volunteers or chaperones working directly with students.
- 3) The school utilizes a safety committee to oversee and report safety concerns to the administration.
- 4) The school maintains sites, facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, orderly, and healthy environment.
- 5) The school establishes and implements written security and crisis management plans with appropriate training for all stakeholders.
- 6) The school maintains Certificates of Insurance on all contractors or vendors.
- 7) The school implements and enforces policies that reduce hazards and risks to the school.
 - a) The school implements and enforces policies related to personnel and employment practices.
 - b) The school implements and enforces policies related to school security, building access, etc.
 - c) The school implements and enforces policies related to transportation, field trips, and special activities.
 - d) The school implements and enforces policies and provides employee training related to harassment, abuse, and drug and alcohol matters.
- 8) The school provides employee training on Workers Compensation issues.
- 9) The school has a comprehensive student discipline policy (including due process procedures for suspension and expulsion) that maximizes safety and learning time.
- 10) The school employs measures for monitoring compliance with Special Education mandates.



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Evidence

- School security summary (reference any policies, systems, or specific practices)
- Crisis Management Plan
- Summary of insurance coverage and amounts
- Narrative of criminal background check practices
- Acknowledgement of staff training (Y/N) on harassment, abuse, drug and alcohol use, and workers compensation
- Student Discipline Policy and due process procedures



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Standard VII

CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

A quality charter school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders and ensures the establishment of shared accountability for student achievement.

Objectives

- 1) The school fosters collaboration with and solicits the knowledge and skills of community businesses, civic groups, educational entities, and stakeholders to support student learning.
- 2) The school employs strategies to listen to and communicate timely and meaningful information to all stakeholders.
- 3) The school communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders.
- 4) The school creates and supports collaborative networks of stakeholders to support the school's programs.
- 5) The school provides opportunities such as committees, focus groups, surveys, etc. for stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process.
- 6) The school generates and sustains a school culture reflective of the charter's mission and vision that is conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Evidence

- Narrative of community involvement and partnerships
- Narrative of parent communication vehicles
- Narrative of collaborative efforts with authorizer
- Narrative of specific practices related to building culture
- Satisfaction surveys from parents, staff, and students