

Critical Charter School Start-Up Activities

(post application submission/pre-opening)

Prioritize Tasks

- Put extra attention towards those items in your charter application that were incomplete and/or that the authorizer seemed to emphasize during the application review process (e.g., acquiring a facility, having sufficient enrollment, enrolling a diverse student body, etc.).

Legal Support

- Hire an attorney who specializes in charter schools (if you haven't done so already) to help you through the contract negotiation process with your authorizer.

Board Training, Policy Development

- Determine a plan for electing/appointing (based on the governance structure you described in your charter) permanent board members. Seek training for your interim board (and your permanent board once established) in order to ensure that all board members understand their roles and responsibilities and that the board can develop a clear process for operating. And, that board members understand how to use the autonomy they have as charter schools to their fullest advantage for the school. Begin to develop and implement policies.

Budgeting and Fundraising

- Finalize the school's budget and apply for start-up funds (federal funds via your state department of education and private funding, if available in your location from such funders as Walton or Gates).

Student Recruitment and Enrollment

- Develop plan and process for student recruitment and admissions and design a public relations campaign for school (communication to press, public, potential parents, etc. about school) to ensure that a clear message is being communicated about your school and that people are aware that your school exists.
- Develop process and plan for collecting all required documentation (e.g., health and safety, free and reduced lunch, IEP info, etc.) from students and ensuring that staff and the school as a whole is prepared to meet the students needs and ensure compliance (e.g., first aid training, fire drill/evacuation plan, etc.).

Accountability and Planning

- Establish annual and long-term goals (academic and otherwise) and an accountability plan and process (e.g., data collection and analysis) for ensuring success as a school and in meeting those goals.

Facility

- Ensure that your facility is up to code and that a plan is in place for funding the facility and opening it on time. Select contractor for improvements (if necessary), have the facility reviewed to ensure that it meets all zoning requirements, negotiate lease with landlord, etc.

Leadership and Staffing

- Develop job description for and hire the school leader as soon as funding is secured.
- Develop personnel policies, finalize staffing needs, create job descriptions for teachers and other staff members (including needs for office support, LEP, SPED, counseling, business management, etc.) develop employee benefit package, background check procedure, and other items related to hiring. Hire staff when funding permits.

Planning the Implementation of the Educational Program

- Board, school leader and teachers work together to finalize the curriculum content, research effective instructional approaches, and acquire materials required in order to implement the educational program and open the school's doors.
- As they are hired, teachers and school leader collectively design and implement a professional development plan for ensuring that all teachers are ready to start the school year and on the "same page" re: curriculum, instruction, etc.
- Plans for implementing, staffing, and funding the special education program and LEP program (if necessary) are finalized, including determining what is needed from students and identifying how to best meet students' needs.

Parent/Community Involvement

- Develop clear and specific opportunities for involving parents and the community in meaningful ways in your school.
- Develop plan for ensuring smooth transitions between home and school (including student drop off and pick up, how parents can be involved at home, parent/teacher conferences, etc.).