

CHARTER SCHOOL

Charter schools are schools established under AS 14.03.250 that operate within the public school district. Charter schools are established under the approval by the Board and the State Board of Education of an application for a charter school. Charter schools shall operate under a written contract between the charter school and the School Board.

Establishment of Charter Schools

The Board shall give appropriate consideration to any charter school petition in light of its overall effect on the district's children and the proposed school's ability to function effectively and meet its goals. The School Board desires to support innovations, which improve student learning and views charter schools as an opportunity to implement school-level reform. In accordance with law, the proposed charter must include descriptions of the vision, mission and goals of the charter school, the governance structure, which will be used, the educational outcomes to be attained by the students, and the method by which progress in meeting these outcomes will be measured.

Applications for a charter school to operate during the next school year shall be submitted to the Board no later than February 1 of the current school year. A charter school shall begin operation as agreed with the School Board but no later than October 1st of the year approved for opening.

Charter schools shall comply with the following general requirements:

1. The charter school shall establish an Academic Policy Committee that will function according to the terms of law.
 2. The charter school Academic Policy Committee shall report directly to the School Board or a subcommittee of the School Board unless mutually agreed otherwise.
 3. The charter school shall operate in compliance with state and federal law, and with School District policies unless mutually agreed otherwise.
 4. The charter school shall comply with the requirements of the district accounting system.
 5. The charter school shall comply with the requirements of the district purchasing system.
 6. The charter school shall be designed to advance basic skills areas (mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies) appropriate to the age of students included in the program. The charter school disciplinary program shall enforce Alaska statutes, state and federal regulations, and district policies with respect to drugs, alcohol, weapons, tobacco, harassment, and violence.
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CHARTER SCHOOL (continued)

7. The charter school shall participate in the district's report card process as required by Alaska statute.
8. The charter school shall participate in all tests and assessments required by either the State Department of Education and Early Development or the district unless the contract specifies otherwise.
9. The charter school shall not promote religious ideologies or philosophies.
10. The charter school shall operate in compliance with negotiated agreements established between employee groups and the School Board.
11. A charter school operating as a correspondence program or a residential program shall comply with all requirements of Alaska statute and regulation.

School Board Review of Charter School Application and Appeals

No later than 60 days after submission of a charter school application, the School Board will issue a written decision approving or rejecting the charter school. The written decision will include all relevant findings of fact and conclusions of law.

If the School Board approves an application, it shall forward the application to the State Board of Education for review and approval. If the School Board denies an application for a charter school, the applicant may appeal the denial to the Commissioner of Education and Early Development within 60 days of the School Board's denial. A decision of the Commissioner upholding the denial may be appealed by the charter school applicant within 30 days to the State Board of Education. If the Commissioner approves the application, her/she shall forward it to the State Board of Education for review and approval.

Review of the Charter School

Once approved by both the School Board and the State Board of Education, the charter school will be subject to an annual review of its operations and finances by the School Board. Annually, the charter school will submit a written report and make a presentation to the School Board and the public. This report will include information on the attainment of student performance expectations, meetings of the governing bodies of the charter school, descriptions of charter school activities, and other information of interest to the School Board.

CHARTER SCHOOL (continued)

If academic performance targets for student achievement are not reached by the identified timelines specified in the contract, the Academic Policy Committee must submit a Plan for Improvement, outlining activities for remediation, a process for monitoring the progress of the Plan, and a process for reporting progress of the Plan to the School Board.

If there is evidence of a breach of contract than the School Board shall have a right to investigate this breach of contract and meet with the charter school to discuss possible remedies, including termination of the charter school contract.

The Department of Education and Early Development may audit the charter school's program and may take any action necessary to ensure compliance with federal and state law, including the withholding of funding.

Organization and Operation of a Charter School

A charter school operates as a school in the district except that a charter school:

- Is exempt from the school district's textbook program, curriculum and scheduling requirements.
- Is exempt from AS 14.14.130(c), which states, "If the district employs a chief school administrator, the administrator shall select, appoint, and otherwise control all school district employees who serve under the chief school administrator subject to approval of the school board."
- Operates under the charter school's annual program budget as set out in the contract between the Board and the charter school.
- Shall designate a contact person for all communications between the charter school and the district administration.

A charter school must participate in all student assessments required by the Department of Education and Early Development."

CHARTER SCHOOL (continued)

Operation of a Charter School

A charter school shall:

- keep financial records of the charter school;
- oversee the operation of the charter school to ensure that the terms of the contract are being met;
- meet regularly with parents and with teachers of the charter school to review, evaluate, and improve operations of the charter school; and
- meet with the Academic Policy Committee at least one each year to monitor progress in achieving the committee's policies and goals.

Amendment of Charter

A charter school may apply to the School Board for an amendment to its charter during the term of its contract. If the School Board approves the amendment, an amended contract must be executed to conform to the amended charter. The School Board must forward an amended charter and amended contract to the Department of Education and Early Development. A charter school may make minor changes to its program without review by the Department, if they are approved by the district. A change of program that involves the addition of an elementary or secondary program must be approved by the School Board and the State Board of Education and Early Development.

Definitions

“Employees” of charter schools are considered employees of the district with all rights guaranteed by their respective collective bargaining agreements unless specifically waived by mutual agreement between the appropriate bargaining unit and School Board.

“Principal” means a person selected by the Academic Policy Committee to select, appoint, or otherwise supervise employees of the charter school. This person is not required to possess an Alaska Type B Administrative Certificate, but if a type B is not possessed, the individual may not conduct certificated employee evaluations. The school district assumes no responsibility for employing this person after the termination of the charter school contract unless the person is also employed as a teacher.

CHARTER SCHOOL (continued)

“Annual program budget” means the funding generated by students enrolled in the charter school as set forth in AS 14.03.260

Legal Reference:

Alaska Statutes

14.03.250-14.03.280 Charter Schools

14.16.100, Application for Residential School

Alaska Administrative Code

4 AAC 33.110 Charter Schools

4 AAC 33.405 - .490 Correspondence Study Programs

4 AAC 33.090 District-operated statewide and district-wide residential schools

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