

The background is a green chalkboard. Two pieces of pink chalk are lying on the left side. There are several white chalk drawings on the board, including a circle on the left, a large 'A' at the bottom, and some abstract lines and shapes in the center and right.

# **Maryland Charter School Network**

## **Mission and Vision**

### **Module I**

**Summer of 2004**



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- **Foundation Center**
- **Illinois Charter School Resource Guide**
- **Maryland Public Charter Schools Model Policy and Resource Guide 8/2003**
- **The Massachusetts Charter School Handbook**
- **New Jersey Charter School Application**
- **Northwest Regional Educational Laboratories**



# **Module I. Mission and Vision**

## **Topics**

- A. Identifying and Recruiting School's Founders;**
- B. Establishing Need for School;**
- C. Developing Clear Mission and Vision;**
- D. Creating Measurable Goals and Objectives;**
- E. Comprehensive School Design**
- F. Community Involvement**
- G. Charter Drafting**


# **A. Identifying and Recruiting School's Founders**




# Founders:

- Are a small committed group who move the charter school from a shared educational dream to a shared educational reality
- Work together to plan for the charter school and complete the charter school application



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- Some founders may become staff or board members of the charter school once it is in operation.
  - Staff are paid employees and should not be voting board members.
  - Some staff may be ex officio (non-voting) board members.

- 
- Beyond sharing a common educational vision for their schools, founders need to be willing to offer or learn needed expertise, including (but not limited to):
    - Reading and understanding the state charter school law;
    - Following and/or developing the charter application;
    - Writing the charter application;
    - Educational law and legal issues;
    - Marketing and recruiting a constituency;
    - Dealing with the media, and community relations;
    - Identifying and obtaining human and financial resources;
    - Real estate and facilities planning and management;
    - Educational assessment and evaluation;
    - Leadership, governance, and management issues;
    - Public communication and media relations;
    - Other areas as they apply to the school's situation


# **A. Establishing Need for School**





# Provide the following information:

- Who will be served by this school and how will you meet the needs of that community
- Describe the community, include data
- Why are you planning this school
- What is the focus or theme of this school
- Who are the stakeholders
- Who will benefit from this charter school
- How will this school enhance the mission and goals of the district master plan



The statement of need will enable the reader to learn more about the issues.

It presents the facts and evidence that support the need for the project and establishes that your founders understand the problems and therefore can reasonably address them.

The information used to support the case can come from authorities in the field, as well as from local educational statistics.




You want the need section to be succinct, yet persuasive.

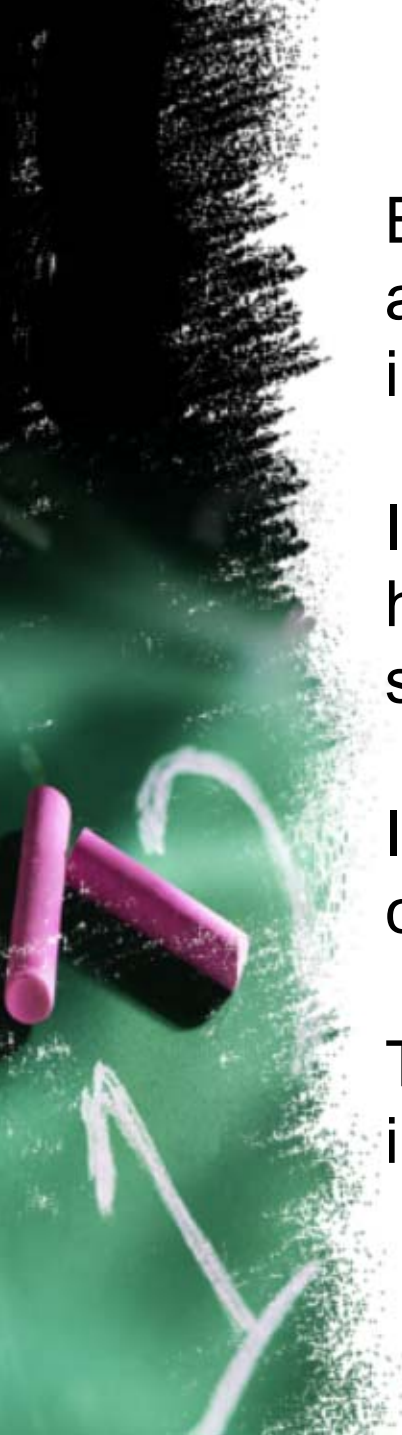
Like a good debater, you must assemble all the arguments.

Then present them in a logical sequence that will convince the reader of their importance.

As you marshal your arguments, consider the following six points.



**First, decide which facts or statistics best support creating the school.**



Be sure the data you present are accurate. There are few things more embarrassing than using information that is out of date or incorrect.

Information that is too generic or broad will not help you develop a winning argument for your school.


Information that does not relate to your school will cause the reader to question the entire application.

There also should be a balance between the information presented and the scale of the school.



## **Second, give the reader hope.**

The picture you paint should not be so grim that the solution appears hopeless. The reader will wonder whether an investment in a solution will be worthwhile. Avoid overstatement and overly emotional or negative appeals.

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**Third,  
decide if you want to put  
your school forward as a  
model.**




Serving as a model works only for certain types of schools.

Don't try to make this argument if it doesn't really fit.

Readers may expect your school to be suitable for replication if you present it as a model.


If the decision about a model is affirmative, you should document how the problem you are addressing occurs in other communities.

Be sure to explain how your design could be a solution for others as well.




**Fourth,  
determine whether it is  
reasonable to portray the  
need as acute.**

You are asking the reader to pay more attention to your application because either the problem you address is worse than others or the solution you propose makes more sense than others.



**Fifth, decide whether you can demonstrate that your school addresses the need differently or better than other schools.**




It is often difficult to describe the need for your school without being critical of the competition. But you must be careful not to do so.

Being overly critical of other schools will not be well received by the reader.

It may cause the reader to look more carefully at your design to see why you felt you had to build your case by demeaning others.

The reader may feel invested in these other schools.




If possible, you should make it clear that you are cognizant of, and on good terms with, others doing work in your field.

Keep in mind that today everyone is very interested in collaboration. They may even ask why you are not collaborating with those you view as key competitors.

So at least, you need to describe how your school complements, but does not duplicate, the work of others.


**Sixth,  
avoid circular reasoning.**





In circular reasoning, you present the absence of your solution as the actual problem. Then your solution is offered as the way to solve the problem.

For example, the circular reasoning for building a community swimming pool might go like this: "The problem is that we have no pool in our community. Building a pool will solve the problem."



A more persuasive case would cite what a pool has meant to a neighboring community, permitting it to offer recreation, exercise, and physical therapy programs.

The statement might refer to a survey that underscores the target audience's planned usage of the facility and conclude with the connection between the proposed usage and potential benefits to enhance life in the community.



**The statement of need does not have to be long and involved.**

**Short, concise information captures the reader's attention.**

The preceding information is adapted from proprietary materials with permission of the Foundation Center

# **C. Developing Clear Mission and Vision**



# Vision

- Is a common or shared understanding of what it means to learn and be educated.
- Describes the dream that motivates you and others to create a charter school.
- Describes the outcomes of an education at the proposed school, what students know when they graduate, the role teachers play in the school, the role of the proposed school in the community it will serve.



# A vision:

- Provides a solid base upon which to build a successful application;
- Is easy to share with others;
- Describes the clear sense of purpose shared by parents, students, teachers, staff, and the schools board of directors;
- Motivates the school's decision-makers in all aspects of planning and operations;
- Prevents misunderstandings





# A vision:

- May be used as a guide for decision-making;
- May provide a set of criteria by which to measure a school's progress toward its defined purposes;
- Gives potential employees, prospective students, and their parents clear indications of how they will be treated and what will be expected of them;
- Explains to chartering authorities and the community at large how this charter school is distinctive from other public schools

# Mission:

- The mission of the charter school should be to see that the goals are attained and the vision is realized.
- The mission statement should include five elements: values; educational approach, curriculum focus; customer focus; outcomes and goals.





# **Mission may answer three questions:**

1. Whom do you seek to serve?
2. What do you seek to accomplish?
3. How will you proceed (i.e., what methods will you use)?



# **Your mission statement must serve the following purposes, among others:**

- Inform the public of your school's purpose and aims;
- Serve as the common motivator and focus for all staff and the entire school community;
- Drive every school program and decision;
- Provide meaningful guidance to the future leaders of your school in making important decisions and resolving conflict; and
- Provide clarity of purpose that will guide and sustain the school over the long term.



# A Mission Statement should:


- Describe how the mission provides a clearly articulated vision for a public school that would promote student achievement.
- Identify and describe any specific area(s) of concentration or theme(s) upon which the charter school may be focused (for example: math and science, technology, the arts, etc.).
- Describe why the district of residence was selected. Provide supporting evidence.

# Reviewers may look for evidence of:

- A clear, compelling mission statement that is meaningful and free of jargon
- A statement that describes how the charter school seeks to make a difference in public education and the community
- Statements that establish the need for a charter school in the district or region of residence
- A description of how the mission statement will drive the school's programs and decisions throughout the other sections of the application
- A description of how the school will enhance or expand educational options for the student population

# **D. Creating Measurable Goals and Objectives**






**Goals describe the broad standards and outcomes for the students, staff and school.**

**Objectives are the specific measurable results of achieving goals.**

# Goals answer these questions:

- Are the specific standards and outcomes for students aligned with the vision?
- What should students know and be able to do?
- What are the desired outcomes?
- Are the objectives to be measured the truly important ones?





**Objectives are the measurable outcomes of the program.**

They define your methods.


Your objectives must be **tangible, specific, concrete, measurable, and achievable** in a specified time period.

Writers often confuse objectives with goals, which are conceptual and more abstract.



# Goals and objectives for:

- **Academic achievement** – what performance level will the school be held accountable for attaining?
- Meeting **school specific goals**
- Include **state board goals, district priorities, and community needs**
- **Content-based or performance-based?**
- **MSA** – Maryland State assessment
- **Must be measurable** – consider what instrument will be used to measure
- **Expected performance goal** – **baseline and increase**



Describe the **BROAD academic goals** of the charter school (not goals of each subject or grade level), which will promote high student achievement.

These are goals that involve the entire school—not one grade or subject.

Under each goal, **list objectives** with selected representative indicators (measurable/anticipated outcomes) that will provide evidence that the goals are being achieved.



## **Reviewers may look for evidence of:**

- Alignment of the goals with the mission and curricula of the school
- Measurable indicators for each goal
- A plan for achieving the stated goals

# **E. Comprehensive School Design**





**Comprehensive School Design  
provides a well-defined  
instructional plan,  
with clear framework for:**

**Curriculum  
Pedagogy  
Goals  
Assessment**



# Educational Program

Describe the curriculum used and the rationale for how it was chosen.

Show alignment with all MD and district standards

# Educational Program

Describe the innovative strategies for learning and teaching that the charter school will employ to promote high student achievement and the process for measuring the efficacy of these programs.

Include any supporting research-based data and/or indicators that provide evidence that the strategies promote high student achievement.



# Educational Program

Provide the school calendar for the first school year listing opening and closing school dates, holidays, vacations, etc.

Outline the school day schedule.

Describe the process for curriculum development, supervision, continual assessment and revision of the educational program.

# Educational Program

Explain how limited English proficient learners, disabled students, and students who enter the school below grade level will benefit from the curriculum.

Describe the meaningful and sustained professional development opportunities that will be provided to teachers in the area of curriculum and how these opportunities will promote higher levels of student achievement.



# Reviewers may look for evidence of:

- A curriculum plan that is consistent with the mission of the school and that challenges students to perform at high levels
- Curricula that are aligned with MD and local standards
- Effective teaching strategies that support the innovative strategies described
- Program models and delivery strategies that are suitable for limited English proficient students and students with disabilities



# **Educational Equity and Access**

Describe how the charter school will identify and meet the needs of at-risk students.


Outline the charter school plan to identify and meet the needs of limited English proficient (LEP) students.



# Educational Equity and Access

Describe how the charter school will meet the needs of special education students in accordance with federal and state statutes and regulations in the following areas:

- Child Study Team services;
- Location of students;
- Identification of students;
- Evaluation of students;
- Determination of eligibility;
- Individual Education Program (IEP) development;
- Special education placement options;
- Implementation of IEPs;
- Annual review of students; and
- Re-evaluation of students.



Describe how the charter school will meet the needs of students with disabilities who are not eligible for special education/IDEA services.

Describe how equal and bias-free access for all students to all school facilities, courses, programs, activities and services will be provided regardless of race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, religion, English proficiency, socio-economic status or disability.

# Reviewers may look for evidence of:

- A commitment to serving the needs of special populations of students
- A plan that reflects an understanding of services and costs associated with providing support for all students
- Knowledge of the school's obligations regarding state and federal laws on special education, civil rights and students with limited English proficiency
- A plan to develop policies and programs that recognize and value diversity
- A plan for identifying students with special needs and for providing and staffing all necessary services



# Student Assessment

- Outline the participation of the charter school in the required Statewide Assessment Program.
- Describe the plan to collect and establish baseline assessment data for all entering students and describe how the school will use student assessment data to gauge the effectiveness of curricula and instruction.
- Identify and describe with specificity all other non-mandated tests and/or assessment measures and how these measures will be used to assess students' progress in meeting the measurable objectives of the educational program of the charter school.

# Student Assessment

- Describe the process to inform parents/guardians periodically of their child's performance and progress.
- Outline a plan for addressing the needs of students who do not perform at acceptable levels of proficiency and/or do not reach state performance standards. Describe steps that will be taken to intervene before students become dependent upon remediation.
- Outline a plan that reflects how school leaders will measure the academic progress of individual students, cohorts of students and the school as a whole. Include in this plan how data will be disaggregated, analyzed and used to comply with the *No Child Left Behind Act* to improve student achievement.

# Student Assessment

- Describe the policies and standards for promoting students to the next grade or achievement level.
- Describe the meaningful and sustained professional development opportunities that will be provided to teachers in the area of assessment and how these opportunities will promote higher levels of student achievement.



# Reviewers may look for evidence of:

- Descriptions and/or examples of assessments that are consistent with the school's mission and program as well as high expectations of students
- Multiple measures of student outcomes and a plan for analyzing and using data
- A thorough, clear, measurable, credible and sound design for measuring, disaggregating and reporting the performance and progress of the charter school
- An understanding of state, federal and NCLB requirements and alternate assessment requirements
- A strategy for how assessment results will be used to make adjustments in curricula, instruction and improve student outcomes
- A commitment of time and resources for professional development and for the analysis of the relationship between professional development and instructional improvement

# Governance Structure

**Provide the following information:**

If the board of trustees members have been identified:

- full name and complete home address;
- business/industry/education/community affiliation(s);
- résumé with qualifications; and
- voting or ex officio (non-voting) status

# Governance Structure


If the board of trustees members have **not** been identified: :

- qualifications sought; and
- date by which the board of trustees will be formed.



## **Describe the board of trustees as follows:**

- total number of members with the number who will be voting members and the number who will be ex officio (non-voting) members;
- process for selection (appointment or election) to the board of trustees;
- length of term as a member of board of trustees;
- title of officer positions;
- process for selection of all officers; and
- length of term as officers.



**Describe the role of the board of trustees and outline its responsibilities.**

**Describe the role of each officer and outline the responsibilities of each officer.**



**Describe the involvement of the following in the planning and governance of the school:**

- teachers;
- community organizations;
- parents; and
- students.

A chalkboard with a blackboard eraser and a piece of pink chalk. The chalkboard is green and has some white chalk markings, including a large 'X' and some curved lines. The eraser is black and the chalk is pink.

## **Describe the involvement of the following in the planning and governance of the school:**

- Specify the extent to which any non-profit and/or for-profit private entity such as an EMO, CBO, College, etc. may be involved in the operation of the charter school and the percentage of representation of that entity on the board of trustees.
- Describe the orientation and training process for board of trustees members.
- Describe the process that will be used for continual evaluation and professional development of the board of trustees.



## **Reviewers may look for evidence of:**

- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of board members
- Qualifications of board members that show a capacity for providing strong vision and continuity of leadership and other areas of expertise related to school management
- Knowledge of the responsibilities and powers of board members
- A stable, effective governance model that is consistent with the mission of the school
- Plans to ensure the viability of the governance and administrative structures and allow for stakeholder input



# Detailed Fiscal Plan

- Provide the specifics of the financial plan for the proposed charter school; include a description of the charter school fund development plan. The narrative should describe any plans to use outside revenue including fund-raising and any affiliations with non-profit or for-profit entities.
- List the provisions that will be made for auditing of the charter school.
- Provide a plan to hire a business administrator and to establish a uniform system of double-entry bookkeeping in conformance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles that is organized and operated on a fund basis. Include a plan to establish internal controls for the accounts payable/voucher system.



# Detailed Fiscal Plan

- Prepare a first-year budget covering projected sources of revenue, both public and private, and planned expenditures. Include in those expenditures and revenues, all start-up costs including those expected to be incurred between the approval date of the charter prior to the start of the first school year. The estimated cost and anticipated source of funding for facilities should also be included in this Budget Summary.
- Prepare a Detailed Line-Item Narrative on how each line item of revenue and expenditures was derived

# Facilities plan

- Provide an address (street and city) and a description of the physical facility in which the charter school will be located. Include the square footage of the facility and the number of classrooms, multi-purpose room(s), offices, gymnasium, cafeteria, restrooms, etc.
- Describe financing plans for the acquisition of a facility.
- Describe potential renovation needs for the facility including the estimated cost and whether the renovations are the responsibility of the landlord or the charter school.
- Include anticipated source of funding for the renovations.
- Provide a specific timetable for the acquisition, financing and renovation (if applicable) of the facility.

# Reviewers may look for evidence of:

- A facility plan that identifies a site suitable for the proposed educational program and that meets proposed enrollment needs
- Capacity to maintain the facility
- Sound financing options
- Compliance with federal, state and local statutes and regulations
- A well thought out plan for acquisition of a facility including a timeline and a designated point person and deadline for each task

# **F. Community Involvement**



# Public Relations

- Determine target audience
- Develop action oriented message. What should receiver of the message do next?
- Purposes of public relations are:
  - To communicate to potential parents and students
  - To recruit teachers and staff
  - To answer critics
  - To educate about your school
  - To raise funds
  - To build partnerships
  - To establish and strengthen communication with staff and students

# Public Relations

- Develop a school phrase four-ten words long,
- Find a way to concisely articulate your instructional program
- Never release anything that is not perfect



# Items to include/remember in developing Marketing Materials

- NO student may be denied admission – unless maximum enrollment has been met
- Recruitment must demonstrate commitment to equity and diversity.
- Be positive about what you have to offer -- not the negatives of traditional public school
- Communicate how you will meet the specific need of the community
- Always be aware of and communicate how you will be helping kids
- Provide information in the commonly spoken language of your community
- What do you want the recipient of the message to do?
- Where do they go?
- Who do they call?
- When?

# Methods of Getting Your Word Out

- ✓ Have enrollment and school information available at local libraries
- ✓ Send flyers to social services organizations describing your school and/or
- ✓ inviting them to an event (Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis)
- ✓ Community and youth centers, after-school, and recreation programs
- ✓ Place flyers in real estate offices
- ✓ Present at newcomers clubs



## Methods of Getting Your Word Out

- ✓ Encourage word of mouth (satisfied parents, satisfied staff)
- ✓ Submit classified ads in newspapers
- ✓ Feature stories in newspapers
- ✓ Mail information to PTA and other parent organizations
- ✓ Interview on local radio talk shows
- ✓ Advertise on ethnic radio stations
- ✓ Send press releases to the local media
- ✓ Write letters to the editor/editorials
- ✓ Distribute newsletters
- ✓ Displays in corporation lobbies, shopping malls



## Methods of Getting Your Word Out

- ✓ Place posters in children's clothing stores, day care centers, hospitals
- ✓ Publicize student awards ceremonies
- ✓ Post information on bulletin boards (laundromats, gyms, beauty shops, bowling alleys, grocery stores)
- ✓ Advertise on billboards
- ✓ Advertise on buses
- ✓ Information/orientation meetings
- ✓ Hand out bumper stickers
- ✓ Send information to professional associations and publications



## Methods of Getting Your Word Out

- ✓ Display banners outside of the school advertising events and inviting all to attend
- ✓ Create a video showing that your school is a safe place to be, and play
  - ✓ in doctors' offices, restaurants, malls—anywhere that potential families may be
- ✓ Invite people to come in to visit the school on a regular basis (open house)
- ✓ Advertise in the “Penny Saver” or in ValU-Pac coupon books, if you have them in your area
- ✓ Local TV stations may advertise nonprofit events free of charge.



# Parent/Community Involvement Opportunities

- Assist at school
- Extend learning by helping to arrange experiences in the community
- Serve on advisory or decision-making committee
- Increase financial resources available to the school
- Share information
- Help other parents develop parenting skills



# How to describe Parental and Community Involvement:

- Describe the procedure to be implemented to ensure parental involvement in the charter school planning process and in the operation of the school.
- Describe plans to build family-school partnerships that focus on strengthening support for learning and encouraging parental involvement in school operations.
- Describe partnerships with educational institutions that will enhance the charter school's instructional, professional development or other programs that will enhance student achievement.



## How to describe Parental and Community Involvement:

- Describe partnerships through support services in the areas of health, nutrition and counseling which would enhance student achievement.
- Provide information on the manner in which community groups will be involved in the charter school planning and development process and/or in the operation of the charter school. Discuss any commitments for partnerships or other relationships with community organizations or individuals that would enrich the learning opportunities of students in the school.




## **Reviewers may look for evidence of:**

- Plans for developing working relationships with parents and community groups and service links with community organizations
- Policies that are broad-based and consistent with the school's mission
- Plans for gauging and publicizing parental satisfaction
- Plans to include parents and community members in the governance of the school
- Outreach procedures


# F. Charter Drafting








**In designing your school,  
there are many questions  
to consider.**


**Here are some questions to  
get you started:**

- 
1. Who will the school serve? What age and what specific needs?
  2. How many students will be accepted?
  3. How will they be selected?
  4. What are the general outcomes expected of the school? Will there be a particular focus of study?
  5. Will the school operate year-round? Extended day?
  6. Will students have individualized learning plans? Portfolios?
  7. What will the relationship between the teachers and the students be (facilitator, advisor-advisee, etc.)?

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8. What kind of parent involvement will be expected?
  9. What will be the expectations of businesses in partnering?
  10. Will the school be primarily experiential? Hands on?
  11. Will there be multiage grouping? Or grade levels?
  12. Will there be an emphasis on cooperative learning?
  13. What type and size of building will be needed?
  14. What will be the general management structure of the school? Will there be a site-based team?
  15. Does the school need a principal?

- 
16. How will the money be handled? By the district? By a site team? By a school manager?
  17. What will be the legal relationship with the district? How much money will follow the students?
  18. Will teachers participate in collective bargaining?
  19. Who does the hiring and firing? How will teachers be selected?
  20. Will there be consequences for poor results? What will they be?
  21. What evaluation outcomes, tools, and procedures will be in place?
  22. Will students and parents be active participants in planning their course of study?
  23. Will students have opportunities for field trips, internships, and apprenticeships?

- 
24. Will there be policies governing attendance, discipline, student expectations, discrimination, and so forth?
  25. Will there be courses? Subjects? Integrated and interdisciplinary courses?
  26. Will teachers be generalists or specialists?
  27. Will there be grades? Will there be report cards?
  28. Do you need waivers from state rules?

- 
29. What are the roles and responsibilities of teachers, students, and parents?
  30. One teacher, one classroom?
  31. Will there be an hourly schedule? Blocked time? Flexible scheduling?
  32. What materials and resources will you use for instruction?
  33. How will technology be used?
  34. How will cultural and economic diversity be addressed?

**These are a mix of general, philosophical, and detailed questions...**

**They are a good place for the core founding group to start as they work to develop a shared vision of their charter school.**

