



# Charter System Application

DISTRICT NAME

Barrow County School System

DISTRICT ADDRESS

179 West Athens Street  
Winder, GA 30680

Dr. John D. Barge  
State School Superintendent  
JULY 2014



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## Introduction

The Charter Schools Act of 1998 established a flexibility option for Georgia school districts that wish to become a Charter System. A Charter System is a local school district that operates under the terms of a Charter contract between the State Board of Education and the local Board of Education. The system receives flexibility in the form of waivers of certain state laws, rules and guidelines in exchange for greater accountability for increased student performance and an emphasis on school-based leadership and decisionmaking.

Your Charter System Application is a petition to the Georgia State Board of Education asking it to create or renew your Charter system. The evaluation of your Application will be led by the Charter Schools Division of the Georgia Department of Education, in partnership with others within the Department (including the Policy Division and the Accountability Division) and with the independent Charter Advisory Committee (CAC) that was also established by the Charter Schools Act.

The evaluation of your Application will focus on whether implementing the Charter system proposed in your Application will lead to the improved academic performance you are promising in exchange for freedom from much of Georgia's education law, rules and guidelines. It will also determine whether the proposed Charter system would comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures (including the Charter Schools Act of 1998, as amended [O.C.G.A. §§ 20-2-2060 through 20-2-2071], State Board of Education Rule 160-4-9-.04 et. seq., and Department of Education Guidelines accompanying the Charter School Rules); whether your proposed academic plans are viable; and whether the Charter system is in the public interest.

Please note that submitting a Charter System Application does not guarantee that a Charter will be granted. It does guarantee, however, that the Georgia Department of Education will work closely with you to improve your chances of State Board of Education approval of your Charter system contract.

## DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Your Charter System Application must be approved by your local Board of Education in accordance with the rules and regulations of your local board. After local submission, review and approval, Charter system applications must be received at the address below by November 1 of the year prior to the start of the July-June fiscal year in which the Charter system contract would go into effect. Early submissions are strongly encouraged.

Georgia Department of Education  
Charter Schools Division  
2053 Twin Towers East  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, SE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

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## APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

Your Charter System Application Package must comply with the following submission procedures.

- An Application Package includes an original and two copies of the following items:
  - SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET** (Use the form on page 3; the form may not be altered in any way).
  - CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION** (Your answers to the questions posed on pages 4-7).
    - The Charter System Application is limited to 50 double-spaced pages using an 11-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins with a header showing the school system's name and a footer showing consecutive page numbers. Please note the suggested page limits provided within each section.
    - The original must be signed in blue ink. Stamped signatures will not be accepted.
  - ASSURANCES FORM AND SIGNATURE SHEET** (Use the Assurances Form and Signature Sheet below on pages 8-10; the Form and the Sheet may not be altered in any way).
    - The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted.
  - EXHIBITS** (See list of required Exhibits below on page 11).
    - Required Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible (no more than 5 pages per Exhibit). The only exceptions to this size limitation for Exhibits are your most recent annual audit, accreditation report, and strategic plan (to which you will provide online links).
    - All Exhibits must be tabbed.
- Your Application Package must be bound by a binder clip; do not enclose your Application Package in a notebook, binder, or folder.
- Your Application Package must also include a single CD or USB drive that includes a:
  - Microsoft Word version of your Charter System Application Cover Sheet
  - Microsoft Word version of your Charter System Application
  - PDF Version of your signed Assurances Form
  - Microsoft Word version of your Exhibits (except for your annual audit, accreditation report, and strategic plan)
  - PDF version of your most recent annual audit
  - PDF version of your most recent accreditation report
  - PDF version of your most recent strategic plan

Faxed or emailed copies will not be accepted. Only complete petitions that comply with these guidelines will be evaluated. Applications will not be returned; please keep a copy for your records.



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## CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Please enter the requested information in the gray boxes following each question. Thank you!

Proposed Charter System Information			
1. Full Name of Proposed Charter System Barrow County School System			
2. Please indicate whether this is a: New Petition <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Renewal Petition</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X	3. How many schools in total are you proposing to include in your Charter system? 14		
4. How many of each of the following schools are you proposing to include in your Charter system? <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">Primary School(s) 0</div> <div style="text-align: center;">Middle School(s) 4</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">Elementary School(s) 8</div> <div style="text-align: center;">High school(s) 2</div> </div>			
5. On July 1 of what year do you want your Charter contract to be effective? 2016-2017 SY			
6. How many years are you proposing for the term of your Charter contract? (Note that an initial Charter cannot exceed five years) 10			
7. Charter System Street Address 179 West Athens Street	8. City Winder	9. State GA	10. Zip 30680
11. Contact Person: Dr. Chris McMichael		12. Title: Superintendent of Schools	
13. Contact Street Address 179 West Athens Street	14. City Winder	15. State GA	16. Zip 30680
17. Contact's telephone number 770-867-4527	18. Contact's fax number 770-867-4540	19. Contact's E-mail Address chris.mcmichael@barrow.k12.ga.us	



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## CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION

The Barrow County School System is a mid-size school district of approximately 13,500 students located on the edges of the Atlanta metropolitan area. The district mission is to ensure an exceptional education that leads each student to become a high achieving and responsible citizen. To further this mission the Barrow County School System applied for Charter system status to the Georgia Department of Education in the spring of 2010. That Charter petition was granted and Barrow County Schools have been operating successfully as a Charter system for the past four years. Barrow County Schools are highly motivated to continue as a Charter system as a means of ensuring the continued success in educating its students for the challenges of the 21st century.

### THE CASE

#	Question	Challenge #1	Challenge #2	Challenge #3
1	What challenges is your school district facing?	Successfully managing the continued growth of the BCSS student population both in raw numbers and increasing diversity	Increasing the high school graduation rate	Improving the college and career readiness of BCSS graduates
2	What is the rank order priority of these challenges (from most to least important)?	3	1	2
3	Which of these challenges will your school district be able to address by becoming a Charter system?	X	X	X



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4	<p>What specific actions will your district take to address each of these challenges (listed in #3 above) during its five-year Charter term?</p>	<p><b>1a:</b> Increase opportunities to team with community services available to parents such as English classes for adults and Computer Literacy classes presented in languages other than English</p> <p><b>1b:</b> Increase the diversity, both demographic and linguistically, of BCSS staff through teacher recruitment/retention programs</p> <p><b>1c:</b> Increase the number of language and culturally-specific Town Hall Meetings at the District Level with the goal of presenting requested information and allowing feedback from these communities</p> <p><b>1d:</b> Develop strong reciprocal relationships with economic development and community leaders to predict growth and develop adequate facilities and personnel to accommodate growth and meet system needs.</p>	<p><b>2a:</b> Provide technology &amp; training incentives for teachers faithfully implementing instructional technology best practices and/or PBL practices</p> <p><b>2b:</b> Increase course offerings meeting high school credit requirements at middle school level</p> <p><b>2c:</b> Fully implementing state recommended models for student led and APTT conferences</p> <p><b>2d:</b> Implementing a balanced and consistent literacy approach across early grade levels</p> <p><b>2e:</b> Increase the effective and meaningful uses of technology through professional learning offered by school-based Digital Coaches</p> <p><b>2f:</b> Partner with Foothills Education Charter High School to provide an additional option for high school completion</p>	<p><b>3a:</b> Expand and continue the BCSS Teacher/Leader program to incentivize high performing teachers to stay in the classroom</p> <p><b>3b:</b> Add additional Pre-K classes to promote school readiness and early literacy</p> <p><b>3c:</b> School wide integrated STEAM challenges and curriculum</p> <p><b>3d:</b> Increasing job embedded high quality professional learning for teachers</p> <p><b>3e:</b> Locally defined pathways combining courses from existing state pathways</p> <p><b>3f:</b> Restructure middle school connections courses</p>
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<p align="center">5</p>	<p>Provide a clear explanation of how each of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) will lead to the specific challenge being addressed.</p>	<p><b>1a:</b> Engaging parents in areas key to improving support at home which supports both parent engagement and reinforces the instructional programs of the system</p> <p><b>1b:</b> The demographics of BCSS are changing such that a focus on recruiting and retaining linguistically and culturally representative staff becomes a key tool in engaging students and families and managing district cultural change</p> <p><b>1c:</b> As parents of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds become more ubiquitous it will be necessary to find creative and sensitive ways to communicate information and facilitate engagement and support.</p> <p><b>1d:</b> Barrow County School System needs to be proactive in managing and responding to growth, rather than being merely reactive. The system must take an active role in community development in order to ensure that growth is factored and the quality of instructional programs is not compromised on the basis of enrollment growth.</p>	<p><b>2a:</b> Using existing technology in the classroom In a way that facilitates learning is a critical component of engaging students in a modern social-media saturated world. Providing incentives, either financial, training, or technology based, to teachers that effectively integrate technology into standards based lessons is a key tool in improving overall technology integration.</p> <p><b>2b:</b> Students who begin their high school career with exposure to higher level work are better prepared for the transition and are more likely to graduate on time (or early). BCSS will work to increase the percentage of students earning HS credit in MS by increasing the number of credit offerings at middle school. This will increase student engagement and graduation rate at the HS level.</p> <p><b>2c:</b> The APTT model (Academic-Parent Teacher Team) is an approach designed to facilitate family engagement and build relationships between school and parent. Implementing in elementary and middle school creates a stronger foundation for students entering high school and cultivated lasting relationships between family and schools that will increase the likelihood of intervention when students struggle at high school.</p> <p><b>2d:</b> Strategic use of early</p>	<p><b>3a:</b> The Barrow Teacher/Leader program provides financial incentives to high achieving teachers to keep them in the classroom, rather than following the leadership track solely for financial gains. It further attempts to use these teachers as “model classrooms” that can be used to improve instruction for all teachers. Keeping the best talent in the classroom supports student learning and prevents the “brain drain” that sometimes happens with financial incentives that actually work to encourage dedicated and talented teachers to leave the classroom, even when they may not have real interest in leadership.</p> <p><b>3b:</b> Early literacy skills and school preparedness are critical components of ensuring students do not fall behind at early grades. When teachers in subsequent grades cannot teach at a normal level due to residual deficits in learners it distracts from quality instruction. Increasing the percentage of students, particularly those from challenging backgrounds, enrolled in pre-K courses will increase the percentage of students with baseline literacy needed to succeed.</p> <p><b>3c:</b> Barrow County Schools have promoted STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, &amp; Math) programs as a way to increase both the acquisition of standards based learning and a method to increase student engagement through the use of exciting and innovative competitions and programs. These programs further raise</p>
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			<p>literacy screening along with the implementation of best practices and interventions in a Response to Intervention construct are initiatives in process of being standardized in Barrow elementary schools. Improving the baseline literacy skills of younger students helps ensure they are adequately prepared for higher level work in middle and (particularly) high school.</p> <p><b>2e:</b> In BCSS, the Digital Coaches serve in a similar fashion to instructional coaches, only with a focus on proper integration of technology into instructional classrooms. While the program exists currently, at present digital coaches are only part time and have fulltime instructional duties. Increasing the stipends and time for these positions makes it more likely that teachers integrate technology properly and that the learning environment is engaging and facilitative of learning.</p> <p><b>2f:</b> Currently, Barrow offers limited options for students that are not being successful in a traditional high school environment. By partnering with Foothills more students will be able to earn the necessary credits and skills to be successful as a high school graduate and beyond. Students can earn credits at their own pace and can work after hours.</p>	<p>awareness of careers in high needs areas such as engineering and the sciences and serves as a valuable tool for building interest in and preparing students for these careers.</p> <p><b>3d &amp; 3e:</b> Creating pathways that are more specific to the needs of the community of Barrow students, both at the middle and high school levels, allows the district to leverage our technology and innovation advantages (such as the Sims Innovation Program) and our strategic partnerships with colleges like Lanier Tech, to more flexibly and quickly create personalized pathways and classes in areas that the state has, in many cases, not yet developed pathways and programs. This allows BCSS to be both innovative in the delivery of instruction and better partner with the community and the state to graduate career ready learners in key employment areas (particularly STEAM areas).</p> <p><b>3f:</b> Barrow County Schools are seeking to restructure connections courses at the middle school to both support and align to later pathway offerings as well as courses designed to improve awareness of college/career options and foster management, interpersonal, and employability (soft skills) skills among students.</p>
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<p align="center">6</p>	<p>Although you will be granted a broad flexibility waiver if you are granted a Charter, please list the specific Georgia law or State Board rule that must be waived to allow your district to implement each specific action (listed in #4 above).</p>	<p><b>1a:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>1b:</b>  <u>Personnel Required: Certification</u> (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167, 183, 196-186, 200; SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.22</p> <p><b>1c:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>1d:</b> N/A</p>	<p><b>2a:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>2b:</b>  <u>Middle School Program Criteria</u> (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-290, 20-14-33; SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.05)</p> <p><u>Awarding Units for High School Credit; Seat Time</u> (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.4; SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.46)</p> <p><u>Class Size</u> (SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.08)</p> <p><b>2c:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>2d:</b>  <u>Remedial Education Program</u> (§ O.C.G.A. 20-2-154)</p> <p><u>Program for Limited English Proficiency Students</u> (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-156)</p> <p><u>Early Intervention Program</u> (§ O.C.G.A. 20-2-153)</p> <p><u>Direct Classroom Expenditures and Expenditure Controls</u> O.C.G.A. § 20-2-171</p> <p><b>2e:</b>  <u>Professional Learning</u> (SBOE Rule 160-3-3.04)</p> <p><b>2f:</b> none currently but flexibility opens up possibilities for further collaboration with Foothills</p>	<p><b>3a:</b>  <u>Experience for Salary Purposes</u> (SBOE Rule 160-5-2-.05)</p> <p>Salary Schedule Requirements (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-212)</p> <p><b>3b:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>3c:</b>  <u>Competencies and Core Curriculum, Online Learning</u> (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-140.1, 20-2-142, and 20-2-777; SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.12 and 160-4-2-.20)</p> <p><b>3d, 3e, &amp; 3f:</b>  <u>Educational Programs</u> (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-151, 20-2-153, 20-2-154, 20-2-154.1, 20-2-155, and 20-2-156; SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.17, 160-4-2-.38, 160-4-5-.01 and 160-4-5-.02)</p> <p><u>Textbooks</u> (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-133; SBOE Rule 160-4-4-.10)</p> <p><u>Awarding Units for High School Credit; Seat Time</u> (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.4; SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.46)</p> <p><u>Dual Credit Courses</u> (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-159.5; SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.34)</p> <p><u>List of State Funded K-8 Subjects &amp; 9-12 Courses</u> (SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.20)</p> <p><u>Class Size</u> (SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.08)</p>
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7	Indicate the timeline for implementation of each specific action (listed in #4 above).	<p><b>1.a:</b> Ongoing but expansion of some key areas (such as Parent Academies) will begin rollout in 2016-2017.</p> <p><b>1.b:</b> Teacher recruitment in key areas is a component of the five year strategic vision of the system and will be an ongoing process over the next few years.</p> <p><b>1.c:</b> These programs already exist to some degree, but increasing the number of such events during a three year period to 2019 is a key goal.</p> <p><b>1.d:</b> The initiation of this plan begins in 2016-2017, so far as strategic partnerships go, but the process is always ongoing.</p>	<p><b>2.a:</b> Proposed pilot year of 2018-2019.</p> <p><b>2.b:</b> Some classes (Algebra &amp; Spanish) began in current school year (15-16) other expansions of offerings will begin in 16-17 and 17-18 (Physical Science is already targeted for SY2017)</p> <p><b>2c:</b> Pilot begins in 2015-2016 at the elementary school level with possible expansion to middle school after.</p> <p><b>2d:</b> Ongoing but the process of choosing more consistent and coherent screening and teaching programs will be a key feature of the 2016-2017 school year.</p> <p><b>2e:</b> Digital Coach program initiated in 14-15 school year. As feedback is gathered from the initial two year period expansion of the program is probable.</p> <p><b>2f:</b> Partnership with Foothills began during the current (2015-2016) school year. Barrow will continue to develop this partnership in the near future.</p>	<p><b>3a:</b> Program began in 2015-2016. Ongoing evaluation and expansion of the program over the next three years.</p> <p><b>3b:</b> Uncertain at this time. Depends on funding.</p> <p><b>3c:</b> STEAM initiatives began in earnest during the 13-14 school year with the hiring of a STEAM coordinator. Programs are increasing at a rapid rate.</p> <p><b>3d &amp; 3e:</b> Some initial forays into local pathways and courses began this school year (2015-2016). Expansion into more specific career magnet courses and pathways will ramp up beginning in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.</p> <p><b>3f:</b> The Barrow BOE approved the first new connections course, titled Career Management, for the 2016-2017 school-year. Further courses are planned for subsequent years, based on feedback and data from the initial course.</p>
8	Indicate which of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) represents an innovation for your school district.	<p><b>1.a:</b> Parent support programs in native languages</p>	<p><b>2.a:</b> Technology Incentives program</p>	<p><b>3.a:</b> BCSS Teacher/Leader Program</p> <p><b>3.c:</b> STEAM Initiatives</p>



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### **1. What challenges is your school district facing?**

The first major challenge facing the Barrow County School System has been the rapid population growth of the past few decades. In 1990 the U.S. Census pegged the population of the County at 29,721, a number which increased to 46,144 in 2000 and 69,367 in 2010. This rapid growth has directly affected the school system as enrollment more than doubled during this time period. Additionally, Barrow County students became more culturally and racially diverse and with more economic challenges than in previous decades. Currently, Barrow County has mid-level poverty rates, with around 60% of students receiving free or reduced lunch, and moderate diversity, with over a third of students classified as non-white. This presented system leaders with dual challenges of both building new schools and hiring the requisite personnel to deal with exploding enrollment, but also to create culture and practices of instruction that met the diverse needs of students.

Secondly, the graduation rate in Barrow County had, until the past few years, badly lagged the state of Georgia as a whole. In 2011, only about 2/3rds of Barrow County students were graduating on-time in four years. That number has since increased, but working to ensure more students complete their education is an ongoing issue for Barrow County Schools. Finding non-traditional options for students that have challenges or who are not well served by the traditional school experience is of critical importance. To approach education in a non-traditional way, with customized timeframes and settings, is an at times daunting challenge given the challenges of growth along with the normal funding issues that afflict most school districts in Georgia. Thus being flexible and creative is of paramount importance in figuring out ways to ensure that Barrow Students complete their education.



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Finally, Barrow County is committed to ensuring graduates are college and career ready and able to make the transition into the broader culture and working world. This involves both the need to increase academic attainment and rigor as well as develop career awareness and competency while in school. The first peg (academic skill) is evidenced as a need by Barrow County's performance on the Georgia Milestones Assessments of 2014-2015, in which a high portion of Barrow County students fell short of proficiency in multiple areas. That weakness is coupled with the need to ensure that students walk away from high school with competencies and knowledge of careers and vocations that enable them to become the high achieving and responsible citizens that the mission and vision of the Barrow County School System speaks to. Thus, there is the dual challenge of improving academic performance while also ensuring students develop skills and competencies for their post-secondary lives.

**2. What is the rank order priority of these challenges (from most to least important)?**

If students do not graduate from high school they have no opportunity to leverage any skills and competencies they may have gained during their school career. Increasing the portion of our students that graduate must be job one for the district. Further ensuring that the diploma itself means something and represents an earned repository of skills and knowledge of career options helps ensure that students will be successful in their post-secondary lives, whether that entails more education or direct access into the working world. Creating a challenging classroom environment that adequately prepares Barrow graduates for the next stage of their lives is the second highest priority. Finally, both of these issues are compounded by the rapid numerical and cultural growth in Barrow County. It is not possible to effectively meet the first two challenges to the fullest extent without also tackling the changing and growing population of students.



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**3. Which of these challenges will your school district be able to address by becoming a Charter system?**

In theory, the role of a Charter is to allow flexibility and freedom from restraint, from both local and state level control, to teachers and leaders of a school district while allowing parents and stakeholders a voice in decision making. As such, any challenge could conceivably be addressed by a Charter. More specifically however, some challenges are more directly suitable to being addressed by a Charter. The key role of outside stakeholders (community members and parents) on the school governance team has direct bearing on school climate, student engagement, and family engagement. Allowing School Governance Teams the latitude to have input into, as well as to make decisions about, operations, instruction, & leadership at the school level has the potential to create schools that are more engaging and responsive to the needs of the communities they serve.

In turning to more specifics Barrow County needs to create individualized pathways and options for students. Assuming that one size will ever fit all in education is generally not conducive to improvement. Barrow County experimented with non-traditional learning by creating Snodon Preparatory, a non-traditional smaller high school, in 2012. That project did not work as planned and the school was closed in 2015. Currently, Barrow County Schools has a strategic partnership with Foothills Education Charter High School which offers opportunities of non-traditional work at your own pace studies for students that are not served by the traditional high school model. But moving beyond the traditional model for all students, not just those on the brink of dropping out, is a key to meeting the challenges of graduation and college/career readiness.

Expanding dual enrollment, individualized pathways, and unique courses is a major strategy for the Barrow County Schools to achieve this vision. Barrow has an existing asset in the Sims



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Innovation Program, a joint enterprise of the two existing high schools that provides innovative instruction and programs in a myriad of areas including culinary arts, biotechnology, engineering, hospitality, and information technology. Being able to flexibly waive many of the course and personnel requirements allows Barrow to both recruit the best, industry certified individuals to teach or support such classes and the freedom to develop pathways and courses not available statewide due to the unique partnerships the district and Sims has forged.

**4. What specific actions will your district take to address each of these challenges (listed in #3 above) during its five-year Charter term?**

A key lesson learned during our first Charter term was that much of the first few years of an initial Charter will be spent training and acclimating all stakeholders to the process of Charter decision making. It is, to say the least, not a natural process for many individuals, both staff and parent, who are used to the more centralized decision making of a traditional district. Crafting the climate and procedures to allow School Governance Teams the confidence and freedom to actually govern is difficult and requires the active support of both the school board and superintendent. It has only been towards the end of the current Charter term that Barrow County School Governance Teams have begun to open up and understand the influence they can wield on their schools. Indeed, while Barrow SGTs have consistently exercised the minimal authority defined by the Department of Education in the five domains of governance, only a few have branched beyond into additional areas of authority and influence.

It is the intention of Barrow County leadership that during a second Charter term the focus will squarely be on facilitating and supporting School Governance Teams in collaboratively creating schools that are responsive to parents and stakeholders and have the climate necessary to engage students and the communities they serve. Among the initiatives in this area include fully implementing the Academic Parent Teacher Team model (APTT) which seeks to forge deep and

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long lasting relationships between schools and parents at both the elementary and middle level (and beyond). Another approach being rolled out is the creation of parent workshops, academies, and meetings that are native language based (particularly in Spanish) and culturally appropriate in order to engage difficult to reach families and communities.

A key program and innovation of the Barrow County School System in the realm of improving college and career readiness is the Teacher/Leader program. This innovative program seeks to keep high performing teachers in the classroom by offering financial and job role incentives. Typically, for a teacher to increase their salary and prestige they must enter leadership, regardless of whether they have actual interest in such a role or skills in that area. The Teacher/Leader program financially incentivizes identified teachers and further makes their classrooms as "model" environments that are used as examples for all teachers. As the program expands, the hope is that star teachers will be more likely to both continue to directly impact the learning of students while serving as resources for other teachers.

To improve overall post-secondary preparedness the system is beginning to develop custom courses and pathways designed to reach students such as business management, accounting, entrepreneurship, and computer science. Others will be created as partnerships with industry as other opportunities afford themselves. The driving philosophy is both to meet the needs of the employers and stakeholders of the Barrow Community in terms of employee needs, while offering students desired and unique opportunities to learn and gain skills for later career leverage. Student input into course and pathway offerings are frequently gathered and used in these decisions. Harnessing the power of individualized student learning and unique pathways to career and post-secondary skills are a powerful tool for Barrow County Schools in meeting 21<sup>st</sup>



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century needs for our students and having the flexibility a Charter affords is critical in creating those tools.

**5. Provide a clear explanation of how each of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) will lead to the specific challenge being addressed.**

For the goal of controlling growth the initiatives listed allow Barrow County to be more responsive and open in engaging families from different language backgrounds in ways that should improve student and family engagement. The initiatives designed to improve the graduation rate center on creating more engaging and challenging environments, through the use of technology or higher level content, as well as improving literacy and engaging parents in the hard work of supporting their students. Finally, programs like the Teacher/Leader program, STEAM initiatives, and individualized pathways and courses allow students to have stronger teachers, more individualized learning environments, and exposure to valuable skills and career options. Each of which should work in tandem to improve student preparedness for college and career and see that students remain engaged throughout their school career through to graduation. Currently, Barrow County utilizes some of its Charter funds to staff a STEAM Coordinator, a Digital Media Administrator, and an Innovation Support Administrator. These positions, which would continue in a second Charter term, work to create innovation opportunities for teachers and support them in implementing these initiatives in their classroom.

**6. Although you will be granted a broad flexibility waiver if you are granted a Charter, please list the specific Georgia law or State Board rule that must be waived to allow your district to implement each specific action (listed in #4 above).**



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A full list of potential waivers is listed in the table summarizing “The Case.” To create individualized courses and pathways will, or may, require waivers from state laws and board rules concerning credit awarding, state approved course catalog, class size, seat time, and educational programs. To fully implement the Teacher/Leader program may entail waivers to state salary schedules and experience awarding. Hiring personnel with specific skills in industry or, alternatively, language capacity may require waivers to personnel certification rules.

**7. Indicate the timeline for implementation of each specific action (listed in #4 above).**

Specific timelines are listed in the preceding table summarizing “The Case.”

**8. Indicate which of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) represents an innovation for your school district.**

- Barrow Teacher/Leader Program
- Various STEAM initiatives
- Technology/Professional Learning Incentive Programs

## PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

**1. What are your school system’s specific student performance expectations for your five year Charter term?**

Goal 1: By the end of the proposed Charter term, each school in the Barrow County Charter School System shall meet or beat the odds and half will “beat the odds” as determined by the state BTO formula measuring expected student performance. The percentage of schools meeting or beating the odds will increase each year up to this goal.

BTO Measure	2014 (baseline)	2026 (End of Charter Term)
% Schools Meeting or Beating the Odds	14.2%	100%
% Schools Beating the Odds	7.1%	50%



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**Goal 2:** The Barrow County School System will maintain overall CCRPI performance above the state average each year of the term of the Charter, consistent with performance over the past two years on the measure.

Year	Barrow Overall CCRPI	Georgia Overall CCRPI
2011-2012	73.5	74.1
2012-2013	79.6	75.8
2013-2014	74.0	72.3

**Goal 3:** The Barrow County Charter School System will demonstrate proficiency and/or improvement on the CCRPI indicators in the following areas.

- A. **Measure 1:** The 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate for the system will increase to 84% by the mid-point of the Charter term based on the following ideal trajectory. This would represent a slightly greater than 10% improvement over the course of the term.

2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
75.6%	76.8%	78.0%	79.2%	80.4%	81.6%	82.8%	84.0%

- B. **Measure 2:** As the Achievement Gap Measure has been a notable weakness for the BCSS, and is a key component of Barrow being able to “beat the odds”, improvement on this measure will be a goal. Specifically, each level will earn, at minimum, approximately 75% of the 15 available points (11 or 12) on this measure by the mid-point of the Charter term. The following table is a hypothetical growth trajectory for this measure.

Level	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
ES	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	12
MS	9	9	10	10	11	11	12	12
HS	3.8	5	7	8	9	10	11	12

- C. **Measure 3:** All Barrow County Schools will earn at least four climate stars on the CCRPI during each year of the Charter term. For the baseline year (2014) 12 of 14 schools earned at least four climate stars.



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## LOCAL SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

A key characteristic of Charter systems is their distributed leadership decision-making structure. Within such a structure, a Charter system must implement school level governance and grant decision-making authority in personnel decisions, financial decisions, curriculum and instruction, resource allocation, establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals, and school operations per O.C.G.A. 20-2-2063(d).

**2. Explain how your system will transition from Local School Advisory Councils to effective and fully functioning decision-making Local School Governance Teams (LSGTs).**

As Barrow County is a pre-existing Charter system the transition School Governance Teams (SGT) are a vibrant and extant part of the culture and governance of the Barrow County School System. SGTs meet on a monthly basis during the school year for a total of ten meetings per year. Meetings have an open structure governed through the use of the popular eBoard tool. Topics are placed on each SGTs agenda that help guide them through the often labyrinthine dynamics of school operation throughout the school year and meeting structures allow for teams to consider issues specific to their school. Team members are trained and all meetings follow applicable Sunshine laws and Robert's Rules of Order. Barrow County School System will continue to expand and refine the SGT process and work to ensure that representation of the teams is truly a reflection of the community at large.

**3. Address the formation of the local School Governing Teams, including how members are selected, the terms of members, and how and why members may be removed.**

School Governance Teams will consist of a minimum of seven members in odd numbered increments for voting purposes. At minimum, the team will consist of the principal, two parents, two teachers, and two community/business representatives. The assistant principal serves as a non-voting "ex-officio" member of the team. At the high school level a student representative will be part of the SGT with voting rights. Community members/business representatives will be appointed by the principal while parent and teacher representatives will be voted on by their



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representative groups (i.e. parents elect parents and teachers elect teachers). The high school student representative will be the same individual serving on the superintendent's advisory council and with the same length of term. Lengths of terms for non-student members of the team will be three year cycles. Parent representatives must have a child currently enrolled at the school and ought not be employed by the school. Representatives can only serve on one SGT, even if they have children attending multiple schools in the system. In the previous Charter term principals were allowed to serve as chair of the committee. Under the proposed new term principals can be members but cannot serve as chair and would only vote in the event of ties.

School Governance Teams will meet monthly during the school year. Meetings will have an open and publically posted meeting structure based on Robert's Rules of Order and applicable Sunshine laws. Agendas and artifacts from the meetings will continue to be publically posted on the school system eBoard website. At the September meeting a Chair and Vice Chair for the year will be elected. Both Chair and Vice Chair will serve on the Cluster Governance Team. Moving forward there will be no position of secretary, as there had been in the past, on the SGT, but the principal may utilize a recorder to take minutes during the meeting. This person is not considered a member of the SGT, but is required to attend trainings on the meetings module in the eBoard system.

Multiple criteria may result in a member being removed from the SGT. These include:

- When the member is no longer in the role for which he or she was elected or appointed or
- When there is a lack of attendance which is defined as missing 3 meetings in a school year
- SGTs should consider removing a member when there is a Conflict of Interest where a member demonstrates favor to self or others



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- SGT members who interfere with the management of the school should be removed. Management is the job of the school principal.
- SGTs should remove a member in violation of the "Appropriate Conduct and Confidentiality Agreement"

A majority vote of members present can take action on removal of a member. The Sims Innovation Program (SIP) governance team will have the same authority and requirements as all of the schools in Barrow County. The SIP governance team will continue to receive annual training by approved trainers. Sims Innovation Program already has non-profit status. The SIP will sign a MOU with the district and Lanier Technical College (Exhibit 13).

When a decision by an SGT becomes larger than the school (in that it would affect other schools directly) a meeting is convened with all chairs and vice chairs in the school cluster. We call this the Cluster Governance Team or CGT. A District Governance Team or DGT is made up of the Chairs and Vice Chairs from both cluster teams, the Superintendent, and the Executive Cabinet. The Superintendent or his/her designee serves as Chair of the DGT.

The Cluster Governance Team and District Governance Team convene once per semester or more often if needed. These meetings may be cancelled if no business comes forward from the SGTs. The District Governance Team determines if an agenda item needs to go before the Board of Education. There are occasions when the Superintendent and/or Board of Education will solicit input directly from the School Governance Team(s). New principal selection, setting the student calendar, and recommending revisions to the Code of Conduct are examples of that practice.

- 4. Use the Charter System Application – Local School Governance Matrix found at this link <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Charter-Petition-Application.aspx> to show how the Superintendent will share with Local School Governance Teams his/her authority to develop recommendations to the Board of Education.**



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The Georgia Department of Education's Local School Governance Matrix was shared with School Governance Teams on multiple occasions. During the SGT/Leadership work session held in June of 2015, which was the same meeting that resulted in the ranking of challenges in the "case", the matrix was explicitly discussed and displayed. Issues pertaining to minimal expectations of governance were also discussed at two town hall meetings held in September of 2015. Additionally, components of the minimal governance guidelines are explicitly built into the schedule of topics and information presented to SGTs throughout the year and are structurally built into many areas (e.g. SGT members providing feedback on the code of conduct, setting budget priorities, and school improvement plans).

Beyond the formalities of making SGT members aware of their roles and the reach of their decision making it important to note that, in most every case, the SGTs have exercised at least minimal, and frequently beyond minimum, decision making capacity. The below matrix elucidates the, to date, exercise of Barrow County SGTs along with possible areas of expansion for each domain.

<b>School Level Governance Decision-Making Matrix</b>				
System Name:	<b>Minimum</b> LSGT Authority	<i>How and When</i> <b>Minimum</b> Authority will be Implemented	<b>Additional</b> LSGT Authority*	<i>How and When</i> <b>Additional</b> Authority will be Implemented
<b>Personnel Decisions</b>	LSGTs shall recommend the principal or school leader for selection by the BOE	Since the beginning of the original Charter SGTs in Barrow County have had representation on hiring committees for Principals and make the final recommendation for hiring to the Superintendent and Local Board of Education. 2011	Examples include: Input on principal goals, feedback on principal performance, type and qualifications of all positions, requirements for substitutes, attributes and qualifications for school administrative positions, distribution methods for incentive funds	By the end of the 2018-2019 school year SGTs will provide feedback on principal performance through survey results provided to the Superintendent.



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<p><b>Financial Decisions and Resource Allocation</b></p>	<p>LSGTs shall have input into the final recommendations for the school budget, including number and type of personnel, curriculum costs, supply costs, equipment costs and maintenance and operations costs</p>	<p>SGT input into priorities is an explicit and critical part of the budgetary process for both local and federal budgets in Barrow County Schools. Starting with the third year of the original Charter SGTs were authorized to provide approval for school level purchases over 25,000 dollars pending LBOE final approval in addition to approving budget priorities aligned with school improvement plan, selecting vendors for school resources, and approving fundraising budget.</p>	<p>Examples include: School budget approval, budget priorities aligned with school improvement plan, use of Charter system funds, vendors for school resources, fundraising budget</p>	<p>By the end of the 2017-2018 school year SGTs will approve the school budget. Starting with the 2016-2017 school year, SGTs will receive additional training on school-based budgeting.</p>
<p><b>Curriculum and Instruction</b></p>	<p>LSGTs shall have input into the selection of the curriculum and accompanying materials consistent with the district's Essential and Innovative Features as included in the Charter contract</p>	<p>Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, SGTs provide input into changes of instructional delivery models as long as changes are not in conflict with a system designated instructional delivery model. SGTs also approve the school Professional Learning Plan, and new course offerings pending final BOE approval.</p>	<p>Examples include: approval of instructional delivery innovations that would traditionally require a waiver, approval of instructional programs and materials consistent with innovations, graduation requirements, new course offerings, opportunities for student acceleration/remediation</p>	<p>By the end of the 2016-2017 school year SGTs will review and provide input on selection of instructional materials.</p>
<p><b>Establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals</b></p>	<p>LSGTs shall approve the school improvement plan and provide oversight of its implementation</p>	<p>Since the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, SGTs provide input into, and approve the School Improvement Plan.</p>	<p>Examples include: LSGT members serving as members of the school improvement planning team, LSGT approval of any innovations that would traditionally require a waiver of state law</p>	<p>By the end of the 2016-2017 school year, SGT members will participate as members of the school improvement planning teams (along with school leadership). SGTs have the option of reviewing Innovations that would require a waiver when they arise.</p>



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<b>School Operations</b>	LSGTs shall have input into school operations that are consistent with school improvement and Charter goals	Beginning with the second year of the original Charter SGTs have had input into the district code of conduct, Starting in year three SGTs began providing input into proposed school facility enhancements, system calendar, field trip offerings, partners in education, school teacher of the year, and the approval of the school handbook	Examples include: approval of use of instructional time during school day, partners in education, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, stakeholder surveys, parent involvement, communications strategies, school-level policies, volunteer support, field trips, fundraisers, student dress code, student discipline plan	By the end of the 2016-2017 school year, SGTs will provide input into school start times, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
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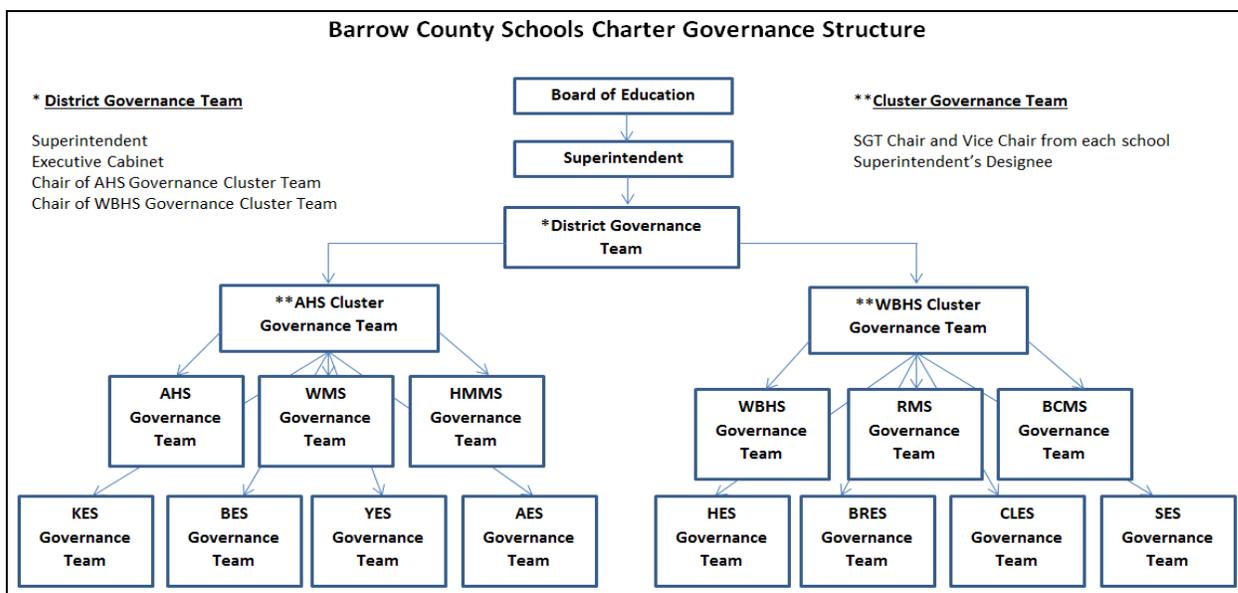
**5. Highlight the differences between the current local school advisory council structure and the new structure your new Charter system will implement.**

The School Governance Team structure is well established in the Barrow County School System. A diagram of the governance structure appears below. The primary purpose of the cluster governance structure is to mediate issues wherein a decision of a School Governance Team may affect other schools within the district or cluster. Additionally, cluster governance teams meet with the Superintendent at least two times during the year in an effort to communicate system initiatives and issues. This serves as a means of communication between their respective Councils and the Superintendent's Office as well as between the different school governance clusters.

The Cluster Governance Teams and District Governance Team convene once per semester or more often if needed. These meetings may be cancelled if no business comes forward from the SGTs. The District Governance Team determines if an agenda item needs to go before the Board of Education. There are occasions when the Superintendent and/or Board of Education will solicit input directly from the School Governance Team(s). New principal selection, setting the student calendar, and recommending revisions to the Code of Conduct are examples of that practice.



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**6. Describe the governance training to be provided to principals and members of the Local School Governing Teams in order to build the capacity needed to make decisions in the areas included in the spreadsheet.**

Training will be provided to members of the SGT which will include but not be limited to: understanding the mission, vision and core values of the school district; student achievement data review; school improvement planning process; laws and regulations regarding employment; student code of conduct; and school board policies. The SGT will participate in the development, approval, and monitoring of the school improvement plan. The SGT will set school budget priorities and provide input to the principal in the development of a budget for any available funding to the school from the Charter system status. Additional training would be provided for any new SGT members as needed. Principals will be involved in all SGT training sessions for their school members.



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Additionally, principals will be provided training and annual updates regarding the effective use of the SGT. The Board of Education itself is also provided training on managing and supporting a Charter district.

**7. Provide the name of the provider(s) of local School Governing Team training that you are considering approaching, if known.**

Training is provided internally and ongoing through the use of videos, face to face trainings, and constant communication. Training will also be provided, beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, through a reputable external training organization fluent in Georgia Charter School operations. Currently the Barrow Board of Education is considering using the Georgia Charter System Foundation as this resource. Failing that, the district will find a suitable alternative. This expansion to external training represents an important next step for Barrow SGTs as all training in the first Charter term was conducted internally.

**8. Provide the name and contact information of an employee of the Charter system that will facilitate communications between the Department and the chairpersons of the Local School Governing Teams in your Charter system.**

Jan Masingill, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning

[jan.masingill@barrow.k12.ga.us](mailto:jan.masingill@barrow.k12.ga.us)

770-867-4527 ext. 112

**9. Explain how your system will transition its central office from a Compliance Culture (where success is measured by simply achieving requirements) to an Achievement Culture (where success is measured by achieving high expectations).**

The central office culture of the Barrow County School System has strived to model a network of supports for schools, rather than a hierarchical power structure designed to enforce compliance. Nonetheless, ongoing training and culture development with central office leadership is a key component of a functioning Charter System. Local school governance through the SGT cannot always circumvent existing rules and guidelines, particularly when those guidelines are federal. However, it is critical that schools not be arbitrarily bound to rules and



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conventions that may be primarily for uniformity and ease of administration by the central office, rather than by rules designed to ensure that federal mandates are being met.

While local governance at the school level can sometimes result in diverse approaches it is the goal of central administration that schools make those decisions based on evidence based practice and that they fit within existing legal frameworks and the Charter structure itself. The existing structure of cluster governance teams creates a framework for mediating decisions at one local school that could affect other schools.



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Assurances Form and

## SIGNATURE SHEET

The law requires your school district to provide assurances that it will do certain things and comply with certain laws. This Assurance Form enumerates all of these requirements and, when you submit this signed Signature Sheet with this Assurance Form as part of your Charter System Application Package, you are providing the legal assurance that your Charter system understands and will do these things. This form must be signed by a duly authorized representative of the school system.

As the authorized representative of the applicant, I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application for a Charter for *(name of school system)* located in County is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; I also certify that if awarded a Charter the school system:

1. Shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations;
2. Shall not discriminate against any student or employee on the basis of race, color, ethnic background, national origin, gender, disability or age;
3. Shall be subject to all federal, state, and local rules, regulations, court orders, and statutes relating to civil rights; insurance; the protection of the physical health and safety of school students, employees, and visitors; conflicting interest transactions; and the prevention of unlawful conduct;
4. Shall be subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A § 20-2-1050 requiring a brief period of quiet reflection;
5. Shall ensure that the system and the system Charter school's governance boards are subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq. and O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq.;
6. Shall ensure that the system Charter school governance board members may only receive compensation for their reasonable and actual expenses incurred in connection with performance of their duties;
7. Shall ensure that all teachers will be certified or highly qualified in compliance with No Child Left Behind;
8. Shall comply with the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through § 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements, and participate in statewide assessments;



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9. Shall adhere to all provisions of federal law relating to students with disabilities, including the IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as applicable;
10. Shall provide state and federally mandated services for English Language Learners, as applicable;
11. Shall provide for supplemental educational services as required by federal law and pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.03, and for remediation in required cases pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01;
12. Shall notify the state of any intent to contract with a for-profit entity for education management services;
13. Shall be subject to the requirement that it shall not charge tuition or fees to its students except as may be authorized by local boards by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-133;
14. Shall comply with federal due process procedures regarding student discipline and dismissal;
15. Shall be subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school;
16. Shall have a written grievance procedure to resolve student, parent, and teacher complaints;
17. Shall have a written procedure for resolving conflicts between the system Charter schools and the local board of education;
18. Shall comply with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20 -2-211.1 relating to fingerprinting and criminal background checks;
19. Shall remit payments to TRS on behalf of employees;
20. Shall ensure that if transportation is provided for its students, the system shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
21. Shall ensure that if the Charter system participates in federal school meals programs, then each participating system Charter school shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws;
22. Shall prepare a safety plan in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1185 and submit and obtain approval from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency;
23. Shall comply with the state facility requirements regarding site codes, facility codes, the submission of architectural plans for any new facility that the system may build or occupy during the Charter term and all other facility requirements as established by the Department;
24. Shall be subject to all reporting requirements of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-160, subsection (e) of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-161, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-320, and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-740;



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- 25. Shall be subject to an annual financial audit conducted by the state auditor or, if specified in the Charter, by an independent certified public accountant licensed in this state;
- 26. Shall acknowledge that all criteria used to calculate QBE funding may not be waived;
- 27. Shall follow any and all other federal, state, and local laws and regulations that pertain to the applicant or the operation of the Charter system; and
- 28. Shall use any funds appropriated for the QBE weight for Charter systems, in accordance with recommendations of the school governance teams or to advance student achievement goals and school level governance training.
- 29. Shall ensure that all new principals and other school leaders, central office staff, superintendents, and Board of Education members receive a detailed orientation session on their Charter system commitments as part of their "on-boarding" process.

This Charter System Application, Assurance Form, and attached Exhibits were approved by the Board of Education on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 201\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Local Board of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If a Charter is granted, all Petitioners assure that the proposed Charter system programs, services, and activities will operate in accordance with the terms of the Charter and all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Local Board of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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## EXHIBITS

The following Exhibits are required to complete your Charter System Application Package. Please tab the Exhibits to match the item numbers below. Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible (no more than 5 pages per Exhibit). The only exceptions to this size limitation for Exhibits are your most recent annual audit and your most recent accreditation report.

1. Signed local Board of Education resolution approving the creation of the Charter system.
2. Notice that was sent to each principal within the proposed Charter system regarding required hearings on the Charter system application.
3. Description of how stakeholders, including parents and community members, were involved in the development of the Charter System Application.
10. This is where you can describe the process you used to develop your Application.
4. A list of all schools to be included in the Charter system, including new schools or college and career academies that will be formed throughout the life of the Charter, with an indication of which existing schools are currently in Needs Improvement status.
5. A brief description of the Charter system that includes the name, the mission, grades served, the focus of the curriculum, instructional methods to be used, including any distinctive or unique instructional techniques or educational programs to be employed, and other pertinent information.
11. Your description will be used by the Department to provide information to the public about applicants and new Charter systems.
6. Local school governance training timeline including training topics.
7. Conflict of interest policy for local school governing teams.
8. A list of business arrangements or partnerships with existing schools, educational programs, businesses and non-profits and the nature of the services provided, including disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest.
9. A brief description of the system's fiscal history and whether the system is or has ever operated under a fiscal deficit.
10. Online link to the school system's most recent annual audit.
11. Online link to the school system's most recent accreditation report.
12. Online link to the school system's most recent strategic plan.