The Colorado Charter School Handbook:

A Guide for Starting and Operating a Charter School

Colorado Department of Education

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http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_charter.htm
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Getting Started

1. What is a Charter School?

In Colorado, a charter school is a public school operated by a group of parents, teachers, and/or community members as a semi-autonomous school of choice, operating under a contract or "charter" contract between the members of the charter school community and the authorizer. The school must be nonsectarian and non-home-based, but may be web based under certain circumstances. Applications may not be submitted to convert an existing private school or non-public home-based educational program into a charter school that is authorized by the local school district. In Colorado, charter schools may be authorized by either a local Board of Education or the state Charter School Institute, under certain circumstances.

> For a complete listing of school districts with exclusive chartering authority go to:
> http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/download/DispositionofRes.pdf
>
> The Charter Schools Institute website is at: http://www.csi.state.co.us/

In a charter school, each student, parent and teacher chooses the school. The "charter," as defined in the Charter Schools Act, Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S.) 22-30.5-101 et. seq., describes the school's goals, standards, education design, governance and operations. The degree of autonomy to be exercised by the charter school on such issues as personnel, curriculum and facilities is negotiated between the charter applicants and the authorizer and reflected in the charter. School-centered governance, autonomy, and a clear design for how and what students will learn are the essential characteristics of a charter school. Under Colorado law, a charter school is not a separate legal entity independent of the authorizer, but rather is a public school defined uniquely by a charter, and partially autonomous, while remaining under the auspices of the authorizer. The approved charter application and accompanying attachments/amendments are the charter application, which serves as the basis for a contract (or charter), between the charter school and the authorizer.

2. Purpose of Charter Schools

In authorizing charter schools, the General Assembly created an avenue for parents, teachers and community members "to implement new and innovative methods of educating children that are proven to be effective and to take responsible risks and create new and innovative, research-based ways of educating all children within the public education system."

A charter school's program must be consistent with the purposes set forth in C.R.S. 22-30.5-102(2):

(a) To improve pupil learning by creating schools with high, rigorous standards for pupil performance;
(b) To increase learning opportunities for all pupils, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for pupils who are identified as academically low-achieving;
(c) To encourage diverse approaches to learning and education, and the use of different, innovative, research-based, or proven teaching methods;
(d) To promote the development of longitudinal analysis of student progress, in addition to participation in the Colorado student assessment program, to measure pupil learning and achievement;
(e) To create new employment options and professional opportunities for teachers and principals, including the opportunity to be responsible for the achievement results of students at the school site;
(f) To provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of education opportunities that are available within the public school system;
(g) To encourage parental and community involvement with public schools;
(g.5) To address the formation of research-based charter schools that use programs that are proven to be effective;
(h) To hold charter schools accountable for meeting state content standards, as measured in part by the Colorado student assessment program and by longitudinal analysis of student progress, through state accreditation, and by adequate yearly progress as defined by federal law;
(i) To provide an avenue for citizens to participate in the educational process and environment; and
(j) To provide citizens with multiple avenues by which they can obtain authorization for a charter school.

3. The History of Charter Schools in Colorado

In 1993, state Senator Bill Owens (R) and state Representative Peggy Kerns (D) introduced the original Charter Schools Act, which received bi-partisan support and was signed into law. The original Act created Part One (C.R.S. 22-30.5-101 et. seq.). The original philosophy of the Act was that charter schools would be smaller environments to experiment with educational programs and develop innovative ways to educate at-risk students. A small number of large, urban school districts were reticent to the idea of charter schools and so many of the first charter schools started in suburban areas where parents had the capacity to develop a charter school.

The legislature, in 1996, appointed an advisory committee to develop recommendations for improving the Charter Schools Act. Subsequent revisions were made to the Act in 1997 and 1998. One of the changes was amending the legislative intent of the Act to include proven-to-be-effective educational programs as a reason for charter schools to operate.

In 1997 the General Assembly passed the Charter School District law, Part Two of the Charter Schools Act, which provided an opportunity for school districts to become "charter districts." The law was enacted as a pilot program, never used and was repealed in 2003.

The original Charter Schools Act carried a sunset date of June 30, 1998. That year the General Assembly eliminated the sunset and recognized the success of charter schools in the state. In the fall of 1998, 60 charter schools were operating, enrolling

about 14,495 students. Almost half of the operating charter schools were open due to the appeal provision in the Act.

A major issue of concern to charter schools in 1998 was the financing of facilities. The Act was amended that year to allow charter schools to seek bonds through the Colorado Educational and Cultural Facilities Authority (S.B. 98-82). The bond offerings were rated by Standards & Poors Corporation, thus becoming the first charter schools in the nation to ever be rated by a national rating agency.[1]

Originally the Charter Schools Act funded charter schools at 80% of the Per Pupil Operating Revenue (PPOR) if the school was in a district-owned facility and 85% PPOR if it was leasing or purchasing a facility. After passing a bill in 1998 that then-Governor Roy Romer vetoed, the General Assembly passed a new funding formula for charter schools in 1999. Beginning with the 2000-01 budget year, charter schools were funded at 95% Per Pupil Revenue (PPR), with school districts being able to withhold an additional up to five percent for central administrative expenses. In subsequent years, amendments to the law clarified what a school district could charge for administrative expenses. Further, the new funding formula gave charter schools 100% of the Per Pupil Revenues. PPR includes capital and insurance reserve.

As a part of a broader school reform package in 2000, Governor Bill Owens led the effort to adopt an accountability law that would require the mandatory conversion of failing public schools to charter status. S.B. 00-186 created Part Three of the Charter Schools Act, "Independent Charter Schools." The law stipulated that after receiving three consecutive "Unsatisfactory" scores on the School Accountability Report (a.k.a. school report card) a school would be put up for bid to become a charter school. The first school to face such a conversion was Cole Middle School in Denver, converting to KIPP: Cole College Prep Charter School in 2005.

In response to a school district that refused to open a charter school after it was ordered to do so after a second appeal to the State Board of Education, the General Assembly in 2004 passed the Institute Charter Schools law, Part 5 of the Charter Schools Act. The Institute law created a "virtual" statewide school district that could authorize charter schools in a patchwork of school districts that were not granted exclusive chartering authority by the State Board of Education. The law outlined "good authorizer" criteria that a district must meet in order to be granted exclusive chartering authority. In the first year, eleven school districts over 3,000 students did not retain exclusive chartering authority. The Institute received eleven charter school applications in its first year and approved two for opening in the fall of 2005.

Frequently   Asked   Questions: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/faq.htm

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[1] Arrington, Barry and Caldwell, Russell B. Colorado Charter Schools Capital Finance Study: Challenges and Opportunities for the Future; p. 21. 2000. Colorado Department of Education.

4. Starting a Charter School

A. First Steps

Successful charter schools fill a niche in the community. What is the need that your charter school will fill? Identifying the niche will drive the school's marketing plan and ensure that enough students enroll to make the financial plan viable.

Then decide what type of charter school you would like to create to fill the niche. The focus could be the educational program or the school culture. In conjunction with that, a small steering committee should be organized, considering the variety of expertise and strengths individuals bring to the committee. The steering committee writes and submits the charter application to the potential authorizer.

Once the steering committee is established, the first task is to write a vision and mission statement for the charter school. A vision statement defines the "big picture" and the mission statement states how you're going to accomplish that "big picture." Some charter schools have only a mission statement. To begin the development of a vision/mission statement, start by listing "belief statements," or phrases describing the school of your dreams. Talk about what will make your school unique and what will attract people to it. During that discussion, phrases or words will become predominant and the group should gain consensus on what will be included in the vision and mission statements. These statements should be concise and clearly communicate what the charter school will look like once it's operational. Don't use education "jargon" or buzz words.

The vision and mission statements should clearly communicate a message. The statements should clearly tell administrators, teachers, parents and the community what the school will look like in operational terms. Having clear vision and mission statements will help ensure that the charter school develops into the school intended by the founders and remains the same type of school over time.

Next, the steering committee needs to organize its workload. The sample work plan [Attachment A] is based on the contents of the charter school application. Minimally, subcommittees of the steering committee should include: 1. data/research/phone tree, 2. facilities/finance, and 3. application writing. Use whatever structure best suits steering committee members' expertise. Working backwards from statutorily imposed deadlines, such as the application submission deadline, should create deadlines in the work plan.

Some ideas to discuss when planning a charter school:

→ Educational philosophy

→ School environment

→ Discipline/character education

→ Methodology (how the curriculum will be delivered)

→ Size of school

→ School location

→ A typical student

→ A parent's role in their child's education

→ Research-based, proven-to-work programs

B. Contact your Potential Authorizer

In Colorado, both the local school district and the state Charter School Institute can authorize charter schools. All applicants can apply to their local school district. Charter applicants can only apply for an Institute charter school if their school will be located in a district that does not have exclusive chartering authority. http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/download/DispositionofRes.pdf

Schedule a meeting with the staff member designated by your potential authorizer. Introduce your steering committee members, your vision for your school and find out if there is any information you need to be aware of in the process of applying to your authorizer. Obtain a copy of the school district's policy for accepting and processing charter school applications. If applying to the Charter School Institute, obtain their Request for Proposals.

C. Contact the Colorado Department of Education (CDE)

The Schools of Choice Unit at CDE provides technical assistance to charter schools and charter school authorizers. The unit maintains an email listserv that is required for all operating charter schools and encouraged for developing charter schools. Information and notices are distributed through that listserv. To sign up for the listserv, email Denise Mund at: Mund_D@cde.state.co.us

Learn everything you can about charter schools:

1. Read the federal No Child Left Behind Act [http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/edpicks.jhtml?src=az]

2. Read the Colorado Charter Schools Act [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/csact.htm]

3. Visit websites. Read everything on the CDE Charter Schools website and visit each of the links for more information from other websites.

4. Read reports and studies about charter schools. Learn which factors influence success or failure.

5. Visit other charter schools and non-charter schools with the same or similar educational programs.

6. Network with other charter school administrators, board members and parents.

7. Make sure your charter school will rely on research-based, proven-to-be-effective programs and/or strategies.

D. The Charter Application Process

I. Share your Dream

Hold meetings for prospective parents to learn about your school. These meetings could be held at an existing public school, public library, city council meeting room or in someone's home. At the meetings, distribute information about your school, contact information, Letters of Intent to Enroll forms, website addresses or any other related material. Have samples available of the curriculum you plan to use. Make sure steering committee members meet each of the prospective parents and are available to answer any questions.

At the meeting, provide a handout with information on the school, including the vision and mission statements, grade levels to be served, a description of the educational program and contact information. This document should look professional as it will give a first impression of your school.

Contact key members of your community to talk about your developing charter school. Talk to business leaders, neighbors of the proposed facility location, civic organizations and legislators. Provide them written information about your school and how to contact one or two steering committee members. As often as possible, meet face to face with people rather than relying on email or the telephone.

II. Creating and Sustaining Interest in the Proposed Charter School

The charter school application requires evidence of support for the application. The primary method for collecting information on prospective students is a Letter of Intent to Enroll form. Letter of Intent to Enroll forms may also be posted on the developing charter school's website. Before writing an enrollment policy, read the section on enrollment in Part 2.2.

From the Letter of Intent forms, create a database to use in creating grade level wait lists and a telephone tree. If email addresses are included, create a mass email distribution list for the school. Use the telephone tree, email and/or the website to keep interested parents informed on the progress of the charter school application. Several developing charter schools have periodically released a school newsletter to keep interested parents and staff members apprised of the charter school's progress.

Sending out media releases is an inexpensive way to disseminate information about a proposed charter school. Send out a media release for every parent information meeting that is scheduled. Include information about the proposed school, the grade levels it will serve and provide contact information for interested parents. Be concise and succinct in writing the media release. Write it so that prospective parents can capture the vision for the proposed school and can easily understand the educational program and values of the school.

The parent information meeting should not be longer than one hour. Explain your vision for the school, introduce the steering committee and answer questions. Be extremely wary of providing too much detail about your proposed school. It may be a very clear dream in your mind, but sometimes the difference between the initial dream and reality never take place. For example, instead of saying that a student caught cheating on a test will receive detention, simply state that the steering committee will make every effort to hire a skilled and experienced Principal that will fulfill the governing board's values for a school committed to student's attaining their highest academic and character potential.

III. Critical Dates for Applicants and New Charter Schools

August: CDE conducts a grant writer's seminar that is required for startup applicants submitting in tier one of the grant program. For more detail on which schools apply in either tier one or tier two, read the Request for Proposals at http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/cchgrn00.htm A shortened version of the seminar is repeated in January for tier two startup grant applicants. CDE prefers attendance at the August training.

August 15 to October 1: Timeframe in which school districts or the Charter School Institute accept charter school applications. Check with the authorizer for the exact date. Once an application has been received, the Charter School Institute has 60 days to make a decision and local school boards have 75 days to make a decision.

October 1: The official student count date in Colorado. The count determines per pupil funding for schools.

October: Tier One Startup Grant Applications are due to CDE. Check the CDE website for more details. http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/cchgrn00.htm

December 1: The official Special Education count date. The count determines the Special Education funding received from federal and state categorical funding.

January: CDE conducts a grant writer's seminar for startup grant applicants submitting in tier two of the grant program.

March: Tier Two Startup Grant Applications are due to CDE.

IV. Appeal Process for Denied Applicants

Charter school applicants that are denied by the local board of education or the state Charter School Institute may appeal that decision to the State Board of Education under a process defined in 22-30.5-108 and 511, C.R.S.

Application Components

1. Planning for the Charter Application

At the heart of the charter is a clear statement of mission, goals, philosophy, values and principles that serve to guide the creation and operation of the learning environment and the school community. A charter school must have a clear purpose. The charter should be developed as the result of effective, research-based methods and strategies. The charter school should implement innovative strategies and proven methods for improving student achievement, which are developed in association with state model content standards. Assessments need to be incorporated into the school's program.

State model content standards [http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stnd.htm]

Teaching methodologies, school management, and governance should be based on reliable research and effective practices. The charter school should embody a comprehensive design for effective school functioning, including data-driven instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, and school management, that aligns with the school's curriculum, technology, faculty and finances into an implementation plan.

A charter application also contains elements similar to a business plan. The application describes the school's design regarding such issues as: budget, employment, contracted services, governance, facilities, special education, content standards, curriculum and assessment of students.

The application process should consist of a series of meetings, dialogues and negotiations between the applicants and appropriate authorizer staff and authorizer board members. The open sharing of information and ideas between all parties is essential to the process and the development of a successful charter school. Early, informal discussions between the applicant and the authorizer are highly encouraged before the official application is submitted. This may help in the development of a quality and successful application. In the best case scenario, most issues can be informally resolved before the official application is submitted to the authorizer and the statutory review process and timeline begin.

Tips:

- Note the differences in application requirements for a local school district and the Charter School Institute. The format and contents differ, so contact your potential authorizer before writing an application.

- Refine and bring definition to your dream.

- Ensure that your academic program will be a success by using research-based, proven-to-be-effective programs and strategies pertaining to your targeted student population.

- Ensure that your application meets state and federal laws. For example, school goals must conform to the federal requirement for meeting Adequate Yearly Progress by the year 2014.

2. Components of the Charter Application

I. Guidelines

Every charter school application is essentially an explanation of how the proposed school will look once it's open. The application should be specific. If the authorizer provides a Request for Applications, such as is provided by the Charter School Institute, follow the instructions completely. Explain information in your narrative rather than directing the reader to an attachment. An authorizer does not need to accept, nor act on, an incomplete charter school application.

For the purposes of this publication, the application components being used are those listed in the Charter School Institute's Request for Applications. This is done because there are more components than most school districts use, therefore providing more information.

a. Mission Statement

A charter school application must have a mission statement for the proposed school. Many schools have both a vision and a mission statement. The vision statement is a statement of how the charter school will look once it is operating (the big picture view). The mission statement is how the school intends to make that vision a reality.

The mission statement should be succinct, easy to understand and remember. Many schools post their vision/mission statement throughout their building and use it in their printed materials (e.g. Parent/Student Handbook). Resist the temptation to please everyone with the mission statement. Instead define your school for potential students, parents and staff. Be as clear as possible and don't use education "jargon." Again, be clear so as to lend clarity to those who will ultimately implement the vision over the life of the charter school.

During this discussion, many founders name their charter school. Before deciding on a school name, consult the list of established charter schools and don't replicate or use a similar name for your new charter school.

b. Goals, Objectives and Pupil Performance Standards

This section should be based on the state Accreditation Indicators, which can be found at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_accredit.htm. It is understood that there are not actual baseline test scores, attendance rates or other data before the school is established. A charter applicant can either use the district average as a baseline and/or state that a baseline will be established in the first year of operation. The authorizer may use this section of the charter school application as a basis for the accreditation plan it creates with the approved charter school.

In Colorado, there are multiple forms of accountability on which public schools, including public charter schools, are measured. The State Board of Education has approved accreditation contracts with each of the school districts and the Charter School Institute. School districts and the Institute, in turn, accredit each of their public schools. The process for individual public schools to be accredited oftentimes mirrors the authorizer's accreditation plan. Reviewing the authorizer's accreditation plan would be helpful before writing this section.

In addition to Accreditation Indicators required by state law, a charter school may choose to have other measures for which they wish to be held accountable. Those indicators may include school climate or affective measures. Be sure to only include measures that the charter school is willing to be held accountable to over time as these additional indicators would become a part of the school's accountability plan.

c. Evidence of Support

A charter school application should include the aggregate number of students interested in the charter school at the different grade levels. Individual student and/or family information should NOT be included in the charter school application. Do NOT include copies of the Letters of Intent completed by prospective parents. Instead include a table with the different grade levels and the total number of students interested in that grade level. After the charter school is approved, the founders will go through an enrollment process and verify which students will be attending the charter school. See 22-30.5-106(3), C.R.S. for more information.

It may also be helpful to include letters of support from community leaders, business people, or elected officials in your charter application. These letters should state why the individual believes a new charter school would best serve the community,

d. Educational Program

A charter school application should include a description of the school's educational program, pupil performance standards, and curriculum, which must meet or exceed content standards and must be designed to enable each pupil to achieve such standards. Content standards are specific statements of what a student should know or be able to do relative to a particular academic area or areas. Instruction and assessment, in a standards based system, should be aligned with Colorado's content standards. Colorado model content standards and suggested grade level expectations are online at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/

There should be a research basis for selecting a particular curriculum. In addition to obtaining information from the publisher, research is available online at ERIC [http://www.eric.ed.gov] and the What Works Clearinghouse

[http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/]. Make sure that the research supports using the curriculum with the student body your school will likely attract.

e. Plan for Evaluating Pupil Performance

A charter school application should include a clear plan for evaluating pupil performance across the curriculum. This plan should align to state performance standards as well as the school's pupil performance goals, and should be presented along with a clear timeline for achieving these standards/goals. A clear explanation of the types of assessments and frequency of administration should be included reflecting thoughtfulness given to tracking student progress while still preserving as much class learning time as possible. A plan for the use of data gathered through assessments should include procedures for taking corrective action (both individually and collectively) if pupil performance falls below expected standards.

A quality assessment plan will include summative (end-of-year) assessments as well as formative (more frequent, end of unit assessments) to track student skill and knowledge development. The plan will include how this data will be used to guide professional development of teachers as well as how this data will be used to guide refinement of the curriculum.

When developing the assessment plan, consideration should be given to: the appropriateness of your assessments to your curriculum; what will serve as your baseline for student progress comparisons; the inclusion of state and federal assessments to demonstrate appropriate student growth (Ex: CSAP, AYP, CBLA); the ability of your assessment plan to allow early detection of students struggling with curriculum content; and, the ability of assessments to reflect the use of basic skills at grade-appropriate levels (Ex: reading, writing, problem-solving, etc.).

Please be aware that all Colorado public schools, including charter schools, are subject to the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP), which is aligned with the model state content standards. Contact the Colorado Department of Education's Assessment office at 303-866-6664 or use the CDE website, www.cde.state.co.us/index_assess.htm, for detailed information regarding this program. In addition, all Colorado public schools, including charter schools, are subject to the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) which mandates that all students will be reading on the third grade level by the end of the third grade before they can move on to a fourth grade reading class. This law requires that the reading growth of all students be monitored carefully from kindergarten through third grade. Students not reading on that grade level must be placed on Individual Literacy Plans (ILP). CSAP is an integral part of this process and all third graders are required to participate in the state reading program and test, which is a part of CSAP. Further information about CBLA is also available on the CDE website at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/action/CBLA/.   Lastly, Colorado public schools are also held responsible for demonstrating Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), all states, schools districts, schools and subgroups of 30 or more students within each school are required to make AYP. It represents the annual academic performance targets in reading and math that the state, school districts, and schools must reach to be considered on track for 100% proficiency by school year 2013-14. To make AYP, a school must (a) assess 95% of its students; (b) reach targets for either proficiency or reduce non-proficiency and (c) reach targets for one other indicator - advanced level of performance for elementary and middle

schools and graduation rate for high schools. Additional information on AYP can be found at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/ayp/index.asp

Finally, if your charter includes high school, you will need to include graduation requirements and how those requirements meet standards put forth by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education for college preparation or how your requirements prepare students to enter the workforce.

f. Budget and Finance

The budget and financial plan for the charter school must include a plan for revenues and expenditures and a plan for compliance with state and federal accounting and reporting requirements.

The proposed budget should be based on reasonable estimates that reflect choices made throughout the rest of the charter application. For example, enrollment projections used elsewhere in the application need to be the same enrollment projections used in the development of the budget. Similarly, facility, insurance, and employment plans discussed in other sections of the application should be reflected in the budget.

The budget should demonstrate an ability to understand the sources of funding available to the charter school and the types of expenditures required to operate the charter school. The primary source of revenue is Per Pupil Revenue (PPR). There are several other sources of revenue, some of which are temporary or restricted and some of which are dependent on market factors other than enrollment. However, PPR is the guaranteed stream of revenue which makes up most of the funding the school receives. When developing the budget, all ongoing expenditures required to operate the school should be supported by PPR.

The amount of PPR varies by school district. A charter school receives 100% of the PPR for the district in which the charter school resides. The charter school authorizer, whether a school district or the Charter Schools Institute, may retain up to 5% of PPR to cover the charter school's portion of the authorizer's central administration costs. In cases where the maximum is withheld, the charter school effectively receives 95% of its school district's PPR. When projecting revenue numbers, the single most important factor to understand is enrollment. Enrollment projections must be accurate and it is best to project conservatively for budget purposes.

Other sources of revenue can be very helpful in funding specific programs or in helping with start up costs for new charter schools. These sources include Federal grants, private grants, and more. CDE (www.cde.state.co.us) and the Colorado League of Charter Schools (www.coloradoleague.org) are good resources for finding information about current sources of funding.

When planning expenditures, it is important to understand how choices affect different areas of the budget. For example, the smaller the class size the less revenue there is to spend. Also, the more staff there is in the school the less money per staff member there is to spend. Finally, as another example, the more money spent on facility costs the less money there is for salaries and other discretionary items.

In nearly all cases, the combination of facility costs and salaries and benefits represents close to 75% of spending in charter schools. As such, close attention should be paid to these two areas. In addition to these two areas, other items that need to be planned for financially include special education, various professional services, classroom supplies and materials, general supplies and materials, liability insurance, and more. Existing Colorado charter schools that have a similar mission/philosophy are a good resource for assistance with planning expenditures.

In addition to budget projections, the charter school must comply with various requirements. In summary, the charter school needs to set up proper accounting procedures to safeguard its assets and to ensure accurate financial reporting. At the same time, it is important to be able to provide financial information in a clear, understandable format that allows board members and administration to make sound financial decisions.

The CDE requirements for financial management and reporting are available in the Financial Policies and Procedures manual at www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/sfFPP.htm. An additional resource with general information is the Colorado Charter School Financial Management Guide at www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/fin/pdf/FinGuide.pdf.

g. Governance

Charter school governance is extremely important to the success of a charter school. Oftentimes a proposed charter school's steering committee transitions to a governing board. The charter school application should describe the process involved in developing the steering committee and the individual expertise represented on the steering committee, the process to appoint or elect the initial governing board, how and when bylaws will be adopted by the board, the governance structure for the school, the nature and extent of parental and/or involvement in governance, and the amount of authority the governing board will convey to the school's administrator.

While some existing Colorado charter schools have staff members on the governing board, others do not. Administrators may be an ex-officio, non-voting board member. If staff members have voting privileges there should be clear policies to delineate when that board member should recuse him/herself. Any potential conflict of interest, by any board member, should be disclosed and addressed.

A good way to mitigate any potential issues with board members is to have the governing board adopt and use a Board Member Agreement. These agreements stipulate the qualifications, responsibilities, and expected behaviors of individual board members and the governance structure. If the steering committee intends for the approved charter school's governing board to use a Board Member Agreement, it could be an appendix to the charter school application.

The charter school application should also describe the school's legal status. Many charter schools file Articles of Incorporation and bylaws with the Secretary of State in order to have their school recognized as a corporation. About half of the existing charter schools have organized as a membership corporation. The Articles and bylaws define the authority that rests in the charter school governing board and in essence, "who holds the charter." These legal issues should be discussed with a charter school attorney before decisions are made. Additionally, the charter school can apply for its own tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service. Charter

schools can either use their own tax-exempt status or use their authorizer's. Check with the potential authorizer for more information.

The charter school governing board must be in compliance with the Colorado Open Meetings Law (24-6-401, C.R.S.) and Public Records Act (24-72-201, C.R.S.) as well as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act [need Public Law citation]. See http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/pdf/OpenMeetings-RecordsMemo.pdf for more information on the Open Meetings and Open Records laws.

Every charter school governing board should have a set of board policies. Much of what is included in the charter school application will become board policy. For instance, the school's vision/mission statement, legal status, enrollment policy, discipline policy and nondiscrimination policy will all be in the board policy book. These board policies should be made available to school staff and families. Generally schools put these policies on their website and have them available in the school office.

Many sample best practice documents for charter school governing boards are available online at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/index.htm

h. Employees

A charter school must provide an explanation of the relationship that will exist between the charter school and its employees. This must include evidence that the terms and conditions of employment are addressed with affected employees and their recognized representative, if any. Also, proposed employment policies must be included.

As charter schools are, by statute, public schools, employees of charter schools are public employees. Charter schools and their employees must participate in Colorado's Public Employees' Retirement Association (PERA) or in the Denver Public Schools retirement fund. This is in lieu of participation in social security, which makes up the majority of the FICA payroll tax. However, the Medicare portion of FICA is still paid by the employees and matched by the employer. This is currently 1.45% of gross salary.

With the growing presence of private educational management organizations, questions are arising about the nature of employees in some charter schools. This is a result of some educational management companies treating employees as employees of the private company, as opposed to employees of the public school. These determinations need to be made with legal counsel, but the nature of employees should be clearly outlined in the charter application.

There are several resources that provide more information about employment issues. Tax information is available at www.irs.gov and through the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment at www.coworkforce.com. Additional information about PERA can be found at www.copera.org. Finally, a human resources manual developed through CDE can be found at www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/download/HREmploymentManual.pdf.

i. Insurance Coverage

Charter schools must have appropriate insurance coverage. This includes workers compensation, liability insurance, and insurance for the building and its contents. Charter schools are public entities and liability is limited by the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act, C.R.S. 24-10-101 et seq.

The risk management office in your local school district is a very good resource for finding information about your particular insurance needs. Also, the Colorado School District Self Insurance Pool is the insurance provider for many charter schools and can provide information. Once insurance needs are understood, costs need to be estimated and incorporated into the proposed budget.

j. At-risk and Community Involvement

One of the most distinctive characteristics of charter schools is that they are a choice school. Due to this, many charter schools have a small school atmosphere and a culture of everyone belonging to the community.

It is important for charter school developers to provide adequate notice to the community about the possibility of their charter school. Some parts of the community may take additional outreach. For example, fliers may need to be published in a second language. Many charter developers have delivered fliers to individual homes in a community.

Be clear about what the new charter school will look like and the process for getting the school approved. Establish early the school's value for meaningful parental involvement. Explain to parents their role in the charter school through volunteering, monitoring their child's education and holding the school accountable. Designate an individual on the steering committee to follow up with parents that are interested in getting involved with the development of the charter school.

Network with established civic and community organizations in the community your school will serve. Whenever possible, arrange to have Parent Information Meetings in that community. Be sure to reach out to a broad cross-section of the community.

k. Enrollment Policy

The Charter Schools Act allows the authorizer and the charter applicant the flexibility to use any enrollment policy, such as a wait list or lottery. The federal sub grant, administered by CDE, requires the use of a lottery. Many charter schools have elected to use a lottery in order to access these startup and implementation grant funds. More information on lottery requirements can be found in the grant's Request for Proposals at http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/cchgrn00.htm

State law does require a public charter school to not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services.

Charter School Lottery Policies Should Address:

- The date of the annual lottery

- The definition of a "founding family"

- How the community will receive adequate notice about the formation of a new charter school

- Any requirement for parents to reaffirm their intent to enroll on an annual basis

- What happens to names not drawn in the lottery

- How siblings of enrolled students are handled in the process

- How long parents have to make a decision on whether or not their child will attend the school

I. Transportation

A charter school may choose not to provide any transportation services or may choose to negotiate with their school district, or private provider to provide transportation services for its students.

If a charter school chooses to provide transportation services, a plan must be included in the application. The plan should include provisions for transporting students to and from the charter school and their homes and to and from the charter school and any extracurricular activities. Also, a description of how the charter school plans to meet the needs specifically of low-income and academically low-achieving pupils should be included.

The provision of transportation services has several implications. First of all, the cost must be included in the charter school's budget. Part of the route expenses may be eligible for reimbursement from the state. Secondly, insurance and liability issues must be addressed when assessing the charter school's overall insurance needs. Finally, many federal (IDEA, NCLB, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, etc), and state rules and regulations relate to the provision of transportation services. The common areas of regulation include, but are not limited to:

1. All school vehicles transporting students must meet CDE minimum standards and have a yearly inspection conducted by a CDE certified inspector. (1 CCR 301-25 and 29)

2. The drivers must meet CDE training and certification requirements. (1 CCR 301-26)

3. There are daily operational CDE requirements, such as: pre-trip inspection, proper railroad crossing procedures, student stop, and hours of service. (1 CCR 301-26)

4. There are state statutes governing route operation including that the school needs permission of the neighboring school district before transporting students from that district. (CRS 22-32-113)

For more information, the School Transportation Unit at CDE can be reached at 303-866-6661. This information is also available on the CDE website at http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_transportation.htm

m. Food Service

> Note: While the Charter Schools Act does not explicitly ask the applicant to include information on food service, it is wise to specify what the charter school plans to do.

The provision of school food service is at the option of each local school district and charter school. The three food service options available to charter schools are:

1. Participation in the district's food service program. Students attending charter schools in Colorado are eligible to participate in the federal Child Nutrition programs (National School Lunch, School Breakfast, After School Snack, and Special Milk). Participation in these federal programs is available only through the district's non-profit food service operation. Donated commodity foods and federal cash reimbursements are available to the district food service operation, to help support the program, and to provide for meals free or at a reduced price to eligible students. Plans for food services in a charter school must be coordinated through the district's food service department. There are numerous variables that the district's food service department must take into account before considering the inclusion of a charter school. These would include, but not be limited to, the available facility and related health department approval, a food service delivery system which will best meet the nutritional needs of the students, as well as the financial viability and compliance with numerous state and federal regulations.

2. Non-participation in the federal Child Nutrition programs. Should a charter school elect not to take advantage of the benefits of the federal Child Nutrition programs, alternate catered food service may be arranged either through the district's non-profit food service operation on an a la carte basis, or through an outside caterer.

3. No provision for formal food service. Parents would provide meals for the children to bring to school.

If the charter school elects option 2 or 3, above, yet still wishes to establish a similar free or reduced eligibility status for their students for School Finance, Title 1, or other program purposes, the following should be noted. As the school will not be participating in the federal Child Nutrition Programs, USDA regulations do not permit use of the federal meal programs form to make eligibility determinations. CDE has developed an alternate form which must be used, the Family Economic Data Survey, which can be found on the Nutrition Unit's web site (below).

Additional information regarding Colorado School Nutrition programs is available at: www.cde.state.co.us/index_nutrition.htm.

n. Facilities

One of the greatest challenges to opening a new school is finding a suitable facility. The most important thing during the application process is to plan as much as possible and to clearly articulate those plans. It can be difficult to negotiate for facility space without having an approved charter. It is not necessary to have a signed formal agreement for a facility during the application process, but any viable options should be explained and should include reasonable space requirements, a reasonable plan for space utilization, a discussion of how the facility will be ready for use when the school opens, and, most importantly, reasonable costs of that facility which must be reflected in the proposed budget.

Charter schools may rent, lease, own, or otherwise finance facility space. In some cases, a school district may have an unused facility, and in some cases a charter school may share space with another tenant. Many charter schools have been able to finance their own facilities with tax-exempt bond financing through the Colorado Educational and Cultural Facilities Authority (CECFA). These are typically schools that are established, but information can be found by calling CECFA at 303-297-2538.

With any facility, building permits and inspections are required. Life and safety requirements (including asbestos regulations) apply to rented or contributed facilities as well. The state is responsible for issuing certificates of occupancy for public schools and information can be obtained by calling Wayne Horn, in the Department of Labor at 303-572-2919. In addition, contact your community's planning and zoning department, as well as the facilities director for your school district for further information.

o. Amendment 23 One-percent Increase

Amendment 23 guarantees a minimum increase in base per pupil funding of the rate of inflation plus one percent each year through 2011. As part of that guarantee, school districts, including charter schools, must state how they plan to use the one percent increase in the ensuing fiscal year. As part of the application process, charter schools should state how they plan to use that one percent increase in its future years. These statements are typically broad and may include purposes such as raising student achievement, reducing class size, or other purposes.

p. Waivers

The technical means by which charter schools operate is via waiver from certain state laws, state rules and/or school district policies. Information on applying for waivers from the state is on the CDE Charter Schools website at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_charter.htm under Technical Assistance. Charter schools applying for waiver of school district policies, should contact their charter school liaison if those policies are not listed on the school district's website. An example of a waiver application can be found in the CDE Charter Schools Electronic Guidebook of Best Practices at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/index.htm

The Colorado State Board of Education has determined that 13 statutes may be automatically waived for charter schools. Charter schools may request waivers from

statutes in addition to those automatic waivers, but the process for approval is different.

There are two philosophies on charter schools obtaining waivers. Some believe that authority is given to the charter school via the charter contract, making some waivers unnecessary. In particular, the Board Powers (22-32-109 and 110, C.R.S.) are considered "delegatory" rather than "substantive." In other words, the charter school governing board is delegated the authority that otherwise would belong to the school district board of education. Others believe that obtaining a waiver is an assurance against charter contracts that may be renegotiated and therefore, less secure for the charter school. A charter school developer should obtain legal counsel for which waivers are sought from either the state or the authorizer.

q. Student Discipline, Expulsion, or Suspension

Although all charter schools must meet the minimum standards for student discipline, expulsion and suspension, they don't have to fit into the traditional "box." Charter schools can have their own policies as long as the statutory minimums are met. Many charter schools have sought and obtained waivers from related laws that provide for flexibility and a unique approach to student discipline.

Refer to 22-33.106 et. seq., C.R.S. is the Suspension, Expulsion and Denial of Admission law, for more detailed information.

Most charter school contracts stipulate which party (the authorizer or the charter school) has the authority to suspend or expel students. 22-33-105(7), C.R.S. states that either a charter school authorized by the Charter School Institute, or the Institute itself, may expel, suspend or deny admission of students. During contract negotiations this issue must be decided. Therefore, the charter application should detail how the charter school proposes to handle student discipline, expulsion and suspension. Many applications include policies that the potential charter school would use. Samples are online at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/fam/index.htm

r. Academic Achievement and Accreditation

A charter school application should include a thorough plan for tracking academic achievement which satisfies the accreditation requirements of the chartering authority. The chartering authority will seek accreditation through the Colorado Department of Education through the Colorado Accreditation Program. Information about this program may be obtained through the CDE website at www.cde.state.co.us/index.accredit.htm.

The charter school application should reflect an understanding of the accreditation requirements of their chartering authority with a clear plan from the charter school outlining how they will obtain the data required by the chartering authority and how they will provide that data to their chartering authority for their use in applying to the CDE for accreditation.

s. Serving Students with Special Needs

As public schools, charter schools must open their enrollment to any student and must provide appropriate special education services as needed for students with

disabilities. The charter school developer should consider the general philosophy of the school when developing the philosophy for delivery of special education services. For instance, a charter school may have an experiential delivery model making the needs of a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) more unique. Further, a charter school with a philosophy that no student "falls through the cracks" may have an aggressive remediation program for students that are not attaining their full academic potential and yet do not qualify for special education services.

While charter schools can obtain waivers from teacher licensure, Special Education licensure cannot be waived.

There are many CDE resources available for charter school applicants to consider when writing this section. Those resources are at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/sped/index.htm   After reading the overview, read the resource on special education funding for direction on the impact to the charter school's operating budget. The sample compliance plan describes how all special education services could be delivered at a charter school. Charter applications should not contain that much detail, however, as legally the charter school application becomes the basis for the charter school contract. By writing that level of detail in the application, the charter school developer would be committing to how exactly particular services would be delivered rather than allowing for flexibility between the authorizer's Special Education Director and the charter school. It is good for the charter school developer to fully understand the scope and depth of services that the charter school will be responsible for, however.

There is a statewide Charter Schools and Special Education Advisory Committee that meets on a regular basis. More information on that committee is at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/sped/index.htm

Authorizer Relations

1. Authorizers

In Colorado, the local school district and the statewide Charter School Institute may authorize charter schools. The Charter School Institute (CSI) may authorize and locate charter schools within the geographical boundaries of school districts that have not retained exclusive chartering authority. The State Board of Education determines which districts should be granted this exclusive authority based on a list of criteria listed in the law [22-30.5-504 et. seq., C.R.S.]. A complete list of districts with exclusive chartering authority is at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/download/DispositionofRes.pdf

A charter applicant from a district that has not retained exclusive chartering authority may apply only to the district, only to the Charter School Institute or to both simultaneously. Charter developers applying to the Charter School Institute are required to notify their school district. Check the Request for Applications at http://www.csi.state.co.us/ for more information.

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) [http://www.charterauthorizers.org] is an association of different authorizers around the country. NACSA has an annual conference and periodic trainings plus a wealth of information and sample policies on its website.

A. Approval Process

Every authorizer publishes its charter application/proposal deadline. Most deadlines are between August 15 and October 1 during the fall prior to the intended opening of the charter school. In addition, the Charter School Institute requires that an Intent to Apply be submitted by August 15. Applicants should check with their potential authorizer for deadlines, checklists or policies that may be helpful during the application process. The Charter School Institute's Request for Applications is at: http://www.csi.state.co.us/

I. Local School District

Once a school district has received a charter application, it has 75 days in which to make a decision on the application. The first step is for a review by a subcommittee of the District Accountability Committee designated to review charter school applications. State law [22-30.5-107 (1.5), C.R.S.] requires the committee to have

one individual with charter school expertise and another individual that is a parent of a charter school student, unless there is no currently operating charter school in the district. The charter school review committee usually meets with the charter applicants and provides written comment on the application to the district's Board of Education. Review committee meetings are open to the public.

Oftentimes, districts ask their department heads (Special Education, Finance, Human Relations, Curriculum and Instruction) to review the charter application and provide written comments. All of these written comments are public record and are available to the charter school applicant.

School districts typically have a person on their staff designated to handle charter school applications. Contact the Superintendent's office in order to know whom to interact with. Communicating with the charter liaison may be best done via email, as it requires both parties to communicate clearly and succinctly and provides a trail for past discussions. It is best to establish an initial meeting with either the Superintendent and/or the charter liaison in order to establish a rapport. Make sure the charter liaison has the applicant's contact information at the end of the meeting.

The school district Board of Education is required to hold public meetings on the charter application. Again, check with the charter liaison, but many school districts will invite the charter applicant to give a short presentation and then respond to questions from the Board. After posting on its agenda and in a public meeting, the Board will vote by resolution on the charter application. If the charter school is approved, it may have a list of contingencies or deadlines in the resolution for approval. The charter applicant will need to meet these requirements and deadlines before the contract is finalized. If the charter application is denied, the Board must cite their reasons for denial in the resolution [22-30.5-107(4), C.R.S.]. The reasons cited in the denial resolution become the basis of an appeal to the State Board of Education should the charter applicant decide to appeal the denial. [See http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeboard/download/brdadminpolicy_charterappeals.pdf for more information on the appeal process.]

II.   Charter School Institute (CSI)

Charter applications are submitted to CSI any time between August 15 and October 1. Once CSI has received a complete application, it has 60 days in which to rule by written resolution. The CSI Board of Directors interviews charter applicants in a public meeting and then in a separate public meetings votes on the application. The CSI requires applications in a specific format, including the use of an electronic budget, all of which is available at: http://www.csi.state.co.us/

In the Institute's inaugural year (winter 2004-05) they retained outside consultants to review the charter applications they received and provide written feedback. Those comments as well as any written comments developed during the interview are public record and should be made available to the charter applicant.

B. Contract Negotiations

Once a charter school application is approved by an authorizer contract negotiations begin. A local school district has 90 days in which to negotiate a charter school

contract and the Charter School Institute has 45 days to negotiate a contract. Most authorizers already have a template contract that they have used previously. If a school district is new to chartering, there are numerous best practice documents available for them to use as models. Many can be found at www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/district/index.htm.

Negotiations usually entail a series of meetings, emails or face-to-face discussions with representatives from the authorizer and the charter school. The Charter Schools Act requires that certain things are included in the contract and the authorizer may require additional provisions. The charter school application serves as the basis for the contract. Every charter school board member should read and know what is in the charter contract. Further, the contract should be made available to the new charter school administrator and be kept on file in the school office as a part of its corporate records.

It is wise to seek legal counsel before signing a charter school contract. Experienced charter school attorneys are familiar with the language of these contracts and can save the charter school developer from experiencing problems in the future.

C. Reporting Requirements

The charter contract will contain some reporting requirements. In addition, the authorizer may have a checklist or calendar of reporting requirements. Frequently, this schedule will align with the authorizer's state reporting requirements. During contract negotiations ask the authorizer for a complete list of data and reports that the charter school must provide.

Further, some authorizers require an annual report. The charter school developer should be clear what expectations the authorizer has for this report. The report may follow the format of the original application, with updated information, or it may be aligned with the state accreditation process and be in the format of an Educational Improvement Plan. In addition to knowing what the report should contain, make sure the charter school's leadership knows who will be expected to prepare the report (administrator, board members, or a combination thereof).

D. Education Management Organizations

There are a variety of Education Management Organizations (EMOs) either currently operating or interested in opening a charter school in the state. EMOs vary considerably in how they're organized. Some are for-profit, others nonprofit. Some have a large parent company; some have a small parent company. Some EMOs provide all services for a charter school board and others are more "technical assistance" companies that provide expertise during the start-up phase.

The most important issue with EMOs is that the charter school governing board should negotiate a contract that is in the best interests of their school. Governing board members should "comparison shop" and check references, including contacting schools already being operated by the company. Minimally, governing board members should know the student academic achievement in the EMOs

operating charter schools, whether in Colorado or other states. If possible, it is good to visit those operating schools to get a feel for how they operate and to speak with staff about pros and cons.

EMO contracts are between the charter school governing board and the EMO company. The charter school authorizer is not party to the contract, but has a vital interest. Many authorizers will ask to review a copy of the EMO contract before it is signed, ask how the relationship was established, and require documentation on which party will hold school assets. The types of agreements that are currently in practice vary greatly. Most importantly, the entire process and the final agreement should be transparent.

See: Chartering a Clear Course: A Resource Guide for Building Successful Partnerships between Charter Schools and School Management Organizations. National Alliance for Public   Charter   Schools,   October   2005.

Part 4 Governing Board Responsibilities

1. Introduction

The charter school application has the foundation for the school's governance detailed in the section on governance. Charter school founders will need to decide three very important issues for the charter school:

- What is the charter school's vision/mission?

- To whom does the charter belong, or where does the power/authority rest?

- What will the school's legal status be?

After those fundamental elements are decided (and typically detailed in the charter application), the initial charter school governing board will further refine the original vision by establishing written policies. The governance structure and roles should be clearly delineated, in writing, to avoid cross-over or micromanaging throughout the future of the school. Charter school governing boards should discuss the balance of power between the board and administration and ensure that the relationship is well documented for future board members and staff.

A healthy balance of power is a governing board focused on "big picture" decisions, strategic planning, policy development, and enhancing the future of the school, while the administrator has the freedom to manage daily operations and the staff. The best way to achieve balance is for board members to discuss what their role is and is not. This is especially important to have defined when hiring the school's first administrator.

Probably the most critical objective for the first year will be for the board to establish the school culture. Boards typically define their school's vision and mission on a day-to-day basis through policy. Rather than making decisions for individual issues, the board should consider policy development that speaks their values on a broader basis. Good communication between the board and the school administrator is especially important in the first year, as both parties learn where their roles overlap and are separate.

Boards have successfully implemented their vision and mission through the development and implementation of a strategic plan. Strategic plans are created with input from key stakeholders in addition to the entire board. The strategic plan gives direction to the administrator by defining priorities. The board can communicate clear administrator expectations by using a strategic plan. Moreover, this type of written documentation of expectations creates a sense of trust and rapport.

Every charter school is legally established through a contract with its authorizer. Its legal standing in addition to the contract may vary considerably. The majority of charter schools in Colorado are independent nonprofit organizations in addition to their nonprofit status as a governmental entity. At least half of the charter schools have been established as a membership organization, meaning the charter belongs to its "members," or parents. Some authorizers do not require charter schools to establish as a nonprofit, however it is considered to be a best practice. The board should specify in policy the legal standing of the charter school.

Checklist for Establishing a Charter School's Legal Standing:

√ File Articles of Incorporation and bylaws with the Secretary of State's office

√ File SS-4 with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in order to obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN)

√ Apply for a sales tax exempt certificate from the Colorado Department of Revenue

√ Purchase Directors and Officers (D & O) insurance

√ If you choose to apply for formal recognition as a tax exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3), file form 1023 with the IRS

√ Register as a business with the Colorado Department of Revenue

2. Establishing Charter School Governance

Quite often the "steering committee" or a significant portion of the steering committee evolves into the founding board. The founding board is established once the charter is approved. There is a significant change in the board's role once the administrator is hired and the school is operational.

It is common for founding boards to have difficulty transferring their focus to leading the school through implementing the vision. Some techniques to mitigate this problem are:

- Don't discuss the school when driving carpool. Keep conversation with other parents light and don't discuss school business.

- Limit board meetings to once a month (the less time the board is physically together the less they can officially act).

- Individual board members should separate their roles by speaking about the different "hats" they wear, such as parent volunteer.

It is extremely important to establish correct principles for board operations such as adhering to the Open Meetings (sunshine) law. Diligence to govern with transparency builds respect and trust within the school community.

Development Stage	Type of Governance	Governance Functions
Planning Pre-charter approval; during the charter school application process	Steering committee (usually a small number of people involved)	* Less formal decision-making process * Carries out all school design decisions & daily operations * Establishes core policies * Conducts managerial duties
Pre-operations Charter approved, contract negotiation phase through opening day	Steering committee transitions to Board of Directors (number of people involved increases)	* Establishes board policies * Writes employee handbook, parent/student handbook, etc. * Conducts managerial duties
Operating Charter School (1-3 years)	Board of Directors (founders step down, turnover on board, staff assumes day-to-day operations)	* Establishes school culture & norms * Ensures adequate resources * Documents policy decisions
Mature (3+ years)	Board of Directors (turnover on board, operating subcommittees, program refined)	* Oversees educational program & financial operations * Trains new members * Addresses facility expansion needs * Renews the charter

A. Governance Structure

The first step is to establish, in writing, the charter school's governance structure and reporting lines. Whenever possible, avoid having more than one person report to the governing board or an individual report to two different bosses. Once the structure is established, document roles and responsibilities for the lead administrator and the governing board.

The initial governing board will establish the tone for future board meetings by deciding how meetings will be conducted and how staff, parents or community members approach the board with issues. Whether the meeting is structured and the board uses Roberts Rules of Order or the board makes decision by consensus, charter school governing boards must document their meetings in written minutes. The atmosphere and tone of a board meeting can be formal or informal, based on the philosophy of each school's board.

Once school founders have signed the charter contract the charter school is officially a public entity and subject to certain meeting notification and public record requirements. It is a good practice to operate with transparency to the public before it is legally required, however. Founding committee meetings should notify interested parents and community members of their meetings and make a written record of those meetings available to the public.

Characteristics of an Effective Charter School Governing Board

1. Passionate, unwavering belief in the charter school's mission and core values.

2. A firm understanding of the charter promises and a clear, consistent way to measure them.

3. Clarity of collective vision—where the school is and where it wants to be in the future.

4. Focus on results.

5. Clarity of roles and responsibilities of the full board, individual trustees and committees.

6. The right structure in terms of board size, composition, committees and officers.

7. Board meetings focused on strategic issues, not just reporting.

8. Clear understanding of the different between governance and management.

9. A school leader who has the time to assist in the creation of effective governance.

10. A strong partnership between the board and the school leader, which is built on mutual trust and respect.

Source: Authorizer Issue Brief, National Association of Charter School Authorizers, September 2005

A. Corporate Documents

In order to establish a new charter school as a legal entity, certain documents must be written. The very first step for a founding committee is to establish a written vision and mission statement. [See Part 2, 2.A. for more information on vision and mission statements.]

The Articles of Incorporation is the document that establishes the corporation with the state. While charter school developers can file their own paperwork with the Secretary of State, it is best to seek legal counsel. Many attorneys charge a flat fee for drafting and filing Articles of Incorporation, drafting bylaws, drafting the Organizational Consent and getting a federal Employer Identification Number for the corporation.

Articles of Incorporation and bylaws must be filed with the Secretary of State in order to have the charter school legally recognized as a corporation. Bylaws contain provisions on the school's legal status, board composition, board structure and roles, meeting frequency and procedures, and the process to amend the bylaws. The Secretary of State's office requires a filing fee. [See http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/business/main.htm for more information.]

Sample bylaws are available at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/index.htm

The question of "to whom does the charter belong" is answered in the bylaws. About half of the state's charter schools have organized as member organizations, while the others have chosen nonmember organizations. Membership organizations require their members (usually parents) to make certain major decisions such as a fundamental change to the original charter like a change in curriculum or the requirement of school uniforms. Nonmember organizations have vested that power in the charter school governing board, which acts as elected representatives of the parents.

An established charter school should not amend its bylaws without proper notification to its authorizer. Many charter applications contain proposed bylaws for the charter school.

The charter school is responsible for keeping certain records on file such as the Articles of Incorporation, bylaws, governing board policies, governing board agendas and minutes. Many schools have purchased fireproof filing cabinets to keep these important corporate documents. Further, charter school governing boards should have a document retention policy that directs staff to keep, periodically review and/or dispose of certain documents on behalf of the organization.

B. Board Expertise & Training

Once a year, shortly after new board members are seated, it is helpful to complete a board profile worksheet in order to ascertain individual members' strengths and weaknesses. A sample is available at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/pdf/JeffersonAcademyBoardProfileWorksheet.pdf The board should discuss these strengths and weaknesses in order to make the best use of each other's time and skills.

Each new board member should be provided a notebook with a copy of the original charter application, the charter contract, bylaws and any other document that is important for the charter school. Every board member should be familiar with these documents.

Board Books are helpful to keep needed information accessible.

Board notebooks contain:

→ The charter school's vision and mission statements

→ The school's strategic plan

→ A list of the year's scheduled board meetings, including agenda items routinely addressed listed under each month

→ A roster of all board members, including their contact information

→ The current year's operating budget

→ Monthly tabs for monthly board packets (agenda, previous meeting's minutes, financial statements, reports, background information or other material)

→ Other documents important to the school such as the Educational Improvement Plan, CSAP data, a staff list, or any other document important to the school's operations

C. Strategic Planning & Goal Setting

With so many important matters needing attention, dealing with complaints or suggestions, and just managing the hectic demands of being a charter school board member, many individuals have a hard time focusing on what is most important for overall success of the charter school. Strategic planning by the governing board takes the grand vision and turns it into something useful. Without even realizing it, board members make certain decisions on behalf of their school. A proactive board will make those decisions in a thoughtful manner, having examined both internal and external factors and after a discussion by the full board and key staff members. Reactive boards will make decisions as a reaction to each new set of circumstances and have a difficult time leading their school to a successful future.

The strategic plan is typically developed during a board retreat or workshop. Those included in developing the strategic plan are board members, the lead administrator, and key staff members. The board may wish to include other key stakeholders such as the school PTO President or School Accountability Committee chair through indirect means (telephone or personal contact) or by inviting them to participate. The group of individuals developing the strategic plan should be fairly small and include a variety of thinking styles and personalities.

The board speaks collectively through the strategic plan and it is used as a primary means of communicating the board's goals and plans. The strategic plan is a way for the governing board to communicate with the lead administrator what it wants accomplished during the school year and allows the administrator to focus his/her efforts. In fact, governing boards may tie the strategic plan to the administrator's evaluation and/or bonus pay. Further, the strategic plan communicates future planning and goals with the staff and parent community. It is also an important document to include in foundation grant applications and certain fundraising packets.

For many charter schools, the strategic plan is their primary document because it is the board speaking with one "voice." The board uses the strategic plan to focus its values and priorities and to measure its progress annually. The potential for personal agendas or strong personalities to disrupt the charter school is mitigated through the use of a strategic plan.

> For a power point presentation on Strategic Planning, go to:
> http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/ppt/StrategicPlanning.ppt

Ideally, a charter school's strategic plan is a 4-5 page document containing the following elements:

→ The school's vision and mission statements

→ The school's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT Analysis)

→ Long-term objectives

→ Annual objectives

→ Functional strategies

→ Responsible party and/or status

Charter school boards use the strategic plan to communicate annual goals to parents at the beginning of the new school year and then report progress on goals at the end of the school year.

> Actual Strategic Plans used by charter schools in Colorado are available at:
> http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/index.htm

D. Election of New Members

The frequency and process to elect new board members should be outlined in the bylaws and board policy. Typically, a minority number of board positions are open each year. Board members may either be elected by the membership (usually parents) or appointed. Appointed members may include community member positions. Occasionally a board may have a staff representative, elected by the entire staff or a Parent Teacher Organization representative elected by the PTO membership.

TIP	Choose new board members based on their skill or expertise, not to represent a particular group of people.

Once new board members are elected, each individual should be asked to sign a Board Member Agreement (See http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/index.htm for samples). By signing this agreement, the Board President can hold individual board members to certain expectations and requirements.

3. Duties of Individual Board Members

Each charter school governing board should define, in writing, what their legal responsibilities and general expectations are. Some boards do this through policy, others use a Board Member Agreement. Samples can be found at www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/index.htm. In addition, as representatives of a public entity, charter school governing board members have fiduciary responsibilities cited in state law.

A. Duty of Care

This principle means that individual board members must use the same general care that a person would if in the same position. Generally, that means:

- Attend and participate in scheduled board meetings.

- Periodically review and understand the charter school's corporate documents such as the charter contract, bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, governing board policies, financial reports, facility financing agreements, and any other important documents.

- Prepare for board meetings and vote responsibly, having considered both sides of a discussion (without partiality as a parent of a student in the charter school).

- Ensure compliance with all federal, state and local laws. The board's delegating authority or responsibilities to the charter school administrator does not relieve the board of the ultimate responsibility.

B. Duty of Loyalty

This principle prohibits board members from doing anything that would allow them to profit personally or indirectly due to their position on the charter school board. Board members finding themselves in a potential conflict of interest should disclose that possible conflict and recuse himself/herself from voting on related matters. It is wise to have a written policy on conflicts of interest to guide board members and to give an assurance to the school community.

C. Duty of Obedience

Board members should adhere to the charter school's central mission without inserting their own personal agenda. This is an especially important principle after the school's founders are no longer involved. Founding boards should document the school's core beliefs, or elements of the charter school that should remain consistent over time.

4. Duties of the Governing Board

The charter school governing board has power only when a quorum is present in a properly noticed meeting. Individual board members do not have individual authority unless specifically delegated a responsibility or task by the full board. Even the board President should not act on behalf of the board without proper authorization.

Each governing board should have "board norms" or standard expectations. Some boards have adopted a Board Agreement [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/index.htm] that outlines qualifications and expectations. Board members should ensure that each member has an equal voice in the discussion or decision before the board. Mutual respect should be exercised. It is good for the board to have a discussion about how they will make decisions. For instance, that all decisions will be made in alignment with the vision and mission statements.

Board Functions/Responsibilities:

- Protect the legal interests of the charter school

- Determine the vision/mission and set policy

- Exercise sound, legal and ethical practices and policies

- Manage liabilities wisely (e.g. purchase Directors and Officers insurance, find out what you don't know, and seek legal counsel when necessary)

- Advocate good external relations with the community, school districts, media, neighbors, parents and students

- Hire and evaluate the administrator

- Practice strategic planning

- Ensure adequate resources and manage them effectively

- Assess the organization's performance

- Evaluate itself

5. Governing Through Policy

Policies give detail to the original vision of the charter school. Where and how these policies are recorded varies. Each charter school governing board should have a set of board policies that provide a record of their decisions for staff and future boards. Policies provide for continuity over time. The board conveys their values and beliefs through written policies.

Each governing board needs to make a clear distinction between governance and management, especially when writing policies. Board policies are the responsibility of the board while administrative procedures are the responsibility of the school's lead administrator. Board policy should not delve into detail. That type of detail is meant for administrative procedures.

All charter school governing board policies should:

- Align with the charter application and contract

- Comply with federal and state laws

- Align with the charter school's vision/mission

Certain types of policies are required by law. For instance, every school should have a non-discrimination policy. A basic list of policies essential for all charter schools is:

1. Legal policies such as school safety, liability/risk, conflicts of interest, and confidentiality.

2. Internal board policies such as more detail than the bylaws would provide in regard to election of board members.

3. Policy on how the board will adopt policies, for instance holding two hearings before final adoption.

4. Financial policies such as internal audits, signature authority and maximum spending levels without board approval.

5. Instructional program policies such as the type of methodology used to deliver the curriculum, instructional beliefs, and assessment beliefs.

6. Facilities use policies such as how and when the community can use the facilities.

7. Personnel policies, such as how many hours a part-time employee must work in order to be included in benefits.

8. Parent and student policies such as student's rights, how a parent (or community member) can get something on the board's meeting agenda, and student conduct.

A. Policy Development Process

The first step is to have a policy for how the governing board will consider policy adoption. This often involves a two-step process, meaning the board will consider it on first reading and then on second reading before it is finally adopted. [Examples are in board policies at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/index.htm Policy consideration or adoption should only be at regular meetings. It is helpful to include in the policy a different format, such as all capital letters or strike through, for new or deleted language that is being considered. Many charter school authorizers require a charter school governing board to submit recently approved policies to them before they are finally approved. It is typical for an authorizer to have a window of time in which to review charter school governing board policy before they are automatically accepted by the authorizer.

> Policies are broad precepts or principles designed to influence and control future decisions, directions and actions of the board. Boards focus on broad organizational policies and leave operating policies and procedures to the charter school administration. Through policy-making, the board is able to delegate authority and still retain ultimate responsibility and control. Policies also provide a framework in which other decisions can be made and the work of the board and staff carried out. Policies also minimize "re-deliberation" on matters that the board has previously decided.
>
> Frank Martinelli, Creating an Effective Charter School Governing Board Guidebook, November 2000. wwwuscharterschools.org/gb/governance

Every charter school must have certain core policies. Many of those policies are in the charter application, such as enrollment, conduct code, instructional philosophy, etc. The charter school governing board should first identify a format for their policies. Although many of the state's school districts use a coding system (i.e. LBD and LBD-R), many charter schools have chosen to use an easy-to-understand system such as using numbers. A charter school board should identify the categories that their policies will fall under and then begin to draft policies for consideration by the full board.

Usually there is one person on the charter board that is the keeper of board policies. This person accepts proposed changes from others and/or creates initial drafts after conducting research or working with a committee. The board, on first reading, will edit or accept the language that should have been given to them in their board packets prior to the meeting.

All governing boards should have certain legal policies such as nondiscrimination, equal opportunity employer, second reading on consent, and designation of an authorized signer on financial accounts. In addition, the board will want to give further definition to their vision for the charter school by adopting policies on character education, instructional practices, teacher evaluation, or student discipline.

> **How to Handle a Crisis**
>
> - Determine the extent of the problem and get the facts. Don't feel pressure to make haste decisions. It is sometimes helpful for an outside party to conduct fact-finding and report to the Board.
> - Maintain confidentiality laws. Especially if the matter is an employment issue, consult legal counsel.
> - Use honesty and integrity in all individual and board actions.
> - Designate one board member to be a spokesperson for the entire board and don't have multiple messages coming from individuals.
> - Respond to media inquiries as honestly and accurately as possible.

Charter school board policies should be easily accessible to the public. Board policies can be on the school's website and/or available in the school office. Policies should be easy to read and available to all school staff. It should be clear how a parent or community member wishing to propose or amend policy would go about the process.

B. Types of Policy Governance

There are generally two types of board governance. John Carver espouses the "policy governance" model whereby boards focus on the "ends," or outcome, rather than the "means," or process. Carver believes the administrator should be given authority not through being delegated power, rather being told through policy what he or she cannot do. Thus, policy governance board policies are written in the negative, such as, "The Principal shall not fail to…."

The Carver method of governance also places certain restrictions on boards. Boards are limited from acquiring certain information without consent of the entire board. Boards instead rely on written reports submitted by staff on a routine basis.

The more traditional method of board governance is for the board to outline in policy their expectations for staff on how to handle different situations since they're not available on a day-to-day basis. A great deal of operational authority can still be delegated to the administrator using a traditional governance model. In this scenario, the board develops policy while the administrator develops procedures. Procedures are more detailed and specific than the board policy, which is broad and overarching.

6. Board Development & Training

Strong charter school boards have members with a variety of expertise and skills. If certain expertise is lacking (e.g. legal) options, include contracting with a third party and/or recruiting an individual with that expertise. Board development is a continual process and varies according to the charter school's size. Some charter school boards have subcommittees to identify, recruit, and train potential board members. In smaller schools it is typically the board president who identifies individuals for future service on the charter board.

Governing board training is a continual process. New board members should be trained in certain essential topics within the first few months of being added to the board.

New Board Member "First Steps"

- Training on open meeting & open records laws
- Reading the charter application, charter contract, bylaws and other important corporate documents
- Training on the fiduciary responsibilities of board members
- Understanding the personal liabilities for being on a charter school governing board, including an understanding of the Directors and Officers insurance coverage
- Training on Robert's Rules of Order, if needed

7. Board/Administrator Relations

Charter school boards shop for administrators in much the same way administrators shop charter school boards. Charter schools are notorious for administrator turn-over and oftentimes that turn-over is caused by problems that develop between the board and administrator. Maintaining open lines of communication and a rapport built on trust are essential, especially for the board President and administrator's relationship.

Transitioning From a Founder to a Board Member

Personal characteristics of a founder are different from a board member whose role is to lead the school over time. Not all founders have the characteristics to become board members. Once an administrator is hired, the Board's role changes from being the "quasi-administrator," making operational decisions to a board member who governs through policy while in an open meeting with fellow board members. Some people are better "creators" rather than "maintainers." If, or when, a founding board member transitions to maintenance largely depends upon the individual.

"Board member for life" policies tend to be frowned upon by the general public. Some charter schools impose term limits; even without term limits, board members should periodically stand for re-election.

8. Effective Board Characteristics

Effective boards:

- Run efficient meetings.

- Keep complete corporate records.

- Limit time together as a board & stay focused on the issues.

- Respect their different roles & responsibilities.

- May be parents, thus wear different "hats" at different times, always being sure to let people know which hat he/she is wearing.

- Set an agenda ahead of time and use board packets to prepare for meetings.

TIP	If the Board agenda addresses mundane issues or the agenda is very long, it is likely the Board is too involved in day-to-day operations of the school.

Establishing Business Operations

1. Introduction

Charter schools are both an educational institution and a business. As a public entity several individuals are involved in the financial and business operations of a charter school in order to ensure accountability and necessary checks and balances. The charter school governing board has the ultimate responsibility for business operations.

The governing board adopts a budget, conducts long-range planning and approves major expenditures. Generally the board gives day-to-day direction to the board Treasurer and school staff through policies.

The board Treasurer is the individual designated by the board to oversee financial and business operations for the charter school. Depending on the size of the charter school, oversight may include conducting quarterly or monthly audits, preparing grant applications, chairing the Finance Committee, or signing checks.

Staff at a charter school can have different titles and functions based on the size and needs of the school. Staff may be called Business Manager, Finance Clerk, or Chief Financial Officer.

In Colorado, the primary reason for the closure of charter schools is failure to remain financially solvent. Most charter school leaders have a background in education, but not in business and therefore don't make sound financial decisions or establish operations with high quality practices. Especially when charter schools are financing their facility, it is imperative that leaders do not overextend the organization. Because the charter school budget is largely dependent upon student enrollment numbers, student recruitment and retention is of concern to many charter schools.

2. Establishing a Business Office

Establishing a business office can take many different forms, depending on certain characteristics of the charter school, such as size, location, and contract stipulations with the authorizer. There are three basic structures that are in place at most charter schools. First, the school hires a full-time business manager to run the business office. Secondly, the school contracts with the authorizer to provide most business

services and hires a staff member to carry out certain day-to-day functions at the school. Third, the school contracts with a private business services provider and hires a staff member to carry out certain day-to-day functions at the school.

Regardless of the structure, the business office will need to be able to carry out certain essential functions. First of all, the business office will need to set up an accounting system to handle cash management, purchasing/accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, and the tracking of fixed assets. The office should also be responsible for establishing and following procedures to implement the financial policies of the school.   Finally, the office should be able to develop and manage the school's budget from year to year. The product of the accounting system should be regular, timely, and accurate financial reports for management and for the authorizer.

Once a decision is made with regard to the structure of the business office, the school should put together a list of duties that must be carried out by the business office.   Once that list is put together, a list of qualifications needed should be developed and recruitment begins. When looking for someone to carry out the business functions of a charter school, other existing charter schools are the best source of information. Sample job descriptions vary greatly, but other charter schools with similar business office structures are typically very helpful. At a minimum, the school needs to have business/accounting knowledge, with the ability to understand public school accounting requirements.

In addition to other charter schools, there are other resources that can be helpful in recruiting and providing professional development opportunities for the school's business needs. The authorizer and CDE can be two useful organizations. CDE provides regular networking and training opportunities for charter school business managers throughout the year.   Information about these meetings and other resources is available on the CDE website.

3. Financial Accountability

A charter school must be accountable financially as well as academically.   The school is accountable to its parents, to its authorizer, to the state, to the federal government, and to the general public.   From a financial standpoint, that accountability is communicated through different types of financial reports. For those reports to be reliable, an appropriate set of controls must be in place.

The business office should establish procedures that properly carry out board policies. The procedures established should ensure proper controls by adhering to the concept of segregation of duties. This means that no one person should ever be able to carry out a financial transaction from beginning to end. Ideally, there should be a minimum of three people who need to be involved for any transaction to take place.   These procedures should be established for each of the areas discussed above: cash management, purchasing/accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, and tracking of fixed assets.

A sound accounting system leads to reliable financial reports. Charter schools are required to report financial information in several regulatory ways. Schools must know how to report financial information in the format prescribed by the Public Schools Finance Unit of CDE.   Schools meet their CDE financial reporting requirements through their authorizer.   The charter contract should outline the

number and types of financial reports, along with due dates, that the school needs to prepare for the authorizer. In addition to regulatory financial reporting to CDE, the school needs to be able to provide financial reports to grantors, bankers, bondholders, and several other entities that the school may deal with over its existence.

Just as important as being able to produce required financial information to other entities, the business office needs to provide reliable financial information to the board and administration of the school. This information should be formally presented monthly (quarterly at a minimum) and should be timely, accurate, and easy to understand. Regular management financial reports should include a balance sheet, a statement of income and expenditures vs. budget, and, particularly in early years of the organization, cash flow projections.

At the end of each fiscal year an independent audit firm performs a governmental audit of a charter school. This is sometimes accomplished as part of the school district's audit and sometimes accomplished by contracting directly with an independent audit firm. These financial audits examine the school's financial statements and issue an opinion on their accuracy. This step each year is the best way to measure whether the school's management can rely on the financial information it receives.

It is the school's responsibility to contract for the audit and to bear the cost. Audit arrangements must be worked out with the authorizer. This includes communicating the expectations for the contracting, reporting, and timing of the audit. Audit provisions should be included in the contract between the school and the authorizer.

Finally, the school is accountable financially through its budget development and management process. This is discussed in more detail in Part 2 of this handbook. The school's budget should reflect the mission of the school. Most of the budget will consist of salaries/benefits for staff and building costs. The school should always keep the balance between these two items in mind.

4. Personnel

Given that personnel costs are by far the largest part of a charter school's budget and given that the type and quality of personnel has a direct impact on the success of the school, a high level of importance should be placed on this area. The nature of charter schools allows for innovation and for different approaches in many areas, and that includes organizational structure. The structure of the staff is dependent on the mission of the school, the population served, the type of academic program offered, the desired class size, the nature of the relationship with the authorizer, the location of the school, and other factors. As with every other aspect of the school, personnel decisions should support the mission of the school.

Regardless of the school's structure, there are common functions that must be carried out and must be staffed for. The first and most critical single hire is the lead administrator. Whether the position is titled Principal, Director, Administrator, Headmaster, Executive Director, or something else, it's vitally important to hire a leader who understands and embraces the school's mission. There is more on board/administrator relations and on administrator responsibilities elsewhere in this

guide. The importance of finding the right fit for the school in this position can't be overstated.

Obviously, teachers are the largest percentage of any school staff. Most charter schools have waivers from state laws surrounding teacher employment, including certification requirements, collective bargaining requirements, hiring and firing practices, etc. Charter schools may not get waivers from federal employment laws. Teachers in charter schools must meet the Highly Qualified Teacher requirements under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. In Colorado, if a charter school has a waiver from certification requirements, a teacher may still meet the Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements. A more detailed explanation can be found at www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/NCLB/downloads/tiia_hqtguidance.pdf.

NCLB core content areas include:

● **Elementary education**

● **Language arts (English, reading)**

● **Mathematics**

● **Social Studies (Civics, Government, History, Geography, Economics)**

● **Arts (Visual Arts, Music, Drama)**

● **Foreign language**

In addition to the administrator and teachers, schools need to make sure they are adequately staffed (or contracted) to handle business operations, support teachers in the classroom, maintain both the inside and outside of the facility, provide special education services, and provide any other services as necessary based on the school's characteristics. Other positions could include library staff, technology support, playground supervision, athletic director, coaches, nurses, and more.

Finally, when planning for staffing needs, the school should have a clear understanding of what its compensation philosophy will be. Like so many other charter school issues, this is unique to each school but it should support the school's mission. There is a great deal of flexibility in how compensation plans are established. Some schools begin by trying to match their local school district's pay scale, some set up their own pay schedules, some operate more like a business without a set pay scale. Many schools choose to incorporate performance pay into their model, either through bonuses, merit increases, or both. Again, the best source of information about ways to do compensation is an existing charter school with the same philosophy.

5. Human Relations

The nature of the relationship between the school and the employees needs to be clearly defined. This is discussed in more detail in Part 2 of this document. In addition, the school must establish policies and procedures for dealing with human

resources issues. Specific guidelines, tips, and samples are available in the Colorado Charter Schools Human Resources Handbook (www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/download/HREmploymentManual.pdf).

Generally, there should be plans in place for pre-employment, employment, and termination of employment of all staff. First of all, the school should have a plan for recruitment of staff. Secondly, the school should have a plan and processes in place for hiring new employees. This includes interviewing, checking references, background checks, and making offers of employment. Existing charter schools with similar characteristics are the best sources of practical information about recruiting practices.

Once employees are hired, the school is responsible for following all applicable federal laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), and others. In addition, the school must establish payroll procedures and follow all federal and state laws governing payroll and payroll taxes. Finally, the school should have a plan in place for offering and administering employee benefits, including health insurance. In addition to other links already provided in Part 2 and in this section, independent insurance brokers and other human resources consultants can provide valuable assistance in this area.

Finally, the school needs to have procedures in place for terminating an employee. This includes all termination situations, not just when the decision to terminate is that of the employer. For example, the school must comply with COBRA requirements for former employees who exercise their option to maintain health insurance coverage under COBRA. The school also should have procedures in place for beginning termination proceedings with an employee. In this area, as much as any other area the school will deal with, an attorney with charter school experience should be consulted.

6. Transportation

If a charter school chooses to provide transportation services, the plan would have been included in the approved application. As explained in Part 2 of this document, the provision of transportation services has several implications. First of all, the cost must be included in the charter school's budget for current and future years. Secondly, insurance and liability issues must be addressed when assessing the charter school's overall insurance needs. Finally, many federal and state rules and regulations relate to the provision of transportation services.

In addition to the School Transportation Unit at CDE, referenced in Part 2, other charter schools and the authorizer's transportation department are great resources for asking questions about the logistics of implementing the school's transportation plan.

7. Facility Financing

Financing a facility remains one of the most difficult obstacles a charter school faces, particularly early in its development. There is not one solution that works for all

schools, but with the growth of charter schools over the years, landlords, real estate groups, lenders, and others have increased their understanding of the nature of charter schools. This increased understanding has made it relatively easier to structure facility financing to suit the needs of individual schools.

Generally, schools take a two-stage approach to financing facilities. First, a school must take care of its short-term needs. This typically involves finding an existing building to renovate and lease or finding a piece of land on which to place temporary units. In either case, a school must find a way to finance the upfront costs of preparing the facility/land to be used as a school. Although there is start-up funding available for charter schools, it can be very difficult to find start-up money that can be used for facilities. The most common solution to dealing with the start-up cost issue is negotiating a lease that includes the cost of renovation and can be paid over the term of the lease.

While securing a short-term facilities solution, the school should keep in mind its long-term needs. The board and administration should strive to strike a balance between the desire for a perfect facility immediately and the need to save money for a permanent facility in the future. Once the school establishes a solid financial base, it can take advantage of other, more favorable financing arrangements. When entering into a long-term financing arrangement for its facility, a school should make sure that the facility being financed will meet its long-term needs. In this stage, schools typically purchase the facility they have been leasing, build a new facility on their current site, build a new facility on a new site, or purchase another existing facility and renovate it to be used as a school.

Just as with short-term facility financing, there are several different ways that charter schools have financed permanent facilities. Several schools have taken advantage of tax exempt bond financing using the Colorado Educational Cultural Facilities Association (CECFA) as the conduit to the tax exempt market. Several schools have also entered into conventional financing arrangements directly with lenders or have entered into lease-purchase arrangements with facility owners.

While there are typical ways to plan for facility needs and to finance those needs, there is not one right way for all schools. There are constantly new avenues opening up as charter schools grow. Residential developers, commercial developers, and educational management organizations all bring their own resources with them and that provides avenues for some schools to improve their facility situation. Finding the right facility and financing that facility depends on several factors including school size, probability of school's success, type of program offered, financial priorities of the school, individuals or companies involved with the school, authorizer involvement, and, as with all real estate issues, location.

Since each school has a unique combination of the factors listed above, and other factors, each situation requires a different solution. Regardless, the school should always consider both the short and long term financial ramifications of any financing arrangement. While the school may be able to take advantage of individual skills within the school community, there are several professionals and the school should look for a qualified individual or firm to assist with facility financing needs. Once again, other charter schools in your area are great places to check for recommendations.

8. Finding Financial Resources

While the school must be able to meet its mission based on guaranteed streams of revenue from year to year, there are several other resources available to help supplement or enhance the school's program. The Federal Charter School Grant Program, which is administered by CDE, is available to provide start-up funding assistance over a three year period. Detailed information about the program, including deadlines and application procedures, is available through the charter schools link on the CDE website.

The state and federal grants link on the CDE website (www.cde.state.co.us/index_funding.htm) also provides information about other grant opportunities for all schools in Colorado. It also has a link to other grant opportunities, which lists different resources for researching private grant opportunities. The Colorado League of Charter Schools has been active in administering a private grant program through the Walton Foundation. Information about current grant opportunities can also be obtained at the CLCS website (www.coloradoleague.org).

There are several foundations and other private sources that support individual charter schools. The key to finding those sources is to first establish the financial needs of the school and then to research potential sources of funding that match the needs established by the school. There are no shortcuts to seeking outside financial resources and each charter school is in a unique situation based on local community, demographics of the school, type of academic program, etc. In addition, funding priorities change from time to time within foundations and other private entities. It's always important to find the most up-to-date information before going through a grant application process.

Resources related to the financial management of Colorado charter schools are available here: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/fin/index.htm

1. State Accreditation

On July 1, 1998, House Bill 98-1267 was signed into law. This new legislation required the adoption of a more stringent accreditation process for school districts as reviewed by the State Board of Education. In May 1999, the rules guiding this accreditation process were released and were subsequently adopted on November 1. As the process currently exists, the district requires individual schools to provide data to support their accreditation through the State Board of Education. Therefore, it is the individual school's responsibility to contact their district or other authorizing agency to obtain specific, detailed requirements. Listed below are the state requirements for accreditation. More details may be found at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeedserv/download/pdf/AccredGuidelines.pdf

The purpose of accreditation is to provide a mechanism for the state to hold districts accountable for providing a high quality, accessible education to all students. The focus is on improving student achievement across all subjects and to provide this achievement in a safe environment. Therefore, individual schools will be best served by developing a quality accountability/accreditation plan to use for internal program assessment and for the external accreditation process.

A. What State/District Requirements Mean for Charter Schools

Note: this is a summary and details are available through the link above.

I. Accreditation Report Indicators

a. **Educational Improvement Plan**
   - Set specific student achievement goals that are high but attainable and measurable
   - Provide proof of alignment of the curriculum to state model content standards
   - Establish a defined, quality professional development plan to support classroom learning through standards-based instruction
   - Utilize research-based instructional strategies that have been shown to be effective in the school's population of students
   - Demonstrate that participation and investment from parents and community members exists in the school
   - Utilize state and local assessments of student performance to guide future programming
   - Develop policies and procedures for intervening with struggling students and describe how parents will be involved in the process of intervention

b. CSAP Goals
- Set realistic student achievement/improvement goals in reading that will demonstrate longitudinal growth on district weighted score indices
- Set goals to meet the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (See http://www.cde.state.co.us/action/CBLA/index.htm for information)
- Set realistic student achievement/improvement goals in writing that will demonstrate longitudinal growth on district weighted score indices
- Set realistic student achievement/improvement goals in math that will demonstrate longitudinal growth on district weighted score indices

c. Closing Achievement Gaps
- Set goals that can be measured for all subgroups of the school's student population (Note: subgroups can and should include groups based on race, gender, gifted and talented, English language learners, and those children with disabilities)
- Show that students who are performing below grade level are making more than one year's growth in the school year
- Show that students who are performing above grade level are still growing by one year's growth during the school year
- Goals should be geared toward closing gaps identified in previous data

d. Value-Added Growth
- Set measurable goals for students to make the equivalence of one year's progress in learning in all subjects. Generally this involves using other standardized tests such as NWEA, Terra Nova, ITBS, etc.
- The Sanders Educational Value-Added Assessment System or a similar program can provide the data needed to show value-added growth

e. Achievement Across the Curriculum
- Set specific goals to reach state standards on all subjects not tested by CSAP.
- As part of the school's program assessment include goals that address things like specials courses, foreign language, civics, economics, science, history, and character development, etc.
- This achievement can be measured through district assessment tests, teacher discretion based on classroom evaluation/observation, the percentage of students achieving various grades (A through F), or through exit exam scores.

f. Compliance with School Accountability Report 4.01
- School accountability reports (SARs) will be prepared and published by CDE and distributed to charter schools through their authorizer. These reports should be further distributed to parents and community members.
- Most charter school governing boards that use a strategic plan will want to include that plan in their annual distribution of the SARs along with updates on what has been achieved and what is still being pursued.
- Maintaining a high level of accountability is best approached by establishing a good accountability plan that is used to evaluate overall school achievement each year. Further guidance on accountability plans is given below.

g. Compliance with Educational Accreditation Act 4.01
- Disaggregated CSAP data (disaggregated by race, gender, gifted and talented status, disability and English language learners)

- CSAP scores need to be presented in aggregate form and by grade and subject. Trend analysis of 3rd grade CSAP data needs to be presented.
- Further data will include number of students achieving in advanced placement courses, performance data on subjects across the curriculum, numbers of expelled and suspended students, graduation rates, dropout rates, and the percentage of students not taking the CSAP.
- The district will also provide requirements for reporting attendance rates, graduation requirements, and the reporting of a safe and civil environment.
- Again, districts may require data on more than is listed here, so it is the individual school's responsibility to find out what data each district will require.

h. Compliance with Safe Schools Act 4.01
- Data required for accreditation will address if all schools in the district are implementing district codes of conduct and discipline, if all schools have a Safe School Plan, if all schools have a bullying-prevention program, if all schools have an effective violence prevention program, and if all schools have an emergency crisis plan to meet their potential needs.
- Further, local boards of education will need to provide proof of the adoption of policies and procedures for dealing with disruptive students in various environments (classroom, bus, on school grounds, or at school activities), as well as policies and procedures for overcoming the "code of silence" rampant in current school culture.
- The district will need to demonstrate a mechanism for students to report anonymously any behavior or conduct that worries them.
- Schools within the district will need to be in compliance with the Gun-Free Act and have a threat assessment team available to evaluate all threats that are reported.

i. Compliance with Colorado Basic Literacy Act 4.01
- Data will need to reflect the number and percentage of 3rd grade students reading at or above their grade level, the number of students currently on Individual Literacy Plans, the number of students removed from Individual Literacy Plans over the past year, the number and percentage of students showing 2 or more grade level gains in one year, and general trends in literacy data.

j. Annual Assessment Review will include CDE additional assessments (Additional assessment data CDE may require)
- Data on the use of technology to improve student achievement and the use of technology to gain information literacy skills needs to be addressed along with policies and procedures for protecting students from inappropriate Internet sites.
- Data covering professional development goals and plans to hire and retain highly qualified teachers should also be included.
- Plans for implementing contextual learning and any evaluation areas that the district believes needs to be adjusted.

k. Compliance with the Budgeting, Accounting, and Reporting Requirements 4.01
- Because the district must provide evidence of accurate accounting and reporting, individual schools will most likely need to provide audited financial statements and clear budgeting/accounting practices to the district.

B. Formulating an Overall Accountability Plan/Program Assessment

An overall accountability plan will include an assessment of all aspects of the program. The school will want to develop a way to evaluate how well it is achieving the vision and mission, how the board of directors is functioning, how effective the administrator is managing the school, how effective teachers are in providing learning opportunities to students, how effective the financial plan is in meeting the needs of students, how safe students and faculty feel in the school environment, etc. Some categories and ideas to begin this development are listed below:

I.   Board Effectiveness
- Evaluation of ability to accomplish strategic plan goals
- Evaluation of responsiveness to school needs
- Communication with constituents
- Effective finance management and procurement of additional funds
- Ability to run effective meetings

II. Administrator Effectiveness
- Parent survey
- Faculty survey
- Board survey
- Faculty retention data
- Student retention data
- Mentor evaluation (an outside mentor may provide insight on training needs)

III. Teaching Effectiveness
- Class visitations (Obtain good class evaluation rubric)
- Student achievement data
- Student survey
- Parent survey
- Evaluate average student time on task during important lessons of the day

IV. Student Achievement
- Student performance on standardized tests
- Student preparation for future learning
- Student performance on regular classroom assessments
- Plan to keep advanced students achieving

V. Finance Management
- Audits-both internal and external
- Clear policies developed that serve the school but protect the finances
- Clear procedures for tracking expenditures
- Priority for student services and curriculum needs is implemented
- Priority is given to professional development training
- Are financial issues interfering with implementation of programming?
- How effective is the board at securing additional funds for program expansion?

VI. Impact of Intervention Services or Special Education

- Number of students served
- Number of students making grade level (plus) improvements
- Students feeling empowered by skills provided by intervention
- Appropriate and successful intervention provided to all students who qualify
- Successful interface with parents to assist in intervention

VII. Strategic Plan Accomplishments
- Were goals set during original strategic planning session met?
- Were these goals met on time?
- Were the goals that were set predictive of the major issues that occurred in the school?
- Were periodic updates on strategic plan progress provided to parents and community members?

VIII. Specific School Improvement Goals
- These goals will likely focus on such issues as:
  - Attendance
  - Drop-out rates
  - Number of students requiring intervention
  - Percent improved readers over last year
  - Percent of decrease in disruptive, suspended, and expelled students

2. Accountability in Charter Schools

The original accountability law was adopted by the Legislature before the Charter Schools Act became law in 1993. The intent of the accountability law was to give parents meaningful involvement in their child's education. To accomplish this, the Legislature required school districts and individual school buildings to form accountability committees. Subsequently, the law was amended in 1997to eliminate the state accountability committee. It was further amended at that time to change the school accountability committee to School Advisory Councils [22-7-106, C.R.S.].

The statutory purpose of School Accountability Councils is to provide staff, community and parents the opportunity to suggest how funds be spent at the school and to monitor student academic achievement. Because this embodies the philosophy of charter schools governed by parents, staff and/or community members via a charter school governing board, many of the first charter schools created in Colorado had their charter boards simultaneously serve as their accountability committee. When the accountability law was amended in 1997, it specifically grandfathered in schools that already had other accountability structures in place (e.g. charter governing boards functioning as School Advisory Councils).

Presently, if a charter school governing board wishes to serve as their school's School Advisory Council (SAC) the school must seek a waiver from the State Board of Education. Another option is for the charter school SAC to serve as a subcommittee of the governing board. Because the charter governing board develops and adopts the school budget, that statutory function of the SAC is irrelevant for charter schools. Further, the academic performance goals developed by the SAC should align with the charter and school accreditation plan. Therefore, many charter schools have their SAC as a subcommittee of the board, possibly with

a different title (e.g. Academic Planning Committee), and with the responsibilities and other details for the committee detailed in governing board policy.

Charter school boards that operate using a strategic plan may wish to ask their SAC to address a particular goal of the strategic plan each year. Ultimately, the SAC should serve the needs identified by the school and not operate under the auspices of how a SAC would function in a neighborhood public school.

Board policy pertaining to SACs should first address the statutory responsibilities of the committee, specify who will be on the committee and how these persons will be elected or appointed, and then the scope of responsibility and authority the subcommittee holds. The policy should make it clear that the SAC reports to the governing board and operates within the parameters of the charter contract and accreditation plan.

> More information on charter school accountability is at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/guidebook/gov/pdf/AccountabilityHandout.pdf

3. Evaluating Pupil Performance

A charter school should consider viable ways of measuring student progress across the curriculum, focused on determining student achievement of individual school goals/priorities, and Colorado State Model Content Standards. The evaluation plan should allow for early detection of a student who struggles in any primary topic area so that adequate intervention can be implemented. The plan should include details of corrective action that will be taken if a student is identified as falling behind. Lastly, the plan should demonstrate recognition that testing takes classroom time and, therefore, a balance must be found between meeting data gathering requirements for the school and preserving learning time in the classroom.

Contents of the plan (covered in detail below)
- Plan for evaluation across the curriculum (subjects not contained in state performance requirements)
- Plan for evaluation to meet state performance standards with timeline
- Plan for evaluation of school performance goals with timeline
- Types of assessments given and frequency of administration
- Plan for use of data-include steps for corrective action, application to professional development and refinement of curriculum

A. What is the Purpose of Assessment?

When applied appropriately, student assessment can be used to accomplish a number of goals. For instance, student assessment can be used as a pretest to determine what previous knowledge a student comes to the learning environment with. This can help guide leveled placement of students and potentially adjustments to the curricular programming. In addition, assessments can be used to gauge what

students are learning over time and can provide feedback on how well the model of instruction is working for the population of students you serve. Lastly, assessments allow evaluation of student performance so that final grades can be assigned and student progress can be tracked from year to year.

- Determine level of student learning
- Determine success at implementing curriculum
- Track student learning across the curriculum and over time
- Determine where students lie in comparison with national norms or standards
- Assess faculty performance (regarding success in delivering meaningful learning experiences.
- Gauge state and federal standards performance
- Diagnostic testing--to identify specific needs or problems

B. Considerations in Developing a Plan

I.   Age appropriateness.

Assessment of learning is greatly dependent upon the age and basic skills of students. For instance, it would be inappropriate to implement cumulative exams in early elementary school. However, in late junior high or in high school,   it is quite appropriate to expect retention as expected by a cumulative test. Development is far more variable in the early years of elementary school and therefore standardized or norm-referenced tests are more difficult to interpret. It is much easier and more appropriate to implement assessment that compares "young student's" achievement to his or her previous performance. Criterion- referenced tests can also be used to compare young student achievement with state or national standards and will provide guidance on the young students overall progress toward basic skill development. Norm-referenced tests may   become even more helpful as students age and development becomes more stabilized. Below, under "Types of Evaluation," is a list of types of assessments that may be considered as the assessment plan is being developed.

II. Does it measure what the students are intended to learn?

Assessments should be designed specifically to target the objectives of the learning experience. Fair assessments or "quality assessment" will reflect the specific goals of the learning experience and will be developed specifically to measure acquisition of skills and knowledge that are part of the given unit. Of course, as students get older, assessments may also include the ability to apply knowledge to new situations and examples, or perhaps the use of critical thinking when interpreting the information provided in a given unit. The content of the assessment   (what   is assessed) and the format of assessment (how it is assessed) should match what is taught and how it is taught. If not, the results can be meaningless and may lead to curricular or instructional changes that are inappropriate.

III. Are the measures relevant, reliable and valid?

Measures of assessment are considered relevant when they are closely associated with classroom instruction and objectives and are used in appropriate ways to track student progress. For instance, it would be inappropriate to use a multiple choice test

to assess writing skills and it would be inappropriate to include a pretest score in a final grade determination. These tests in this context would be considered irrelevant.

Assessments are considered reliable when they show consistent scores across time, across evaluators, or across various versions of the assessment. Therefore, a given student will perform similarly on the test regardless of who is testing them or what version of the test they are taking.

Assessments are considered valid if they measure what they are intended to measure. A good example of an invalid assessment is using a paper and pencil test to determine mastery of the ability to recreate an impressionist style of painting. Obviously the more valid measure would be to have the student create a painting that can then be judged on specific criterion of impressionist painting style.

IV. Are the people with assessment expertise involved in the school's assessment planning and development?

Does the school have staff, faculty, or administrators with expertise in assessment construction, implementation or interpretation? If so, make sure they are involved in creating the plan that will be implemented in the school. Those people with the most experience can bring wonderful insight to an evaluation plan.

V. Is training provided to faculty to discuss the evaluation plan and alternative assessments?

Does the school have a strong professional development plan that will support teaching faculty knowing how to use the evaluation plan and alternative assessments to measure learning? Make sure that funds are set aside for professional development to support whatever evaluation plan is developed. Provide training to faculty so that they can understand how to use assessment to drive teaching and curricular changes in their classrooms to meet the needs of students.

C. Types of Evaluation

The field of assessment is full of new terminology. While this list is not all inclusive, it does cover many of the terms encountered as the school does its research to develop a plan.

I. Formative assessment

Formative assessments are intended to track how well a student is acquiring their new learning. It can be used to guide future instruction if students are not satisfactorily gaining the new skills or knowledge as planned. Summative assessments are end of unit, end of year type assessments that provide a measure of what was learned overall. They are called summative because they "summarize" the learning that has occurred.

II. Selected/constructed responses

Assessments that ask a student to choose between responses as the correct answers are considered "selected" assessments. These assessments measure

recognition of the material the student has been exposed to. For instance, multiple choice tests, matching, and fill-in-the-blank (when word options are presented) formatted assessments are all considered selected assessments. Constructed response assessments require that the student use their current knowledge to create a response. Examples of this format include short-answer and essay questions. A balance of selected and constructed response assessments should be obtained to provide a more balanced measure of what has been learned. However, when using constructed response assessments, they must be written to examine clear targets of learning. Otherwise, they will be hard to interpret or use in any type of data analysis.

III. Performance-based

Performance-based assessments represent a strategy for students to demonstrate their application of knowledge and skills through the performance of tasks that are meaningful to students. This type of test allows the teacher to learn about how a child thinks and problem solves.   Students engaged in performance-based assessments generally learn while engaged in the assessment activity, giving greater value to the time spent implementing the assessment. However, some teachers are insecure with setting up clear rubrics to measure success on performance-based assessments and will need training to become comfortable with these types of assessments.

For help on developing rubrics for performance-based tests visit

http://edweb.sdsu.edu/webquest/rubrics/rubrics.html
or
http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php

IV. Authentic assessments

Authentic assessments involve testing knowledge and skills in ways that prepare students for life. An example of an authentic assessment might be to have a student keep a bank account register rather than simply applying a paper and pencil addition and subtraction test. Other examples include performing speeches, participating in debates, performing research, or participating in student government activities.

V. Standardized tests

Standardized tests are tests that rely on specific procedures for administration and scoring so that they can be used to make comparisons to large bodies of data gathered at other schools across the country. Because the instruction sets provided by the administrator and the scoring practices used by those who grade the tests are held constant, they are considered "standardized". Examples of standardized tests include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, the Terra Nova, and the CSAP, to name only a few.

VI. Norm-referenced versus criterion referenced

Norm referenced tests compare your students to other students of the same age or grade level, usually on a national level. The results provide information on how far above or below "average" the student is on a given skill. Examples of norm-referenced tests include: Iowa Test of Basic Skills; Terra Nova; and, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.   Criterion-referenced tests are tests that compare the

performance of a student against specific criterion involved in learning a given set of skills or knowledge. Examples of criterion-referenced tests include: Stanford Achievement Test; Michigan Educational Assessment Program; and Woodcock Johnson.

VII. Informal and formal assessments

Informal assessments are when the student is not aware that they are being assessed. For instance, when an evaluation of a student's work habits or social interactions with other children is conducted, it is usually being done during a time when the child is not aware that they are being observed or assessed. A formal assessment is when the child is aware that they are being tested. This would represent most paper and pencil tests that are presented in the classroom.

VIII. Direct/Indirect methods of assessment

Direct methods of evaluating student learning are methods that provide evidence that a student has mastery of a specific skill or subject, or that their work demonstrates critical thinking skills such as creativity, analysis or synthesis. Indirect methods are methods that provide data regarding the act of learning. The data may reflect factors that predict or modulate learning, or they may reflect perceptions about learning. Both types of data are important since one measures accomplishment and the other reflects why the student has made that accomplishment.

D. Components of the Actual Plan

I. Plan for evaluation across the curriculum (subjects not contained in state performance requirements)

The priorities of a school should guide the evaluation process. If the vision is to bring students into the new millennium prepared to interface with technology, then the school needs to have a strong plan for assessing skills and knowledge associated with technology. This should be balanced with measuring accomplishment along with basic skills and knowledge so that future learning can be supported. In this part of the plan the school needs to describe their plan for assessing student growth in areas that are not covered by state and federally required tests. Specific plans for evaluating students in subjects like history, science, art, music, technology, etc. are appropriate in this section.

II. Plan for evaluation to meet state performance standards with timeline

Charter schools are required to include methods to gather data for state and federal assessments to track student achievement and growth such as the CSAP, AYP and CBLA. The CSAP program assesses students on state performance standards. CBLA states that all students will be reading at level by third grade. Therefore, careful tracking of young readers is required to be in compliance with this Act. Students not reading on level must be placed on Individualized Literacy Plans to assure that adequate intervention is being applied. Lastly, Colorado schools must demonstrate Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act. To make AYP, a school must assess 95% of its students, reach specific targets for proficiency or be actively decreasing deficiencies, and reach targets for advanced

levels of performance for elementary and middle schools and for graduation rates for high schools.

See http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_assess.htm regarding the CSAP program requirements.

Visit http://www.cde.state.co.us/action/CBLA/ for information on CBLA and http://www.cde.state.co.us/ayp/index.asp for information on AYP.

The assessment plan should also include strategies to identify students struggling with basic skills and curriculum content so that early intervention can be implemented. Finally, if the charter includes high school, the school will need to include graduation requirements and how those requirements meet standards put forth by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education for college preparation or how the requirements prepare students to enter the workforce.

III. Plan for evaluation of school performance goals with timeline

This part of the plan should address the specific school performance goals that were stated in the charter application. Specific plans for how progress towards those goals will be measured and the specific timeline used for the assessment are essential.

IV. Types of assessments given and frequency of administration

In this section, the types of assessments used and how often those assessments will be administered should be outlined. If measures will be compared with baseline measurements, identify where those baseline measurements come from and specifically what follow-up data will be used for comparisons of growth.

V. Plan for use of data—include steps for corrective action, application to professional development and refinement of curriculum

A clear plan will include specifics on when corrective action will be warranted for either individual students or groups of students. For instance, it should state at what point will corrective action be recommended and what type of corrective action will be taken. It should also include specifics on classroom intervention and special education implementation. Finally, the potential for further testing to identify learning difficulties should be explained.

Plans for using the data to guide professional development should be considered. For instance, if scores for one fourth grade teacher in math consistently fall below the other fourth grade teacher and those levels are unacceptable, professional development in teaching math would be a reasonable course of action. If during classroom visits it is noted that many students are not engaged in the classroom and require constant intervention, further development in classroom management may be required.

Lastly, student achievement data should be looked at globally to determine the success of the overall curricular program. If consistent achievement failures are noted, an examination of curriculum, teacher preparedness, resources and student opportunity to learn should be conducted. Teaching or curricular changes should be fully investigated before adopting new approaches.

4. Literacy

Research shows that students who are poor readers at the end of first grade are not likely to ever catch up[2]. Policymakers and educators alike have emphasized the role of public education in teaching students how to read. The Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) stipulates that every student not being able to read the third grade level in third grade be placed on an Individual Literacy Plan (ILP). Further, all students must be assessed annually beginning in Kindergarten.

An effective reading program has a strong research basis and addresses the five essential components of reading instruction. Reading programs should be sufficiently rigorous to align with CSAP expectations and have a coherent instruction design. The instructional design should have explicit, systematic instructional strategies, have coordinated instructional sequences and offer multiple practice opportunities.

Five Components of Reading:

1. Phonemic awareness

2. Phonics

3. Fluency

4. Vocabulary

5. Comprehension

A school should have different curricula for meeting the varied needs of students. First, the school needs a "core" program designed to enable 80% or more of students to attain schoolwide reading goals. Next, schools need a "supplemental" curriculum designed to support the core program by addressing specific skill areas such as phoenemic awareness or reading fluency. For students needing intensive support, "intervention" programs and materials are designed to provide support for students performing below grade level.

Additional program reviews are available at:

● Florida Center for Reading Research
  www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/reportslist.htm

● Oregon Reading First
  oregonreadingfirst.uoregon.edu/curriculum_review.php

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[2] Connie Juel, 1988, 1994.

Curriculum Selection

Definitions

Curriculum-Curriculum is defined as program content set in a sequence of delivery aimed at satisfying learning and performance objectives for the school. It consists of the subjects to be taught, the depth of the content of those subjects, and the delivery method for the teaching of those subjects.
Curriculum development-Includes planning, improvement, and evaluation
Curriculum planning-preliminary steps taken when developers establish the plan for content and delivery of the curriculum
Curriculum implementation-placing the curriculum plan into action
Curriculum improvement-thoughtful adjustments to the curriculum based on solid research to assist the curriculum in reaching its goals for student achievement
Curriculum evaluation-data gathering to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum for achieving its goals
Curriculum alignment-Verifying that the curriculum with teach state standards

Timeline for Planning/Selecting a curriculum

Initially the school will begin a process of selecting curricula that merits further research and analysis. The school will form a preliminary list of learning goals that will serve to guide the process of selecting a curriculum. This preliminary list will arise from the vision/mission of the school, from student needs, from sound scientific research, and from the characteristics of quality in a curriculum.

- Driven by vision and mission
  - Most likely the vision and mission of the school makes a statement about the type of education the school will provide for students. Clearly, this will drive the type of curriculum that will be selected to serve the school. For instance, if the school is founded as an experiential school, fundamental school, Montessori school, obviously that will drive the curriculum choices.
- Driven by student need
  - Hopefully the vision and mission of the school arose from a significant need in the community for a specific type of education plan or delivery of that plan. In the process of determining the viability of the school being proposed, there should also be a fairly clear picture of the type of student the school will draw from the community. These factors should help narrow down the types of curricula the school is reviewing in the initial stages. The curriculum should meet the need of the students (for instance, if the school is trying to reach kinesthetic or non-intuitive learners, the curricula will be very different than if the school is trying to provide an accelerated, fundamental program). If the school is working with students who are English language learners, the curricula should accommodate the special learning that must occur for these students to become literate and fluent in English. If the school does not have a good indication of the type of student they will obtain from the community, this will dramatically slow down the process of identifying a good curriculum to work with.
- Driven by Research
  - A curriculum program should never be selected unless there is good solid scientific research that demonstrates that it is effective in the population of students that the school will be serving. Scientific research can be obtained when researching curriculum programs through the publisher of the curriculum, however, there should also be independent research that supports that

curriculum in aiding student achievement. Please note the definition of "scientific research": "rigorous, systematic and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge, which includes research that is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs, preferably with random assignment." (Slavin, 2002, p. 15).

- o   See http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/whatworks/research/page_pg10.html for further discussion on the merits of scientifically-based research

> Potential search sites for curriculum research:
> ERIC Educational Resource Information Center
> http://www.eric.ed.gov/
> Federal Resources for Educational Excellence
> http://www.ed.gov/free/index.html
> Midcontinent Research for Education and Learning
> http://www.mcrel.org/#
> Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
> http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/index.jsp/

- • Driven by Quality
  - o Any school providing an education to students is responsible to provide an assurance that the curriculum that is being used is a high quality curriculum. Some characteristics of high quality curricula include:
    - • The curriculum provides connections within and across the disciplines. For instance, students studying the renaissance in their regular classroom are also learning about renaissance paintings and music in their specials classes.
    - • Higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills are included at each grade level or in each course.
    - • The curriculum demonstrates objectives, activities, and assessments that are aligned to state standards.
    - • The curriculum has a nice balance of skill development and knowledge development.
    - • The curriculum provides experiences and applications of information for real-life connections.
    - • Redundancies in curriculum coverage are limited or absent in the curriculum.
    - • In-depth study of significant concepts is evident.
    - • Provides a variety of formative and summative assessments to guide future curricular adjustments.
    - • What students should know and be able to do is defined through consideration of each learner objective and related activities and assessments.
    - • Appropriate age/developmental instructional levels and techniques are presented with training available.
    - • Vertical alignment exists between the grades and horizontal alignment occurs across topics.
    - • Supports learning needs of all students while maintaining high achievement expectations. Supports teachers in the development of teaching skills and lesson development that utilize multiple teaching methods to address individual learning styles.
    - • Supports high quality professional development of teachers who will be implementing the curriculum.

Pre-operational (between getting approved and opening the doors)

Verifying alignment of curriculum to state standards:

During the pre-operational stage after the curriculum has been chosen, a school must verify that the curriculum implemented will cover state standards. By obtaining the state standards, an item-by-item analysis can be performed to confirm alignment. One standard from science has been covered below as a demonstration of an appropriate alignment. Note that many curricular programs already have alignments prepared for Colorado State Standards, however, the accuracy of that alignment must be verified. Ultimately, it is the individual schools responsibility to assure parents, community members, the district and state that they are covering the basic requirements set for by the State of Colorado. The final alignment should be shared with administration, faculty, staff, parents and of course, the chartering entity that granted the school their charter. Alignment is a detailed process that is best completed with as many stakeholders involved as possible. As the administrator and faculty are hired, they should become fully involved in the alignment process and should teach with the standards in mind as part of the objectives of each days learning.

The Steps to Align Curriculum with Standards:

1. Gather standards documents that outline each standard and its benchmarks. Standards documents can be found at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stnd.htm

2. Chart the standards and benchmarks by grade.

3. Gather curriculum lessons and specific lesson objectives and outcomes.

4. Match the objectives and outcomes of the curriculum to each standard. Warning: Do not use topic headings only when performing the alignment. Almost any curriculum will support all standards if only a topical approach is taken to the alignment. When doing the alignment, uncover the specific objectives and outcomes for each lesson to fully determine what is being covered by any one unit.

5. Determine an outcome measure that can be used to make sure that standard is met.

6. Determine gaps and revise unit or find supplemental curriculum.

For additional information on aligning curriculum visit:
voc.ed.psu.edu/projects/ Institute/2003/SevenSteps%20doc.pdf

Sample alignment for Standard #1 for Science in the 3rd grade.

Grade Level/ Subject	Standard	Benchmark	Lessons that cover standard	Outcome Measure
3/Science	**STANDARD 1: Students understand the processes of scientific investigation and design, conduct, communicate about,**	•asking questions and stating predictions (hypotheses) that can be addressed through scientific investigation; • selecting and using simple devices to gather data related to an investigation *(for*	Lesson 4.2 from McGraw/Hill Science Solutions-asks students to test whether plants need light. Students will be required to form hypothesis and test using control plant and experimental	Brief lab report with daily observations and appropriate conclusions for the experiment. Students will present their data before the class. Students

	and evaluate such investigations.	*example, length, volume, and mass measuring instruments, thermometers, watches, magnifiers, microscopes, calculators, and computers)*; • using data based on observations to construct a reasonable explanation; and • communicating about investigations and explanations.	plant. Daily height and well-being of plants is measured.	will graph their data to provide a visual aid for their talk.

In continuing to work on the alignment, the curriculum chosen may be unable to meet every standard. If this occurs, a decision will have to be made on how to supplement the curriculum to meet the missing standards. Sometimes that involves creating only one or two lessons while other times, a substantial supplemental curriculum may be in order. An ongoing discussion on how to fill the shortcomings of a curricular plan is always a valuable exercise between board, administration and faculty.

Another task of the preoperational preparation of the curriculum is to obtain resources that teachers will need to implement the curriculum. This will include manipulatives for math, science kits for science, and literature/readers to support the language arts curriculum (to name only a few of the possible needs). It is critical that the board focus on providing substantial financial support so that the curriculum can be implemented as it was intended, otherwise, evaluation of the success of the curricular program will be plagued with not knowing if it is the curriculum or the lack of resources that led to students failing to learn.

Another critical area of investment is in training of the staff to use the curriculum that has been chosen. A summer institute that covers each of the elements of the curriculum program is critical. Further, networking with other schools that are using the same or similar curricular programming to determine how these schools are integrating all of the aspects of the curriculum can be very helpful and keep each school from having to "reinvent the wheel". Publishers of the curriculum programs that have been adopted will generally have trainers available to assist startup schools. Otherwise, it is best to find an expert in implementing that particular curriculum program and bring them in for training the faculty.

Pedagogy is the principles and methods used for instruction. When evaluating a curriculum, it is important to look at the learning goals of the program and what is known about how students learn how teachers can effectively teach. A curriculum should encourage methods of teaching that address varied learning styles and gender differences in the classroom. Again, if innovative, research-based teaching methods are suggested as part of the delivery of the curriculum, substantial training should be provided.

To help judge the value of the instructional strategies incorporated in the curriculum, here is a listing of some of the characteristics of effective instructional activities and strategies.

- Instructional activities support the objectives of the lesson and are closely linked with assessments to gauge the learning.

- Instruction activities support varied learning styles or can be adjusted to meet students with special needs.
- Instructional activities give students real-life experience examples.
- Instructional activities allow interim assessment to help the teacher to determine what is being learned and allow for adjustment if needed.
- Instructional activities offer opportunities for critical thinking, problem solving, and transfer of knowledge.
- Instructional activities provide opportunities to solve problems using methods similar to those required by state assessments.

Once the School is Operational

Evaluating effectiveness of the curriculum is critical to optimizing the achievement of students. To evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum, a variety of data will be required.

Data helpful in evaluating curricular programming:

- Survey of teachers to investigate what has gone well and what has not. This should include content and instruction. If there are units or topics that are chronically reported as not achievement their objectives, supplements or additional teacher training may be necessary.
- Evaluating ability to implement curriculum programming.
- Survey of parents to investigate their satisfaction with the learning being accomplished by their child. Generally, parents can identify where the greatest amount of frustration is occurring in curricular assignments and can lead the program to looking at whether a curriculum can meet the needs of a variety of students.
- Student classroom assessments (day to day assessments). This should help determine if the curriculum is meeting its basic objectives.

Characteristics of effective student classroom assessments:

- Assessments are aligned to objectives of the state standards and the objectives of the individual curricular units.
- Assessments allow practice of similar tasks as required by standardized tests and that encourage critical thinking and application of the material studied. Move toward more conceptual application as students grow.
- Careful application of clear rubrics are used to grade subjective assignments.
- Assessments occur in varying types so that students have many opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the material.
- Assessments are provided on a consistent basis so there are a number of opportunities to measure learning.
- Assessments are both formative and summative and oriented to real-life situations as much as possible.

Student standardized test assessments. If the curriculum is correctly aligned to state standards, student accomplishment on standardized tests can easily uncover areas of weakness in the program.

- A written plan should be in place that determines how data will be used, how tests will be administered and which students will be included in the testing.
- Assessment data should be used to uncover areas of strength and weakness in the curricular program.

- Clear plans on when to gather baseline data is required. Follow-up testing can then be used to track the progress of the implementation of the curricular program.
- Warning: testing takes time away from classroom learning. An assessment plan should demonstrate a careful balance of testing that leaves substantial opportunities for classroom learning. Therefore, standardized tests should be carefully selected with a clear purpose in mind for betterment of the program.

Mature-As a school gains years of experience

A consistent plan to continue evaluating the curriculum and student learning in the school is essential for accreditation and accountability. Data gathered in this process should provide information on how well the curriculum and instruction is helping students learn basic skills and knowledge. If data demonstrates that parts of the curriculum are weak and needing adjustment (as evidenced by consistent low achievement scores), adjustments may be in order. These adjustments may range from rewriting and supplementing specific areas of learning, or changes in instructional strategies. Because curriculum is expensive, extensive changes are not recommended unless consistent patterns of data indicate that the curriculum that was researched and chosen by the school no longer meets the needs of students. Switching curriculum programs should only occur if data on student achievement remains poor for an extensive period of time and changes in supplements and instructional strategies have not helped.

As the school matures and becomes better at implementing the curriculum, it may also be time to add new options to school programming such as gifted and talented programming, foreign languages, or extended learning opportunities. For each of these additions, it is advised that the selection of curriculum to be used be investigated similarly to the original curriculum selection. After school programming to target specific weaknesses in student achievement may also be in order. Lastly, as the school matures and confidence is built in the curricular programming, reviews of the curriculum should expand beyond the objective level and begin looking at coordination of the curriculum across semesters and across years so that even more improved delivery of curricula can occur.

Please note that during maturation the school must stay committed to providing strong professional development and multiple opportunities for staff to meet in groups to troubleshoot specific issues in the curriculum. Having time to meet and adjust programming between and within grades will be critical to retaining buy-in for the curriculum and maintaining excellence in instructional delivery. Opportunities to network outside of the existing school will further the improvements available to teachers and broaden the quality of coverage of the curriculum.

Resources for further development on curriculum:

http://www.nwea.org/

Slavin, R. E. (2002). Evidence-based education policies: Transforming educational practices and research. *Educational Researcher, 31*, (7), 15-21.

Tanner & Tanner (1995). Curriculum development: Theory into Practice, 3rd ed., Upper Saddle River; NJ; Prentice-Hall.

Faculty

1. Professional Development

Professional development is essential to continue to build skills to help teachers be successful. Without professional development, teacher's burn out more easily, stagnate in their own learning, and fail to set a model of learning for students in their classrooms. In charter schools, modeling for professional development should begin with the Board of Directors and filter down through the administration to faculty and staff.

Basic principles that can guide professional development involve allowing visitations to other schools to observe best practices and to form mentorships with more experienced board members, administrators, faculty or staff. Professional development should always include a detailed induction of new members of your school team along with allowing more experienced members of the team to assist in the development of their own development plans. Support from the school can come in helping them to identify specific training needs by using past student achievement or behavioral data. Further, training obtained by any one member of the board, administration, faculty or staff should be expected to be disseminated to other team members so that all members can benefit from the new learning opportunities. It can't be stated enough that the best way to learn and integrate any new skill is to teach someone else that same skill. This allows you to better leverage your professional development investment so that you can gain more impact on student achievement in your school. Promote and reward any staff members who want to share their expertise with others whether at a conference, workshop, or seminar as this too will help them solidify their learning and implementation of new skills.

2. Professional Development Plans for Start-up Schools and School-wide Improvement

A school-wide professional development program will include plans to meet learning needs of the board, the administration, and the faculty. The board and administrator will lead by example, modeling priority for consistent, high quality, professional development. As the board incorporates new members, continued professional development will guarantee continuity in strong leadership. Some of the areas where boards may benefit from training include:

- Running effective meetings
- Strategic planning
- Effective fund raising beyond PPOR
- Community building
- Finance management
- Developing strong leadership

- Accountability plans and reporting

Some of the areas where administrators may benefit from training include:

- Personnel management
- Running an effective school program
- How to keep kids out of the office for discipline issues
- Effective implementation of policy and procedure
- Accreditation requirements
- Developing school improvement/accreditation plans
- Accountability plans and reporting
- Finance management
- Building a safe environment for learning
- Mentoring new teachers

A yearly needs assessment can be conducted to survey which members have received pertinent training and a plan for filling deficiencies can be constructed. All training should be followed by evaluation to determine the impact of the training and to assure accountability for funds spent on training. Those programs that lead to significant gains in expertise for board members and administration should be retained while searching for additional opportunities to target weaknesses.

3. Professional Development for Staff—Highly Qualified Teachers Defined

Charter schools must comply with the expectations of employing Highly Qualified Teachers. Below is an outline of expectations for staff being highly qualified taken directly from the more extended document available at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/NCLB/downloads/tiia_hqtguidance.pdf.

Colorado's Plan for Applying the Teacher Quality Provisions of NCLB

A. *The federal No Child Left Behind Act, of 2001 (NCLB),* requires that all teachers teaching in core-academic content areas meet the requirements for being designated as "Highly Qualified," no later than the end of the 2005-2006 school year.

B. Core-academic content areas are defined as: English; Reading or Language Arts; Mathematics; Science; Foreign Languages; Civics and Government; Economics; the Arts; History; and Geography.

C. The Colorado plan for implementation of the federal NCLB requirements, and presented in this document, represents the state's on-going effort to consistently and sensibly apply the federal requirements to all Colorado's teachers.

D. The federal statute allows a wide definition of the term "highly qualified," for *all* public elementary and secondary teachers. As such, for each grade level, the law requires that *all* teachers demonstrate competency in all *applicable* content areas - and outlines *multiple* mechanisms for *demonstrating* that competency.

Note: The Colorado plan should be viewed as a *working document,* to be updated and refined as the state continues its implementation of the federal law. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) will provide ongoing clarification of the plan, as necessary, as well as pursue options which will satisfy the requirements of NCLB, beyond those already outlined in this document.

A workbook to determine if your teachers are highly qualified is located at:
http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/NCLB/downloads/tiia_hqtwkbk.doc.

4. Utilizing Student Achievement Data to Guide Future Professional Development

There is a lot of debate on the usefulness of student data to guide teacher evaluation. While student achievement data may not be appropriate for measuring the merit of teachers' skills, it can be helpful in identifying areas that may need further skill development in an effort to improve student achievement. Student data on CSAP's, daily reading records and daily work in the classroom can be used to examine potential areas of weakness for a faculty member. For instance, if within your school you have two rounds of 3rd graders and every year Ms. Smith's class has 98% of kids reading proficiently, while in Mr. Brown's class you regularly have only 78% of kids reading proficiently, that should guide you to suggesting some professional development for Mr. Brown on intervening with struggling readers to see if you can impact student achievement. Daily reading records and regular classroom assessments can be used in a similar way to determine if there may be specific skill development needs in your staff. Further, behavior data (number of referrals to the office, student time on task, etc.) may also point to areas where faculty may benefit from additional training in classroom management. Teachers should be trained on how to understand and use student performance data to assess the progress of individual students, to assess full grade levels of students, and to assess potential training needs for their own professional development.

5. How Professional Development Plans and Implementation will Change with the School's Lifecycle

In the beginning of your school you will be focusing more on "blanket" training where all faculty, administrators, and staff are being trained simultaneously on policies, procedures, curriculum, and discipline, etc. However, as stability is sustained and staff members have been exposed to "blanket" training for a couple of years, there is a need to progress to a more individualized plan. In this case, follow a detailed needs assessment to identify specific areas of weakness for your staff. Once the needs are identified, set individualized goals with interim benchmarks so that progress is tracked. Consider some of the goals being measured by student achievement data as well as by data obtained by doing classroom observations. This individualized approach will allow your more senior faculty to continue to develop in meaningful ways that serve both their and your needs.

Consider incentive programs for aggressive professional development plans that demonstrate direct student impact. Make sure you are providing faculty time after training to complete an implementation plan and to begin to gather benchmark data.

Make sure that the plans address individual needs of faculty to help them to make your vision and mission of your school become a real, implemented plan of action.

*Sample Needs Assessment Questionnaire for Faculty – Appendix A

6. Administration of Training

Develop a plan that includes research-based methods of delivery of training to faculty/administrators/board. Allow stakeholders to voice their preferences for characteristics of the development training. For instance, would they prefer to have training in the form of a workshop, individual research, video training, interactive online training, or as part of a mentoring relationship with a more senior faculty member/administrator/board member. Investigate what formats exist for teacher training and make the best research-based choices for implementing this plan.

Add to needs assessment questions that allow stakeholders to indicate when they would most like to participate in training and in what environment. For instance, would they prefer to use weekends, in-service days, or evenings and would they like to remain on campus or travel to a different facility for their training?

Bear in mind that it almost always takes more than just a single session of training for new behaviors to be implemented. Ongoing training, mentoring, collaboration, application, and school support over an adequate period of time are essential to allowing teachers to integrate new learning into their basic classroom skills.

7. Evaluating Professional Development

Every opportunity for faculty, administration, or board to train on new topics should be followed by a meaningful assessment of the training. That assessment may be a questionnaire that evaluates the value of the training as perceived by the trainee or it may be an evaluation where you do classroom visits and see how many times that new technique was used in appropriate learning opportunities through the day. Ultimately, training is only good if there is an opportunity for continued practice and implementation. A good use of funds is when training is provided and that training results in quantitative changes in behavior on behalf of the trainee or ultimately in student achievement. Therefore, multiple measures of successful training may need to be implemented. Examples of measures may include survey, classroom observations, student achievement scores, and pre/post comparative data of specific behaviors. For any professional development program to be viable and accountable, it must have an evaluation component to make sure that the monies being invested in the program are being well spent. More details follow in the table below.

Evaluation of Professional Development Opportunities—Six Levels*

What is evaluated?	What questions can be addressed?	How to gather data	How will information be used?
1. Trainee's Reactions-How satisfied are they with the learning experience?	Did they like it? Did they feel it was a good investment of time and money? Did the training make sense and seem applicable? Was the learning environment comfortable and appropriate? Did the trainer seem knowledgeable and did they garner excitement for their ideas? Will the training be useful?	Survey	To improve training design and delivery
2. Knowledge or skills gained	Were the objectives of the training met? Did the participants walk away with usable knowledge and skills?	Survey Simulations Participant written reflection Demonstrations Role playing	Improve training content, format, organization and effectiveness
3. Organization support, change, and benefit	What was the impact on the school? Did training impact procedures or climate in the school? Was implementation of the new knowledge and skills advocated, facilitated and supported? Were sufficient resources made available? Were problems quickly addressed and were successes quickly recognized?	Behavioral records Surveys Interviews with participants Participant portfolios	To gauge school support for change To build stronger capacity to support professional development in the future

4. Implementation of new skills and knowledge	Did participants implement new knowledge and skills?	Classroom observations Surveys Interviews with participants and supervisors/mentors Video or audio observations Participant portfolio or reflections	To chart progress toward implementation and to evaluate impact of training on teacher behavior
5. Student achievement	Was there an impact on student behavior? Was there an impact on student learning? Does the implementation assist students in being more confident learners? Does student attendance and enthusiasm improve? Does the implementation aid student in their physical or emotional well-being?	Behavioral observations Student records and achievement School records (aggregated data) Surveys Structured interviews with students and parents	To demonstrate overall impact of professional development To improve implementation, design and follow-up
6. Productivity and dissemination	Has implementation of new knowledge and skills improved productivity? Has there been an effort to disseminate new learning and skills to other professionals?	Survey Behavioral observations Participant portfolio	To leverage learning from professional development activities and monies spent on professional development activities.

*(Adapted from Guskey, T.R. (2000). Evaluating Professional Development. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Sample Needs Assessment: Questionnaire for Faculty

This sample needs assessment is meant to give you an idea of the types of questions you may be interested in investigating at your institution. You would need to personalize these questions to your own school and select those that align with your mission/goals. This listing is not intended to be all inclusive nor is it suggested that you adopt all of the questions for any one administration of your evaluation of the needs of your staff. It is meant to be a document in process.

Student Assessment

Rate how comfortable you are with using rubrics for objective assignments.
Extremely Comfortable   *Not Comfortable at all*
          5   4   3   2   1

Rate how comfortable you are with using portfolios for tracking student progress.
Extremely Comfortable   *Not Comfortable at All*
          5   4   3   2   1

Rate how comfortable you are with using special projects to assess students applying their knowledge on a classroom assignment.
Extremely Comfortable   *Not Comfortable at All*
          5   4   3   2   1

How comfortable are you with developing assessments that measure recognition, recall, and critical thinking?
Extremely Comfortable   *Not Comfortable at All*
          5   4   3   2   1

Classroom Management

Rate how comfortable you are with classroom management strategies.
Extremely Comfortable   *Not Comfortable at All*
          5   4   3   2   1

Do you have prescribed techniques that allow you to engage all learners?
I have detailed techniques that work   *I don't have any techniques*
          5   4   3   2   1

What model of discipline is used in the majority of the classrooms at your school?
_____
_____

(Please note that implementing a consistent discipline plan across the entire school has been shown to improve classroom climate and improve student achievement in the classroom.)

What model of discipline do you use in your classroom?

_____

_____

What do you believe is the effectiveness of your classroom discipline plan?

Extremely Effective   *Not Effective at All*

      5   4   3   2   1

Special Education/ESL

How familiar are you with policies and procedures for bringing necessary services to special education/ESL students?

Extremely Familiar   *Not Familiar at All*

      5   4   3   2   1

How familiar are you with how to differentiate classroom instruction to meet the needs of special education/ESL students?

Extremely Familiar   *Not Familiar at All*

      5   4   3   2   1

How familiar are you with how to implement an IEP?

Extremely Familiar   *Not Familiar at All*

      5   4   3   2   1

How familiar are you with the model of immersion for ESL students adopted by our school?

Extremely Familiar   *Not Familiar at All*

      5   4   3   2   1

Safety

Can you confidently list the order of steps you would take if a potential threat entered your room from the outside?

With confidence, yes   *Not with confidence*

      5   4   3   2   1

Do you currently have an emergency evacuation plan that has been practiced with your children?

Plan in place & practiced / Plan is being developed / No plan is currently under consideration

      5   4   3   2   1

Do you fully understand the policies and procedures involved in a school shut-down?

Fully understand school shut-down   *I'm not completely aware of what is expected*

      5   4   3   2   1

Standards and the Implications of Student Assessment Data

Rate your understanding of how to use student assessment data to guide your future teaching? (In other words, how can student achievement data from today guide what you should focus on over the next month or year in your teaching?)

Fully Understand   *I don't completely understand how to use current data*

      5   4   3   2   1

Rate your understanding of how to use State Standards to guide the content of your teaching in the classroom.

Fully understand State Standards   *I'm aware of the standards but not how they relate to what I teach*

      5   4   3   2   1

If asked, could you point out what parts of specific lessons touch on required State Standards?

With confidence, yes				*Not with confidence*
5	4	3	2	1

The Use of Technology

Rate how confident you are with using the computer to manage grades.

Extremely Confident				*Not Confident at All*
5	4	3	2	1

Rate how confident you are in using the computer to communicate with parents.

Extremely Confident				*Not Confident at All*
5	4	3	2	1

Rate how confident you are in using the computer to communicate with administrators, Board, mentors, and fellow faculty.

Extremely Confident				*Not Confident at All*
5	4	3	2	1

Rate how confident you are in using the computer to create multimedia presentations in your classroom?

Extremely Comfortable				*Not Comfortable at All*
5	4	3	2	1

How beneficial would you find training on troubleshooting common software and hardware problems on computers?

Extremely Beneficial				*Not Beneficial at All*
5	4	3	2	1

How comfortable are you making sure that crucial records on your computer are secure?

Extremely Comfortable				*Not Comfortable at All*
5	4	3	2	1

How comfortable are you collaborating or sharing information over the internet?

Extremely Comfortable				*Not Comfortable at All*
5	4	3	2	1

Character Development

How beneficial would you find training on including multiculturalism/sensitivity in the everyday curriculum.

Extremely Beneficial				*Not Beneficial at All*
5	4	3	2	1

How comfortable are you with your ability to address aggressive or destructive behavior in children (including suicide, bullying, depression, etc.).

Extremely Comfortable				*Not Comfortable at All*
5	4	3	2	1

Policy and Procedure

Indicate how comfortable you are understanding and enforcing the following school policies:

Dress Code:
Extremely Comfortable   *Not Comfortable at All*

            5   4   3   2   1

Conduct:
Extremely Comfortable   *Not Comfortable at All*
            5   4   3   2   1

Safe Use of Technology:
Extremely Comfortable   *Not Comfortable at All*

            5   4   3   2   1

Rate your understanding of the discipline policy and procedures required to implement it.
Fully Understand   I don't completely understand the discipline policy
            5   4   3   2   1

How comfortable are you with running effective parent/teacher conferences?
Extremely Comfortable   *Not Comfortable at All*
            5   4   3   2   1

Curriculum

List the level of concern you have about your skills or knowledge for teaching the "Glubman" Math Program adopted by the school?
I'm very concerned   *I'm not concerned at all*
            5   4   3   2   1

How easy is it for you to provide meaningful writing practice to students, which supports the "Moynahan" Writing curriculum?
Very Easy   *Not Easy at All*
            5   4   3   2   1

How interested are you in learning some new methods of instruction for the classroom?
Very interested   *Not Interested at All*
            5   4   3   2   1

How interested are you in learning the current trends in math curriculum?
Very interested   *Not Interested at All*
            5   4   3   2   1

How interested are you in learning the current trends in hands-on science applications?
Very interested   *Not Interested at All*
            5   4   3   2   1

How interested are you in learning how to help struggling readers to bridge the gaps in their reading?
Very interested   *Not Interested at All*

| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

How much would it assist you to learn about innovative programs for reaching special needs students in reading and writing?

Very helpful   *Not helpful at All*
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

General Skills

How beneficial would you find training in managing stress?

Extremely Beneficial   *Not Beneficial at All*
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

How beneficial would you find training in balancing work and family?

Extremely   *Beneficial*   *Not Beneficial at All*
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

How beneficial would you find training in dealing with difficult people in the workplace?

Extremely Beneficial   *Not Beneficial at All*
| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Policy Relating to Charter Schools

1. Introduction

As public schools, charter schools are subject to the same state and federal laws that noncharter public schools are, except that according to state law charter schools can waive certain state laws and rules. Charter schools establish according to the Colorado Charter Schools Act. The law has been almost every year since it was first enacted in 1993. Charter schools may not waive federal law.

2. State Law: Charter Schools Act

According to the Charter Schools Act (22-30.5-104 (6)(b), C.R.S.), charter schools are subject to state statutes and rules unless specifically waived. Certain statutes cannot be waived, including:

- 22-7-406, C.R.S. State Model Content Standards, Assessments & Timelines

- 22-7-601, C.R.S. School Accountability Reports

- 22-54-101 et seq., C.R.S. Public School Finance Act of 1990, as amended

- 22-87-101 et seq., C.R.S. Children's Internet Protection

Waiver requests are discussed in Chapter 2, 2.O.

The Charter Schools Act (22-30.5, C.R.S.) contains five parts. These are:

1. Charter Schools

2. Charter School Districts (repealed, effective July 1, 2003)

3. Independent Charter Schools

4. Charter School Capital School Facilities Financing Act

5. Institute Charter Schools

Rules/administrative policy pertaining to charter schools include:

- 2005 Revised Administrative Policy on Charter Schools [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeboard/download/brdadminpolicy_charterappeals.pdf]

- 2005 Administrative Procedures for Review of a State Board Grant of Exclusive Chartering Authority [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeboard/download/Admin_policy_exclusive_chartering_authority.pdf]

3. Federal Law: No Child Left Behind

Charter schools, like all public schools, are subject to the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The four pillars of NCLB are stronger accountability for results, more freedoms for states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices for parents. More information on the Act is available at http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml

CDE administers the federal program grant associated with NCLB. The state provides grant funds to local school districts through an online consolidated grant process. A complete list of the federal programs is available at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/NCLB/index.asp

In addition to providing funds to states for specific purposes, NCLB embodies certain requirements such as Adequate Yearly Progress and Highly Qualified Teachers. NCLB requires all schools and school districts to evaluate their CSAP data, disaggregated by certain subgroups, on an annual basis. If these minimum levels of attainment are not met, NCLB imposes specific consequences.

Charter schools must meet the Highly Qualified Teacher provisions of NCLB. The Act does not override states, like Colorado, that have state laws allowing charter schools to employ non-licensed teachers. This means charter school teachers may not hold a valid teaching license, but may still be considered "highly qualified." More detailed information is available at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/NCLB/tiia.asp

Part V of NCLB contains the federal Charter School Program grant. CDE has received this grant since 1996 and administers subgrants to eligible charter schools for start-up and implementation purposes.

Federal Laws

Age Discrimination - in Employment Act generally prohibits employers from discriminating on the basis of age in the hiring, termination, benefits, or other terms and conditions of employment of individuals over 40 years of age. This act applies to public schools and employers who employ 20 or more employees. 29 U.S.C. §§621-634. Information: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 202-663-4900.

Americans with Disabilities Act: prohibits discrimination by an employer who employs 15 or more workers against a qualified individual with a disability. 42 U.S.C. § 12101-12213. www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html?src=mr

Bilingual Education Act prohibits federally assisted education programs from excluding a student on the basis of a surname or language minority status. 20 U.S.C. §7401 et. seq. Information: U.S. Department of Education 202-205-5576.

Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act no public school that provides an opportunity for one or more outside youth or community groups to meet on school premises or in school facilities before or after school hours shall deny equal access or a fair opportunity to meet to, or discriminate against, any group official affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America, or any other youth group listed in Title 36 of the United States Code as a patriotic society. http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/boyscouts.html.

Charter School Expansion Act of 1998 requires school districts to ensure that every charter school receives the Federal funding for which it is eligible not later than five months after the charter school first opens. 20 U.S.C. § 10306. Information: Charter Schools Unit, Colorado Department of Education 303-866-6771. http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeunified/qa_Charter.htm

Equal Pay Act prohibits employers from paying wages to employees of one sex at rates of pay less than the rates they pay employees of the opposite sex for work requiring equal skill, effort, and responsibility, and which is performed under similar working conditions. 29 U.S.C. §206(d). Information: Wage and Hour Administrator of the U.S. Department of Labor 1-866-4USWAGE. (Request referral to regional office.)

Fair Labor Standards Act establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, equal pay, record keeping, and child labor standards for employees who are within the coverage of the FLSA and who are not exempt from specific provisions. 29 U.S.C. §201 *et seq.* (1988). Information: Wage and Hour Administrator of the U.S. Department of Labor 1-866-4USWAGE. (Request referral to regional office.)

Family and Medical Leave Act: requires employers with 50 or more workers in a 75-mile radius to provide eligible employees up to 12 work weeks of leave in a 12 month period when the leave is required for (1) birth, adoption or foster care placement, (2) care for a sick spouse or parent, or (3) a personal serious health condition. 29 U.S.C. § 2611 et. seq. www.dol.gov

Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act confers upon students (and their parents) rights of notice, access, amendment and confidentiality with regard to their educational records maintained by a school that received federal financial assistance. 20 U.S.C. § 1232g. Information: Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education 202-260-3887. http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/actguid/infshare.html.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires school receiving federal financial assistance to provide a free and appropriate education to children with disabilities. 20 U.S.C. §1400, *et. seq.* Information: Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education 202-205-9056.

Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 creates civil and criminal sanctions for employers who fail to properly verify the employment eligibility of all workers hired after November 6, 1986. 8 U.S.C. §§1324a and 1324b (1988). Information: contact local Immigration & Naturalization Service. (Request information regarding Form I-9.)

No Child Left Behind Act: the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which contains provisions for defining a "highly qualified" teacher, testing and reporting requirements for states, and all of the federal education programs. www.ed.gov

Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1970 regulates health and safety in the workplace, including handling and disposal of materials that may contain blood-borne pathogens. 29 U.S.C. §651 *et. seq.* (1993). Information: Occupational Health and Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Labor 1-800-321-6742.

Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 requires to conduct pre-employment/pre-duty, reasonable suspicion, random and post-accident alcohol and controlled substances testing of each applicant for employment or employee who is required to obtain a commercial driver's license. 49 U.S.C. §2717. Information: Department of Transportation Office of Drug Enforcement and Program Compliance 202-366-3784.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) prohibits recipients of federal funds from discriminating against an individual on the basis of disability. 29 U.S.C. §§700 *et. seq.* (1994). Information: Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education 202-2059056.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court *in Lau v. Nichols,* 414 U.S. 563 (1974) and the United States Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit in *Castaneda v. Pickard,* 648 F.2d 989 (5* Cir. 1981), requires public schools to provide any alternative language programs necessary to ensure that national origin minority students with limited-English proficiency have meaningful access to education programs. 42 U.S.C. §2000d *et. seq.* (1993). Information: Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education 202-205-5413.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids employers who have 15 or more employees to discriminate against individuals in all areas of the employment relationship if the action is based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. 42 U.S.C. §2000e *et. seq.* (1993). Information: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 202-663-4900.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits gender-based discrimination by an educational institution that receives federal financial assistance. 20 U.S.C. 1681 Information: Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education 202-205-5413.

Appendix A:
Charter School Acronyms

504	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973—a civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability
ACT	American College Test
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act—federal law governing access to public buildings
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
AERA	American Education Research Association
BOCES	Board of Cooperative Educational Services (Small schools and small districts that have pooled their resources together. A BOCES can include 15-25 school districts. The important question to ask is what BOCES does a district belong to and for what projects. Some districts may be in a BOCES only for Title I funds.)
BOD	Board of Directors
BOE	Board of Education
CASB	Colorado Association of School Boards (membership organization of the state's school district Boards of Education
CASE	Colorado Association of School Executives (professional organization for administrators)
CBLA	Colorado Basic Literacy Act—state law that ensures students are reading at grade level by third grade
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
CEA	Colorado Education Association—the state teachers union
CECFA	Colorado Educational and Cultural Facilities Authority—issues bonds for charter schools
CK	Core Knowledge
CLCS	Colorado League of Charter Schools
CREA	Colorado Reading Excellence Act
CRS	Colorado Revised Statutes
CSAP	Colorado Student Assessment Program
CSAP-A	CSAP-Alternate. The assessment for a small percentage (less than 1%) of students with IEP's that need significant support in order to progress in their learning.
CSR	Comprehensive School Reform—a federal grant for failing schools, formerly known as Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration
CSR	Class Size Reduction
CSSEAC	Charter Schools Special Education Advisory Committee
DI	Direct Instruction
ECS	Education Commission of the States
EDGAR	Education Department General Administrative Regulations
ELA	English Language Acquisition
ELL	English Language Learner
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act—federal education law replaced with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
ESL	English as a Secondary Language
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FERPA	Family Education Rights and Privacy Act—federal law governing privacy

FPP	Financial Policies & Procedures
FTE	Full Time Equivalent—one full-time salary
FY	Fiscal Year
GED	General Education Diploma
GT	Gifted & Talented
HB	House Bill in the Colorado Legislature
IASA	Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Federal Law)
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—federal law regarding educating students with disabilities
IDEA-B	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—Part B
IEP	Individual Education Plan—an official plan for students with disabilities that qualify for Special Education services
ILP	Individual Literacy Plan—state law requires an ILP for any student not reading at grade level by third grade (the state law is the Colorado Basic Literacy Act)
ITBS	Iowa Test of Basic Skills
LEA	Local Education Agency or official school district
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment—educating disabled students with non-disabled students
NACSA	National Association of Charter School Authorizers
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
OCR	Office of Civil Rights—federal law pertaining to Section 504 and disability regulations
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
PCD	Perceptual Communicative Disorder
PCSP	Public Charter School Program
PD	Professional Development
PL	Public Law (Federal Law)
PPOR	Per Pupil Operating Revenue
PPR	Per Pupil Revenue
PSAT	Pre-Stanford Achievement Test
R2A	Read to Achieve
RFA	Request for Application
RFP	Request for Proposal
SAR	School Accountability Report
SAT	Stanford Achievement Test
SB	Senate Bill in the Colorado Legislature
SBE	State Board of Education
SBRR	Scientifically-based Reading Research
SEA	State Education Agency—Colorado Department of Education
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SLIC	Significant Limited Intellectual Capacity
USDOE	United States Department of Education

Appendix B:
Internet Resources

Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development	ascd.org
Center for Education Reform	edreform.com
Charter School Institute	csi.state.co.us
Colorado Core Knowledge	ckcolorado.org
Colorado Department of Education	cde.state.co.us
Colorado General Assembly	leg.state.co.us
Colorado High School Activities Association	chsaa.org
Colorado League of Charter Schools	coloradoleague.org
Core Knowledge Foundation	coreknowledge.org
Education Commission of the States	ecs.org
Education Week	edweek.org
Federal Resources for Educational Excellence	ed.gov/free
Mid-Content Regional Education Laboratory	mcrel.org
National Association of Charter School Authorizers	charterauthorizers.org
North American Council on Online Learning	nacol.org
North Central Regional Education Laboratory	ncrel.org
School Matters	schoolmatters.com
US Department of Education	uscharterschools.org
West Ed	wested.org
What Works Clearinghouse	whatworks.ed.gov

Appendix C:
Glossary

Standard Abbreviations

ADA Americans with Disabilities Act
AYP Adequate Yearly Progress
CBLA Colorado Basic Literacy Act
CDE Colorado Department of Education
CLCS Colorado League of Charter Schools
CSP Charter Schools Program (of the U.S. Department of Education)
ED U. S. Department of Education
ELL English Language Learner
EMO Educational management organization
FRC Federal Resource Center
IDEA Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP Individualized education program
ILP Individualized literacy plan
LEA Local education agency (school district)
NACSA National Association of Charter School Authorizers
NCLB No Child Left Behind Act
NCREL North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
NEA National Education Association
NRT Norm-referenced tests
SEA State education agency
SIP School Improvement Plan

Accountability: Holding schools (students, parents, educators, and community members) responsible for meeting identified student achievement targets through a continuous cycle of planning, evaluation, and reporting.

Accreditation: A process of granting recognition to academic institutions and professional programs offered by those institutions for meeting established standards of performance, integrity and quality and which entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public. The State Department of Education grants accreditation to districts. Individual charter schools are responsible to provide data to their districts or chartering agency to support their accreditation.

Accreditation Contract: The agreement between the State Board of Education that binds the school district or authorizing agency to manage the accreditation of public schools under their approval, consistent with the standards and goals to be set forth by the Accreditation Indicators and State Board rules and regulations.

Accreditation Indicators: The achievement indicators that determine the accreditation category of a public school and school district pursuant to the provisions of the law governing accreditation.

Achievement Gap: A consistent difference in scores on student achievement tests between groups of children when compared to other groups of children (Ex: boys versus girls, Hispanics versus Blacks, etc.)

Achievement Test: A test instrument designed to measure the amount of academic knowledge and/or skill a student has acquired from instruction. Such tests provide information that can be used to make comparisons between the group that is tested and a norm group or a specific measure of performance (Ex: Standards).

Adequate Yearly Progress: The minimum level of improvement that states, school districts and schools must achieve each year as required by NCLB.

Aggregation: The combined performance of all students used for reporting purposes.

Alignment: The degree of agreement between measures of an applied curriculum (Ex: assessments of knowledge and skills) and content standards or performance standards.

Alternative Certification/Licensure: The process used to allow potential talented teachers to obtain certification through other means than a college degree in education and state certification.

Amendment 23: Passed in response to a lower than average per pupil funding in Colorado K-12 schools. Specifically, the Amendment requires that the statewide base per-pupil funding and categorical program funding increase by inflation plus 1% from 2001-2011, and by inflation thereafter.

Appeal: Taking the denial of a charter school application or the gross imposition of conditions by a chartering authority to the State Board of Education for reconsideration.

Assessment: The process of collecting performance information about students or programs that relies upon a variety of instruments (Ex: tests, questionnaires, behavior observations, etc.). Therefore, assessment is a more comprehensive term than test.

Authentic Assessment: An assessment that presents tasks that reflect mastery and practical application. Authentic assessment of a student's ability to solve problems, for example, would assess how effectively a student solves a real problem.

Authorizer: The district or other organization that accepts applications, approves, exercises oversight and, after the period of approval, decides on renewal or revocation of a charter school.

Benchmark: Objective that provides a description of student knowledge expected at specific grades, ages, or developmental levels. Benchmarks often are used in conjunction with standards.

Charter Application: The vision of a proposed charter school that addresses all of the components required by the authorizer to make the decision of approval or denial of the school being proposed.

Charter Contract: The agreement reached between a charter school and its authorizer that details how the school will operate under the authorizer and in what ways it will be held accountable.

Charter School: A public school operated by a group of parents, teachers and/or community members as a semi-autonomous school of choice operating under a charter, or contract, with its authorizer.

Choice: A term used to describe the right of parents to be able to choose where to send their children to school.

Conflict of Interest: A conflict of interest is a situation in which someone in a position of trust, such as a board member, administrator, or teacher, has competing professional or personal interests. Such competing interests can make it hard for the person to fulfill their duties without bias.

Consolidated Grant: Federal grant funds available to schools due to No Child Left Behind legislation. These funds are called "Title" funds and are available to schools that fall within certain qualifications. A short list of the title funds is listed below.
- Title I A- Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged
- Title I C- Migrant Education Program
- Title I D- Neglected and Delinquent
- Title II A- Preparing, Training and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals
- Title II B- Math Science Partnership
- Title II D- Enhancing Education Through Technology
- Title III- Language Instruction for Limited-English Proficient and Immigrant Students
- Title IV- Safe and Drug Free Schools
- Title V A- Innovative Programs
- Title V B- Public Charter Schools
- Title VI B- Rural Education Initiative

Content Standard: Statements of what students should know about a particular academic area usually outlined by age/grade.

Corrective Action: A plan developed by the state that includes resources to improve teaching, management and curriculum when a school or school district fails to make adequate yearly progress.

Criteria/Criterion: The indicators used to evaluate student work.

Criterion-referenced Tests: A test that measures specific skill development as compared to a predefined absolute level of mastery of that skill.

Curriculum: Curriculum is defined as a set of program content set in a sequence of delivery aimed at satisfying learning and performance objectives for your school. It consists of the subjects to be taught, the depth of the content of those subjects, and the delivery method for the teaching of those subjects.

Curriculum Alignment: Verifying that your curriculum will teach state standards and allow accurate assessment of student skills.

Curriculum-based Assessments: Assessments that align closely with the instructional materials and procedures related to the implementation of the curriculum. These assessments result in monitoring progress in implementing the curriculum and may guide changes to instruction or services being provided to students.

Curriculum Development: Includes planning, improvement, and evaluation of the curriculum.

Curriculum Evaluation: Data gathering to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum for achieving its goals.

Curriculum Implementation: Placing the curriculum plan into action.

Curriculum Improvement: Thoughtful adjustments to the curriculum based on solid research to assist the curriculum in reaching its goals for student achievement.

Curriculum Planning: Preliminary steps taken when developers establish the plan for content and delivery of the curriculum.

Data-driven: A process of making decisions about curriculum and instruction based on the analysis of classroom data and standardized test data.

Disaggregated: Under NCLB, this term means that test results are sorted into groups of students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency and comparisons are made to determine if any group is underperforming.

Discipline Policy: A policy clearly laying out the expectations for behavior of students in the school. This policy would also include potential consequences for various infractions.

Due Process: An established course for judicial proceedings or other governmental activities designed to safeguard the legal rights of the individual.

Education Management Organization (EMO): A professional organization that provides policy and financial oversight for a charter school.

English Language Learner (ELL): A term used to describe students who are in the process of acquiring English language skills and knowledge. Some schools refer to these students using the term limited English proficient, or LEP.

Formative Assessment: Any form of assessment used by an educator to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of particular content and then to adjust instructional practices accordingly toward improving student achievement in that area.

Goal: A broad statement of performance desired.   It is usually composed of several measurable objectives.

Governing Board: A board in charge of policies and financial stability of the charter school. The charter contract is between the authorizer and the charter governing board.

Highly Qualified Teachers: Through the No Child Left Behind legislation, teachers must become highly qualified by the 2005-2006 school year. For charter schools, that means that each teacher must hold a bachelor's, or higher degree, and they must have demonstrated competency in each academic content area in which they are required to teach.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A written statement, for a child with a disability, that is developed, reviewed and revised accordance with IDEA regulations.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The major federal law related to special education that provides funding to states and sets specific procedural requirements for the identification and education of students with disabilities.

Instruction: The model of teaching that combines the methods, skills and time used to facilitate student learning.

Intent to Enroll: Form filled out by parents who want to enroll their children in the charter school.

Letter of Support: Letter provided by politicians, business owners, community members, and parents that voice support for the need of your school in the community.

Licensed Teachers: A fully licensed teacher is one who has a current valid Colorado provisional, professional or alternative teaching license with an endorsement in the core academic area in which s/he is teaching.

Local Control: Establishing a management structure in which decisions are placed in the hands of those who are directly educating students rather than having decisions handed down from a centralized location that has no hands-on experience with the population being educated.

Local Education Agency (LEA): A local education agency (LEA) is generally a school district or oversight agency that has administrative control and direction of one or more public elementary or secondary schools, and in some states the term includes a public charter school that is established as an LEA under state law.

Lottery (enrollment lottery): A policy for enrolling students when demand exceeds the number of positions open in a school. A school is only required to conduct a lottery if they intend on applying for grant funds through Federal or State Agencies.

Manipulatives: Three-dimensional teaching aids and visuals that teachers use to help students with math concepts. Typical tools include counting beads or bars, base ten blocks, shapes, fraction parts, and rulers.

NCLB (No Child Left Behind): Signed into law by President Bush in 2002, No Child Left Behind sets performance guidelines for all schools and also stipulates what must be included in accountability reports to parents. It mandates annual student testing, includes guidelines for underperforming schools, and requires states to train all teachers and assistants to be "highly qualified".

Norm Referenced Tests (NRT): A standardized test designed, validated, and implemented to rank a students' performance by comparing that performance to the performance of that student's peers.

Objectives: A statement of what students should know or be able to do related to specific learning experiences.

Online learning: Instruction and content delivered primarily via the Internet. Online learning is a form of distance learning.

Performance Based Assessment: Systematic and direct observation of student performance according to preestablished performance criteria. Students are assessed on the result as well as the process engaged in a complex task or creation of a product.

Portfolio Assessment: An assessment process that tracks student progress by collecting student work (such as written assignments, artwork, homework, presentations) is based on the collection of student work that represents growth or mastery of skills and knowledge.

Professional Development: Programs, seminars, workshops, or conferences that allow teachers or administrators to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to perform their jobs successfully.

Rubric: A set of descriptions showing degrees of quality for guiding and assessing student work.

School Improvement Program (SIP): A plan for an improved education program developed by a school to target previously identified weaknesses in their program.

Scientifically Research-based: Research that involves the application of stringent, controlled procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to educational activities and programs. This type of research requires comparison between an experimental group and a control group to obtain valid results.

Standardized Test: An established procedure that assures that a test is administered with the same directions and under the same conditions (time limits, etc.) and is scored in the same manner for all students to ensure the comparability of scores. Standardization allows reliable and valid comparison to be made among students taking the test. The two major types of standardized tests are norm-referenced and criterion-referenced.

Standards: There are two types of standards, content and performance. Content standards are statements of the subject-specific knowledge and skills that schools are expected to teach students, indicating what students should know and be able to do. Performance standards are indices of qualities that specify how adept or competent a student demonstration must be and that consist of the following four components: 1. levels that provide descriptive labels or narratives for student performance (Ex: advanced, proficient, etc); 2. descriptions of what students at each particular level must demonstrate relative to the task; 3. examples of student work at each level illustrating the range of performance within each level; and 4. cut scores clearly separating each performance level. (Adapted from EdSource)

Standards Based Assessments: Assessments that measure how well students have mastered specific content standards or skills.

Standards Based Education: Implementing instruction focused on student learning of specific content standards. This implementation aligns programs of instruction and assessment with the content standards making sure you are measuring student learning of skills and knowledge related to standards.

State Education Agency (SEA): A state education agency (SEA) is the component of state government that is primarily responsible for the state supervision of public elementary and secondary schools.

Summative Assessments: Generally an assessment carried out at the end of a course or project. Summative assessments are typically used to assign students a course grade.

Sunshine Law: The law governing open meetings in Colorado. It assures open public meetings for organizations that are considered "public" entities. Non-public sessions are only allowed in a relatively narrowly defined set of circumstances. All discussions not falling within these "executive session" categories must be held in public, and in any event the discussion leading to the final decision must occur in public.

Systemic Reform: Changes in the educational process that occurs across all levels of the process (Ex: curriculum, instruction, assessment) and that impacts all stakeholders within the process (Ex: teachers, students, parents, administrators, board, and community.)

Value-added Growth: Refers to a longitudinal assessment approach that uses a student's prior year achievement and the current year's achievement to evaluate gains over time. Ideally, a student gains a years worth of growth in a year.

Wait list: Utilized in schools that enroll students on a first-come first-served basis when enrollment exceeds capacity. Students are placed on the waitlist and must wait until an opening is made available in the enrollment of the school in that particular grade.

Waivers: Permission from the State Board of Education (SBE) to set aside the requirements of an Education Code provision or administrative regulations upon the request of a school district or charter school.