

## Office of Charter Schools

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www.ousdcharters.com

every student. every classroom. every day.

1/15/08

### Re: Office of Charter School Oversight Policies, Practices & Procedures

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## General Oversight

### Annual Visitations

Each charter school receives a site visit annually. The purpose of the visit is to observe instruction and ensure that the instructional program outlined in the charter is being implemented appropriately; to survey the health and safety of the campus; to review accounting practices, both attendance and fiscal, to ensure they are sound; to review documentation pertaining to requirements such as governance, staffing, and student records.

These annual visits include both scheduled and un-announced visits. All visitations that occur during the school day involve observations of instruction whenever possible. At least one scheduled visit for schools in their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year involves an over-all annual program evaluation. The evaluation is facilitated through a tool that is currently under development, but is aligned to the **CDE Charter Oversight Evaluation Form**. This tool focuses on Governance and Oversight; Educational Performance; Fiscal Operations; Over-all Fulfillment of the Charter.

Additional visitations include those pertaining to facility walkthroughs for new charter schools, and those pertaining to quality reviews for purposes of renewal.

### Facility Walkthroughs

The OCS applies its **Pre-Opening Facility Walkthrough** instrument for the purpose of surveying all new facilities to be occupied by new and existing charter schools. This instrument derives from the CDE model and allows the District to ensure safety, educational soundness and familiarity with each charter school facility.

#### Areas covered within this walkthrough include:

- General Considerations re: proposed educational program;
- Building Exterior;
- Interior Entrances, Corridors, and Stairs;
- Classrooms.

These walkthroughs occur within two weeks prior to the start of operation for the charter school, and is conducted by OCS staff and the charter school leadership.

## School Closures

When necessary, the OCS facilitates the closure procedures for charter schools who either surrender their charter or have their charter revoked. In such cases, the OCS and the charter school each designate a lead contact that work together to efficiently and effectively close-out the school so that students and families have the smoothest transition possible. This process is facilitated by the **OCS School Closure Procedures Checklist** instrument. This document serves as a guide with approx. 35 areas of focus. Each area defines the manner by which the District and the school agree to conduct the closure or the school with an identified responsible party, timeline, and outcome for each.

The school closure procedures cover the following:

- Invoking the Closure Procedures
- Immediate Actions
- Students and Families
- Student and Business Records
- Facility and Staff
- Assets and Liabilities
- Dissolution of School (Corporate) Entity

In some instances the District will work with the charter school staff to complete this process and in other cases, a close-out attorney is assigned by the charter school's governing board to complete this process.

## Petition Review Process

The OCS implements a **Petition Review Process** based on national standards for best practices of charter school authorizers. This process involves the engagement of both internal and external expertise in the review and evaluation of each new charter school petition submitted to the District. There is a timeline and set of actions clearly defined for both the petitioners as well as District staff to guide this process. District Board Policy also assists in establishing parameters for the review of new charter school petitions.

This process involves both an evaluation of the petition by a **Review Team** comprised of experts using a **Petition Evaluation Rubric**, as well as a **Petitioner Interview** with the lead petitioners and the proposed charter school governing board members.

The focus of the Petition Review Process is on:

- The soundness of the proposed educational program
- The capacity of the petitioners to effectively implement their proposed charter
- The fulfillment of the Reasonably Comprehensive descriptions of the required 16 elements of a CA charter petition.

## Petition Renewal Process

The Office of Charter Schools is responsible for conducting the due diligence necessary to provide a thorough and thoughtful recommendation to the OUSD Governing Board/ State Administrator with respect to charter Renewal Requests submitted by the charter school. The OUSD Charter Renewal Protocol involves review of the following areas:

- 1. Is the school an Academic Success?**
- 2. Is the school an Effective, Viable Organization?**
- 3. Has the school been Faithful to the Terms of its Charter?**

The renewal protocol calls for the school to provide a performance report in the areas of Academic Outcomes, Analysis of the Educational Program provided, a report of the Fiscal Accountability Systems, a report of the Governance Systems, and a revised charter petition that includes all laws and regulations pertaining to charter schools enacted since the previous charter authorization.

The school undergoes a **Site Inspection Protocol**, facilitated by a contract with a Third Party Reviewer (currently Cambridge Education) which evaluates the school along the Criteria Set forth in the District's **Charter School Renewal Quality Review Handbook**.

## Fiscal Oversight:

Each school is required to submit financial reports to the District as follows:

- September::** Final Un-audited Financial Report Previous Year  
**December::** First Interim Un-audited Report Current Year  
**December::** Final Audited Report Previous Year  
**March::** Second Interim Un-Audited Report Current Year  
**June::** Preliminary Budget for upcoming Year

These documents are reviewed by OCS financial accountant for exceptions and any exceptions are discussed with the school directly through this office and resolved.

- A **Financial Review and Analysis Sheet** is maintained for all audited reports to summarize key data and reported information to ensure consistency with unaudited reports.
- A **Balance Comparison Sheet** is maintained for the review of audited reports to determine alignment with unaudited reports and discrepancies are reconciled with the reporting school sites.
- Interim reports are reviewed for: *beginning fund balances, salaries and benefits, restricted and unrestricted funds, Reserves, Budget, Deficit Spending, Audit Adjustments, and Balance Sheet.*

A **Fee Schedule** provides assistance to schools in ensuring timely payment of:

- Special Education Encroachment
- Facility Use Fees (for those schools occupying district-owned facilities)
- BTSA Induction Program Fees (optional)
- Nursing Services Fees (optional)
- Oversight Fees

This **Fee Schedule** explains the use, application and formula for determination of fees, as well as due dates, and payee information.

Attendance Reports are required from schools as follows:

### Statistical Calendar:

*(Sample Dates)*

- **Month 1A** 7/30 - 8/24 **DUE: 8/30**  
*(Only for schools with a start date prior to 8/27)*
- **Month 1** 8/27 - 9/21 **DUE: 9/27**
- **Month 2** 9/24 - 10/19 **DUE: 10/25**
- **Month 3** 10/22 - 11/16 **DUE: 11/29**
- **Month 4** 11/19 - 12/14 **DUE: 12/20**

P1 submitted with Month 4. These figures are used to determine the apportionment allocated to schools for this period.

- **Month 5** 12/17 - 1/11 **DUE: 1/17**
- **Month 6** 1/14 - 2/8 **DUE: 2/14**
- **Month 7** 2/11 - 3/7 **DUE: 3/13**
- **Month 8** 3/10 - 4/4 **DUE: 4/10**

P2 submitted with Month 4. These figures are used to determine the apportionment allocated to schools for this period.

- **Month 9** 4/7 - 5/2 **DUE: 5/8**
- **Month 10** 5/5 - 5/30 **DUE: 6/5**
- **Month 11** 6/2 - 6/27 **DUE: 6/30\***

**\* Submit Month 11 as soon as school closes.**

## Services of the OCS and the District

### Regular Monthly Charter School Meetings

Held monthly and sponsored by the OCS, these meetings involve the leadership of the charter schools authorized by the District. These meetings include both compliance topics, as well as topics of interest to the charter schools, or relevant to the oversight function of the district. These may include teacher credentialing, Federal 504 plans, special education, assessments, etc. Additionally, the goal of these meetings is to assist in building community across charter schools and within the District. Opportunities for feedback from school leaders regarding their experience under the oversight of the District is a regular function of these meetings, as well as a chance for knowledge exchange and dialog around best practices.

### Regular Quarterly Charter School Observation Days

Approximately six times annually, individual charter school host a site visitation day for Oakland charter school leaders. These observation days are co-sponsored by the OCS and the hosting charter school. The day involves an initial welcome and review of the day's agenda. The hosting school leadership shares a brief history of the school, as well as the school's vision and mission. The hosting school leader will typically share a particular focus the school has for the year instructionally, or with aspects of the schools culture and climate. They may pose questions for the participating leaders to consider in their observations, and provide particular highlight towards various aspects of the school program that are noteworthy.

The participating leaders will spend 1-2 hours observing instruction and conducting a round-table discussion with available students and staff. Following these activities the leaders will reconvene where they are facilitated through a conversation regarding the strengths of the program and questions or feedback regarding areas of potential growth. Following the hosting school leader sharing his or her take-away from the morning, the event closes out with appreciations.

The purpose of these Observation Days is to allow for the exchange of lessons learned and to inspire schools to collaborate across campuses. It is also an opportunity for the OCS to facilitate the exchange of knowledge in and between charters and the District.

### OCS Lending Library

In an effort to support instructional leadership, which is at the heart of all quality schools, the OCS maintains a large array of educational texts that are available for check-out to charter school leaders. Titles include texts such as: *Girls, Social Class, and Literacy*, *Fontous & Pinell Leveled Books K-8*, and *Uncovering Student Thinking in Mathematics*. The OCS Lending Library has many standards, as well as unique titles. There is a wide selection of texts dedicated to adolescence, as well as a particular focus on the needs of girls and African American students.

### OCS Website

In an effort to increase accountability and transparency, the Office of Charter Schools maintains a website intended to provide the public with important relevant information regarding the charter schools authorized by the District, as well as the roles of the Office of Charter Schools in the District's Oversight responsibilities. Located at [www.ousdcharters.com](http://www.ousdcharters.com) and soon to be linked to the district's comprehensive website, the OCS website features information regarding compliance deadlines and downloadable documents, school performance data, and updates on activities of the Office. This website will continue to evolve.

### Guidance

- > **Fiscal**
- > **Attendance**
- > **504 Compliance**
- > **State & Local Regulations**
- > **Understanding New Charter Laws**
- > **Assessing Student Learning**

> **Special Education**  
> **Prop 39**

> **Independent Study**  
> **& more...**

The Office of Charter Schools has developed a strong team of leaders from its Office Manager and Compliance Specialist, to its Financial Accountant and Coordinator. This team brings expertise in student and family services, financial management, educational leadership, and the law. In the interest of both ensuring quality oversight as well as quality school programs for children, the OCS expects to be called upon to support the District interests in charter schools as well as to support schools directly.

### **Nursing Services**

OUSD's Health Services, in partnership with the OCS, offers Oakland charter schools with high quality, competitive nursing services. These services are focused primarily on the mandates health services required by the state and federal government. Through a pending MOU established with the OUSD BOE and the charter school, the school contracts services that can be both provided directly and through training of the charter school's staff.

These services include:

- Scoliosis Exams
- Hearing and Vision Testing
- Dental Exam Records Evaluation and Training
- Immunization Records Evaluation & Training

Contracted services are provided through OUSD Health Services staff. The Health Services staff work with charter schools to establish convenient windows and site specific procedures for conducting the contracted service.

### **New Teacher Induction Program**

OUSD's New Teacher Support Department, in partnership with the OCS offer new charter school teachers opportunities to participate in their highly effective BTSA program. Teachers teaching in Oakland charter school who are clearing their CA credentials are required to participate in a two year induction program. OUSD's BTSA program works with the OCS to support effective communication of the program requirements and timelines, identifying qualified required teacher participants, and seeking to ensure that, whenever possible, the charter school provides the resources of mentor coaches or funding to ensure their teachers receive quality coaching.

### **Special Education**

Through the OUSD SELPA, 90% of Oakland charter schools receive their special education services. Through a process of identifying qualifying students, and collaboration with charter school leaders, the OCS supports ensuring that schools have the timely assignment of resource teachers and specialists; assessments; the ability to request additional services and testing as needed, and to pay their encroachment fees to the district in a timely manner.

### **Board Policies**

The District has established a set of Board Policies regarding the authorization and oversight of charter schools. These policies guide the work of the OCS and provide a framework for the District to better understand the role of charter schools in the District's over-all Portfolio of School Options for families. The Office of Charter Schools periodically proposes revisions to the current Board Policies and Administrative Regulations to ensure up-to-date practices in the growing responsibility of charter school authorizing.