



Charter School Development 101  
Michigan Association of Public School Academies (MAPSA)

# So you want to start a charter school?

- Why do you want to start a charter school?
- Have you investigated state laws and policies?
- Are you dedicated to students learning?
- Are you able to put aside “adult issues” while navigating the political scene?
- Do you have the capacity to secure funds to support the development process?
- Are you open to critical feedback and growth?
- Are you committed to quality?

# Assemble the Founding Team

- The core founding group moves the charter school from dream to reality and is a critical step in the development process. They plan it, they write it, and some of them may operate it. This work requires a great amount of time and a wide variety of skills and dedication.
- Expertise in the following areas may be key:
  - Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
  - Community Relations & Marketing
  - Fundraising
  - Governance & Management
  - Legal issues (educational law)
  - Real estate
  - Financial
  - Student Assessment
  - Grant Writing
- You will need people with strong organizational skills, potential charter school parents, and others.
- The expertise you don't find within your core group may be found through the local business community, colleges/universities, parents, and other community members.

# Getting Ready

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- Develop a detailed plan and timeline with the core founding team listing all of the tasks that need to be accomplished before doors open. The plan should identify who will address each issue, when, and how, and how the work will be coordinated.
- Establish the formal organization. As applicable, draft and file articles of incorporation, file for nonprofit status, recruit and install the governing board, and draft bylaws, policies, and an administrative structure.

# Defining a Community Need

- You will be required to describe the demographics, identified needs, and strengths and weaknesses in the geographic area where the charter school will be located. To follow are items that may be included in this section:
  - Racial composition
  - % of children that live in poverty
  - % of children that qualify for free or reduced meals
  - Income range (low, medium, high) of families
  - % of children living in one parent households
  - Educational attainment of adults
  - Employment rates
  - Overall crime rates
  - Youth crime rates
  - Dropout rates
  - Closures of neighborhood public schools
  - Resources not available in the community the charter school will provide
  - Community strengths and weaknesses

# Grade Range & Developmental Needs

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- Include the following in a chart:
  - Initial grades offered, number of students in each grade
  - Year by year expansion plan for the next five years, include grade(s) and number of
  - Include the minimum and maximum number of students the school will enroll for each listed grade and school year.
  - After completing the chart, the applicant must state how the grade plan has been shaped by the developmental needs of the students most likely to attend the school.

# Why will students choose you?

- You will be required to identify where the anticipated students who will attend the school are currently being educated.
- Include the reasons why families will choose the proposed charter school.
- Consider these questions:
  - What will the school do and offer that sets it apart from the competition?
  - What benefits will students and families experience as a result of choosing the proposed school?
  - What are the community and educational needs the proposed school will meet?
  - What will the school do differently that will attract students and families?.

# Mission Statement

- A mission statement should :
  - Be explicit but concise.
  - Be one or two sentences.
  - Written in the present tense.
  - Focus on the here and know.
- A mission statement is a “living” set of words that drives the total operations of the Academy on a daily basis.
- All Academy stakeholders must be constantly reminded of the statement in order for them to remain focused on the purpose of the existence of the Academy.
- A mission statement may evolve over time. As time passes, it is important to review the mission statement on an annual basis.

# Vision Statement

- A vision statement should:
  - Include what the Academy envisions happening when the Academy fulfills their mission statement.
  - Reflect the positive things that will occur in the Academy when the mission statement drives the operations of and decisions made by the Academy.
  - Be a brief description of a desired outcome that directly correlates to the Academy's mission statement.
  - Be one to three sentences in length.
- When writing vision statements, think of the word will. What will be the results associated with meeting the mission of the Academy? The following questions are designed to assist Academies as they write vision statements:
  - What will students learn?
  - How will students act?
  - What will students believe?
  - What will students be able to accomplish?
  - What will be the results of the curriculum used?
  - What will be the results of out of class activities?
  - How will teachers teach?
  - How will parents be involved in the life of the Academy?
  - What impact will the Academy have on the local neighborhood?

# Educational Goals

- Educational goals focus on anticipated outcomes.
- The goals must be:
  - Specific
  - Measurable
  - Reasonable and attainable
  - Include the targeted population
  - State what the performance standard is
  - Reflect how the performance standard will be measured

An example of an educational goal:

*80% of the student population that has attended the Academy for two or more years will gain at least 1.3 years of academic growth as evidenced by the results of the Metropolitan Achievement Test given in the fall and spring of each school year.*

# Evaluate Competitive Curricula

- You will be required to describe how the developmental team evaluated the chosen curricula and the instructional approaches used to deliver the curricula as well as the criteria used to do the evaluation.
- Suggestions related to this topic:
  - Describe the various curricula and instructional approaches evaluated by the developmental team.
  - List the criteria used to evaluate the curricula and instructional approaches.
  - Present research based reasons why the selected curriculum was chosen and has proven to be effective in schools that have a similar targeted population as anticipated in the proposed charter school.
  - State why the selected curriculum and instructional approaches will facilitate the attainment of the school's educational goals.

# Description of the Curricula

- Many charter applications list the textbooks used as the selected curricula. Textbooks are one tool to deliver the curricula. Textbooks are NOT a defined curriculum and often are not aligned to state standards.
- After specifying the name of the selected curricula, present the reasons why the curricula will assist students in mastering the Michigan Grade Level Content Standards or the High School Content Expectations.
- Include a comprehensive description of the curriculum that is aligned with the state standards
- Include a detailed curriculum guide, available to authorizer and parents, indicating specific learning objectives by grade level

# Instructional Design

- Defined as what methods/strategies will the classroom teachers use to deliver the selected curricula.
  - Examples include differentiated instruction, block scheduling, hands-on learning activities, small group instruction, community service learning projects, etc.
- After describing the instructional design, outline the steps the school will take to ensure that teachers understand and implement the instructional model chosen.
- List the proposed dates, purposes of, and who will present This document provides information of a general nature.

# Professional Development

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- Plan scheduled professional development activities to implement strategies.
- Professional development activities for self improvement should be identified.
- Include time line for professional development activities.
- Describe how classroom instruction will be monitored to ensure teachers instruct students according to the selected instructional design.

# Assessment & Evaluation

- Describe the assessment program the proposed charter school will implement as well as how the assessment results will be used to improve teaching and learning.
- Include MEAP testing in this section as well as how school officials will use MEAP results to improve teaching and classroom learning.
- Be very specific when presenting how the school will review assessment results and the strategies the school will use to address any academic deficiencies identified through this assessment.
- Name the standardized achievement test the school will use to measure the yearly academic growth of the students. (i.e. EdPerformance).
- Be very specific in detailing how the school will use the standardized test results to improve teaching and classroom learning.
- Be explicit when presenting the strategies that will be employed to address any academic deficiencies identified through this type of assessment.

# Annual Standards or Measures

- Describe how the applicant will communicate student progress against the standards to students and parents.
- Examples of annual standards include:
  - 75% of the students who have attended the Academy for two or more years will meet or exceed state proficiency standard on the annual MEAP assessment.
  - 80% of the students who have attended the Academy for two or more years will gain at least 1.2 years of academic growth per school year as evidenced by the results of the Metropolitan Achievement Test.
- After listing the anticipated standards, describe how the proposed school will communicate the standards to students and parents.

# Support Services

- Examples of support services that may be included:
  - Before and after school childcare
  - Before and after school tutorials
  - Parent education programs
  - Summer school
  - Preschool program
  - Computer training
  - After school enrichment programs
  - Mentoring programs
  - School clubs
  - Extracurricular programs and clubs
  - Parent support network
- After describing each support service/program, explain how the service program will enhance the overall quality of the school.

# Special Student Populations

- Describe how the charter school intends to participate in its ISD's county specific special education plan
- For example:
  - Describe how special education students will be identified.
  - Describe the procedures that will be used for making special education referrals.
  - Describe how students will be instructed in the least restrictive environment.
  - Describe how all Individual Education Plans will be monitored.
  - Describe whether the school will directly employ or contract the services of special education professionals.
  - Describe the direct and indirect special education services provided by the regional ISD.

# Staffing & Management

- Describe the anticipated staffing, management, and governance structure for the proposed school.
  - Staffing: Develop a chart that lists the number of regular classroom teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, administrators, cafeteria workers, counselors, social workers, office workers, and other staff the school anticipates employing during its first year of operation.
  - Management: Present how the school will be managed. Will the school be self-managed or will the school employ an Educational Service Provider?

# Board of Directors

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- List the proposed board of directors.
- Include demographic Information, resume, and a completed board application.
- Define the governance model and structure.
- Develop and insert an organizational chart.
- Be sure the board is free from conflict of interest and related party transactions.

# Attendance & Participation

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- List the anticipated date the school will open and provide a descriptive of the yearly calendar and school day schedule.
- When developing the yearly calendar, include a month-by-month schedule that lists conferences, assessments, breaks, Holidays, PD, etc.
- When developing the daily schedule, consider including the time the building will open in the morning, time classes will begin, recess times, class time, lunch time, time school is over, etc.

# Advertising & Recruitment

- Describe the school's ***advertising and*** recruitment plans and the methods the school will use to retain the students that enroll.
- Common ways charter schools have used for advertising and recruiting students include billboards, targeted flyers to select zip code areas, open houses, cable television advertisements, radio announcements, booths stationed in malls and other shopping areas, recruiting visits to day care centers, church bulletins, etc.
- After describing how the proposed school will recruit students, the applicant is required to describe how the school will retain the students who enroll.

# Parent Involvement

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- How the proposed school will involve parents in the design of the school and the education of the enrolled students?
- For example:
  - Recruit parents to serve on school committees
  - Recruit parents to serve on the Student Handbook writing team
  - Recruit parents to be mentors
  - Recruit parents to serve as classroom volunteers
  - Recruit parents to serve as classroom speakers
  - Recruit parents to serve on the School Improvement Plan team
  - Host family reading and mathematics nights
  - Implement Parent University

# Facilities

- Describe the facility by stating the square footage, number of classrooms, special areas such as a gymnasium, library, multi-purpose room, office space, playground, parking, etc.
- After describing the facility, detail whether the facility will be purchased or leased and any financial arrangements that have/will be made to finance the cost of the purchase or lease.
- If facility renovations need to be made, provide an estimated budget.
- Provide a timeline that informs the reviewers when the renovations will start and end.
- If the developmental team has not located a facility, the applicant is required to describe the process the developmental team will use to secure a building as well as the criteria the team will use to select the facility.

# Financial

- List all anticipated preoperational costs.
  - Preoperational costs are the expenses the developmental team expects to incur prior to the opening of the proposed school.
  - Such costs include, but are not limited to, salaries, facility renovations, classroom furniture, marketing, legal, accounting, textbooks, professional development, office equipment, phone system, printing and copying, classroom and office supplies, computers, staff development, assessment tools, janitorial supplies, etc.
- After listing the preoperational expenses, the applicant is required to describe how the expenses will be covered.
  - This may include grants, loans, corporate gifts, etc. When listing the sources to cover expenses, indicate whether the source is secured (provide evidence) or anticipated.
- The last part of this section requires the applicant to indicate if the proposed school intends to qualify for state aid as an operational source of funds.
- Be sure to create a 3-5 year operational budget with a monthly breakdown for the first year. Sustainability is KEY.

# Contractual Agreements

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- As applicable, develop formal operating agreements with the sponsor district staff and/or non-district service providers such as an Educational Service Provider to identify any services they will provide and the terms under which they will provide them.
- Be sure to evaluate each support organization before proceeding with an agreement.

# Charter School Authorization

- Charter school authorization comes from submitting a phase one application to one from one of the following entities:
  - Public 4 Year University (i.e. CMU, GVSU, EMU, etc)
  - Intermediate School District
  - School District
  - Community College
- To get the charter approved you need to maximize buy-in from stakeholders in the community you will serve.
- It is important to enlist community support for your charter school idea and to get to know members of the authorizing agency.
- You may also want to submit the draft charter to your school board for review.
- Carefully consider the feedback you receive and revise the application as applicable.
- The last step of presenting your charter may involve attending committee hearings to discuss and review the application.
- Be prepared to show how your school will meet specific needs in the district: bring letters of support with you, and have supporters present at the meeting.

# Opening the Doors

- This stage includes the actual opening of the charter school, with its inevitable unforeseen issues.
- It also includes establishing the culture of the school, clarifying the school's expectations and beliefs, and beginning to use data on student performance as the primary guide for school planning and policymaking.
- At this point the work involved will be divided among the charter school teachers, administrator, and board. Several common areas of focus follow:
  - Formally open the doors and celebrate the commencement of the school.
  - Identify and address unforeseen glitches and constraints.
  - Transition the school's governance structure from the initial "start-up" stages to one of ongoing policy-making and oversight.
  - Establish or formalize relationships with community groups, supporters, the sponsor district, the media, and other potential partners.
  - Refine curriculum and instruction.
  - Collect and interpret student performance and achievement data, using it as the foundation for ongoing planning and school policy development.

# Securing MDE Planning Grant Funds

- Refer to the MDE Grant application. Planning funds include \$110,000 to support planning activities.
- Funds are subject to EDGAR requirements and more “strict” than Michigan guidelines.
- Review the Michigan Department of Education’s website for more information.
  - [www.michigan.gov/charters](http://www.michigan.gov/charters)
- Refer to MAPSA’s website for grant support tools and updated information.
  - Go to [www.charterschools.org](http://www.charterschools.org)
  - Click on Start A Charter School.
- The next MDE Planning Grant deadline is May 12.

# Walton Family Foundation: Start Up Funds

- \$250,000 in Start Up Support Funds
- Eligible applicants include:
  - Demonstrate strong potential for delivering excellent academic results for K-12 students, as measured by standardized achievement tests; Serve significant low-income student populations
  - Not represent a for-profit entity
  - Have an endorsement from a Foundation member or one of our state-based grant partners (MAPSA and/or Walton)
  - And, draw a majority of its students from one of WFF's targeted districts (for Michigan the targeted district is Detroit Public Schools).
- Refer to MAPSA's website for grant support tools, deadlines, and critical information.
  - [www.charterschools.org](http://www.charterschools.org)
  - Click on Start a Charter School
  - Click on Grant Opportunities
- Next WFF Start Up grant deadline is September 1.

# MI Future Funds

- For new high school founders planning to open in Fall 2013, Michigan Future Schools will be announcing an opportunity to seek support for a planning year and the first three years of operations.
- The Request for Proposal will be available December, 2011.
- Michigan Future Schools will accept proposals from school founders seeking support to open a new school open to students from the City of Detroit.
- Applicants may represent traditional public school districts, charter schools or private schools, and the proposed school must be located south of Twelve Mile Road and east of Telegraph Road.
- Michigan Future Schools will only work with new high schools.
- The Request for Proposal will be available December, 2011. In mid December there will be a mandatory bidders conference.
- Written proposals are due in February 2012.
- Refer to [www.mifuture.org](http://www.mifuture.org) for more information.

# Now what...

- Are you feeling overwhelmed? Good.
  - Starting a school is a tenuous, extensive process that involves many hours, often unpaid, and great determination.
  - The process is very competitive, often political, and many founding teams submit several applications before moving to the next level with an authorizer.
- For more support, visit MAPSA's site or contact us at 517.374.9167 for new school development services, upcoming trainings, and free resource tools.