



Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act

ALSDE PublicCharterSchoolOverview

Logan Searcy

Public Charter Schools

Authorizers

- A **local school board** may register to be charter authorizers for *public charter schools* within the boundaries of the school system under its jurisdiction. The LEA Authorizer registers with the Alabama State Department of Education. The registration is available on the website, and technical assistance is available. Once the LEA is an authorizer, they must release a request for proposal between August and November 1st of every year.
- The **Alabama Public Charter School Commission** serves as an *appellate* body in specific circumstances outlined in Act 2015-3 and as a authorizer. They must release a request for proposal between August and Nov. 1st every year.
- The timeline is issued by the Alabama State Department of Education.

Public Charter Schools

- A *public charter school* may refer to both a **start-up** and/or a **conversion** public charter schools.
- A *start-up public charter school* did not exist as a non-charter **public or non-public** school prior to becoming a public charter school.
- A *conversion public charter school* existed as a non-charter public school before becoming a public charter school. **Note: A local board must become a registered authorizer in order to convert a school.**

Role of a Public Charter School Authorizer

| Authorizers | Commission | Local Board of Education |
|---|------------|--------------------------|
| Apply to department to be a registered authorizer . | | √ |
| Serves as an appellate body . | √ | |
| Issue a Request for Proposals for public charter school applicants (start-up). | | √ |
| Evaluate and review PCS charter applicants consistent with nationally recognized principles and standards for quality authorizing. | √ | √ |
| Approve or deny charter applications . | √ | √ |
| Upon approval, execute a charter contract . | √ | √ |
| Convert a non-charter public school to a public charter school. | | √ |
| Issue a Request for Proposal for education service provider (conversion). | | √ |
| Identify an education service provider to manage the conversion school and negotiate a performance contract . | | √ |

Start-Up Public Charter Schools

Authorizer: Local School Boards Registered as an Authorizer or
Alabama Public Charter School Commission

- Functions as a local educational agency (LEA) and is subject to applicable federal, state, and local laws related to operating as an LEA.
- **May** partner annually, by mutual contractual agreement, with local school system(s) for services (e.g., transportation, child nutrition, and special education).
- Authorizers **may not approve more than 10** start-up public charter schools in a fiscal year.
- **Governed** by an independent governing board.

Start-Up Public Charter Schools

- May not have previously existed as a **private or non-public school**.
- May not have any **parochial or religious** theme.
- **May elect** to participate in Teachers' Retirement System and Public Education Employees' Health Insurance Plan.
- If ***denied*** by a local school board, (actual denial or local school board is not an authorizer), applicant may appeal to the Commission.

Conversion Public Charter Schools

Authorizer: Local School Boards Registered as a charter authorizer

- **No limit** to the number of conversion schools.
- **Not appealable** to the commission.
- **Managed** by education service provider.
- Must occur at the **beginning** of an academic school year.
- Current teachers/administrators have the **opportunity** to interview for a position in the public charter school, **may** transfer to vacant position within the same school system for which they are certified/qualified, or a reduction in force **may** occur pursuant to Section 16-1-33, Code of Alabama 1975.
- **Remains** part of the LEA, **managed** by education service provider, and **governed** by an independent governing board.

Powers Granted to a Public Charter School Governing Board

- Subject to State Ethics Law.
- Receive and disburse funds for school purposes (start-up public charter school).
- Secure appropriate insurance and enter into contract and leases.
- Contract with an education service provider for management and operation.
- Incur debt.
- Pledge, assign or encumber assets as collateral for loans and extensions of credit.

Powers Granted to a Public Charter School Governing Board

- Solicit and accept gifts and grants for school purposes.
- Employ school staff.
- Acquire real property.
- To sue and be sued in its own name.
- May not charge tuition.
- Subject to:
 - Same civil rights, health and safety requirements applicable to other public schools.
 - End-of-year annual state standardized assessments.
 - Competitive bid law.
 - Alabama Open Meetings Act and public records laws.

Contracts

- **Performance Contract** – a contract between a local school board and an education service provider (ESP) for the management of a *conversion public charter school* or a contract between a *public charter school* and an ESP to provide substantial education services, management services or both so long as the school's governing board retains oversight authority over the school.
- **Charter Contract** – a fixed-term renewable contract between a public charter school and an authorizer that outlines the roles, powers, responsibilities, and quantitative and qualitative performance expectations for each party to the contract.
- **Service Contract** – an annual contract between a public charter school and a school system or private provider to provide transportation, child nutrition, services, special education services, etc.

State Funds

Public Charter Schools

- Currently, no start-up funds are available to assist start-up public charter schools in Year 0. Charter Management Organizations (CMO) and Education Management Organizations (EMO) are an option for possible assistance.
- In the initial year, and in subsequent years to accommodate growth, funding for **start-up** public charter schools will be provided from the Education Trust Fund in the Foundation Program appropriation for Current Units.
- Public charter schools will receive the same amount of state Foundation Program funds that would have been allocated for each public charter school student to the local school system where the student **resides** (*allocations vary by system*).

What Do Authorizers Do?

- Release application and/or Issue Requests for Proposals
- Review Applications in areas of school design, operations, and finance
- Establish Charter Contracts
- Ensure Compliance-Oversight
- Renew Contracts (or not)

Charter School Application Process

1. Contact Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) charter school education administrator and the Alabama Public Charter School Commission (APCSC) liaison to participate in application workshop.
 2. Application is available September 2, 2019 on Charter.Tools.
 3. Application is submitted via Charter.Tools by December 17, 2019. A copy should be emailed to the APCSC liaison.
 4. The Alabama Public Charter School Commission (APCSC) shall schedule a public hearing within (60) sixty days after receiving the application.
 5. The APCSC may request clarifying or additional information through a interview with an external reviewer within (60) days after receiving the application.
 6. It is recommended that the applicant schedule community meetings in the jurisdiction where the proposed school will be located.
 7. The APCSC will schedule a public meeting to rule on the submitted application within (60) sixty days of submission date.
 8. The charter contract must be executed within (60) sixty days of the APCSC resolution.
1. Local school boards may register with the Alabama State Department of Education to become charter school authorizers.
 2. Local school boards must be registered as an authorizer to have a conversion charter school.
 3. If a local school board is not an authorizer in the area of proposed startup charter school, an applicant must apply directly to the APCSC.
 4. A local school board authorizer shall release a request for proposal by a deadline of Nov. 1, 2019 for a 2021 opening. It can be released prior to that date.
 5. A public hearing must be scheduled within (60) sixty days of application submission.
 6. An interview for clarifying or additional information from an external reviewer must be scheduled within (60) sixty days of application submission.
 7. A final decision must be made within (60) days of application submission at a public meeting.
 8. Denied applicants may file an appeal with the APCSC. The local school board authorizer shall appoint a rotating member to sit on the APCSC during the appeal.

Education Service Providers

Education Service Providers. Education service providers (ESPs), or education management organizations, are for-profit or non-profit organizations that contract with new or existing public, charter, or private schools to help them implement comprehensive reforms.

Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) are nonprofit entities that manage two or more charter schools. Widely recognized CMOs include KIPP, Uncommon Schools and Achievement First, but there are many more. CMOs often provide back office functions for charter schools to take advantage of economies of scale, but some also provide a wider range of services—including hiring, professional development, data analysis, public relations and advocacy. Education Management Organizations (EMOs) are for-profit entities that manage charter schools and perform similar functions as CMOs. EMOs generally charge a management fee for their services to charter schools. CMOs and EMOs are different than the wide range of vendors that schools may contract with for specific services, primarily because CMOs and EMOs have considerable influence over the instructional design and operations of their affiliated charter schools.ⁱ

Application Process

- Obtain a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit status for your group
- Identify a location
- Find a building
- Determine your funding
- Engage the community

Application Process

- Create a login for Charter.Tools
- Complete the application- Due December 17, 2019
- Work with APCSC 's liaison to determine and time and place for the public hearing
- Schedule a capacity interview.
- Meet with the APCSC to answer questions.

Local Authorizers

- Athens City
- Birmingham City
- Macon County
- Greene County
- Montgomery County

Open and Approved to Open Alabama Charter Schools

- Acceleration Day and Evening Academy-Mobile- 2017
- University Charter School- Sumter County/Livingston-2018
- Legacy Prep-Birmingham-2019
- Lead Academy-Montgomery-2019
- Approved to open in 2020
- I3 Academy-Birmingham
- Woodland Prep-Washington County
- Approved to Open in 2021
- Capstone-Tuscaloosa

Contact:

- Alabama State Department of Education

Education Administrator and Liaison to the Alabama Public Charter School Commission:

Mrs. Logan Searcy

lsearcy@alsde.edu

(334) 694-4908