



Charter System Application

DISTRICT NAME

Dawson

DISTRICT ADDRESS

28 Main Street
Dawsonville, GA 30534

Dr. John D. Barge
State School Superintendent

JULY 2014

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

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.

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 Dawson County			
2. Please indicate whether this is a: New Petition or a Renewal Petition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3. How many schools in total are you proposing to include in your charter system? 7	
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-between; margin-top: 5px;"> Primary School(s) Middle School(s) 2 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 5px;"> Elementary School(s) 4 High school(s) 1 </div>			
5. On July 1 of what year do you want your charter contract to be effective? 2016			
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 28 Main Street	8. City Dawsonville	9. State Georgia	10. Zip 30534
11. Contact Person Mr. Rick Brown		12. Title Chief Academic Officer	
13. Contact Street Address 28 Main Street	14. City Dawsonville	15. State Georgia	16. Zip 30534
17. Contact's telephone number (706)265-3246	18. Contact's fax number (706)265-1226	19. Contact's E-mail Address rbrown@dawson.k12.ga.us	

CHARTER SYSTEM APPLICATION

The Charter System Application includes 17 questions grouped into three sections. The first section is “The Case”, where you present your school system’s need for a charter. The second section focuses on your “Performance Expectations”, and the third section focuses on your “Local School Governance” plan.

THE CASE

Please fill out the Excel versions of the following chart found at <http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Charter-Petition-Application.aspx>

1. What challenges is your school district facing?
 - Provide a brief description of the specific issues that, if resolved, would allow you to consider your school district a complete success.
2. What is the rank order priority of these challenges (from most to least important)?
3. Which of these challenges will your school district be able to address by becoming a charter system?
4. What specific actions will your district take to address each of these challenges (listed in #3 above) during its five-year charter term?
5. Provide a clear explanation of how each of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) will lead to the specific challenge being addressed.
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).
 - Please also list the waivers you have used during the past five years (including those granted to the entire state, e.g. class size) and what goals they helped you accomplish during those five years?
7. Indicate the timeline for implementation of each specific action (listed in #4 above).
8. Indicate which of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) represents an innovation for your school district.

The purpose of the Dawson County Charter School District is to be an exemplary school district, with outstanding staff, that prepares students to compete globally. This purpose is accomplished through the direction of providing quality instruction and student support in a nurturing environment that results in success for all. Students in the Dawson County Charter School District are provided high quality instructional opportunities through the district’s commitment to provide:

1. Graduation for all
2. A secure and nurturing/supportive learning environment
3. Relationships with students, families, schools & community
4. Treatment of dignity and respect for everyone
5. A challenging curriculum through research-based, data driven, differentiated instruction
6. Extra-curricular activities and other opportunities, which develop positive personal growth
7. Integration of current and emerging technologies to compete in the 21st Century.

The Dawson County Charter School District is made up of approximately 3,469 students and serves students in grades PK – 12. The student population is made up of the following demographics: 7.6% Hispanic, 89.5% White, 2.9% Other.

In FY15, the district free and reduced population average was 47.59%, and the population of students with disabilities was 12.9%.

The Dawson County Charter School District has shown high performance in student achievement the past two years as measured by the state College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). The district CCRPI scores are shown in the table below:

CCPRI	2013		2014	
	Georgia	Dawson	Georgia	Dawson
Elementary	77.8	73.0	72.7	77.1
Middle	74.6	85.7	73.8	88.1
High	71.7	74.3	68.4	78.4
District	75.8	77.7	71.6	81.2

The Dawson County Charter School District standardized achievement scores exceed the state at every grade span during the FY14 school year and at all but the elementary level during the FY13 school year. The middle school grade span is a highlight area of student achievement for Dawson County Schools with scores at or above 85%. This is 10-15% higher than the state score at the middle school level for the past two years. Each grade span level has shown growth over the past two years as well.

The focus of the first Dawson County Charter was found in the following three areas:

1. Leadership – The creation of additional opportunities for students to experience leadership opportunities. Leadership development activities were built into the curriculum, clubs, extracurricular activities, and community service activities of the schools. Career pathways were developed with leadership development as a priority. JROTC was a new addition to the curriculum and has been a tremendous asset to leadership development.
2. Literacy – The development of a literate student involved not only being proficient in reading, writing, and speaking, but also proficiency in problem solving and critical thinking. Students are required to evaluate, analyze, synthesize and comprehend information in a format that allows them to utilize the scientific method across the curriculum.
3. Technology - Twenty-first century technology has been installed in every classroom. This has required the school district to create structures that allow students to collaborate, share, research, and create using the available technology to compete globally.

The challenges and experiences gained from the implementation of the first district charter provided the foundation for success in the continuation of innovative ideas for increasing student achievement.

The school district formed a Strategic Planning Committee during the fall of 2014. This committee was challenged with the task of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to make determinations about areas of growth for the school district. This led to the development of a five-year strategic plan to guide the district in improvement. The process began with an open public meeting in October of 2014 where an overview of the state of the schools was presented to over 120 stakeholders. Stakeholders then divided into smaller groups where input was received. In November of 2014, the Strategic Planning Committee met to review the input received at the open public meeting. The Strategic Planning Committee was comprised of 30 members, which included district administrators, teachers, parents, students, business leaders, and system governance council members. Additionally, a Georgia Department of Education/Charter System Consultant served as a member of the Strategic Planning Committee. During this meeting, the district purpose, direction, and

commitment statements were reviewed. A draft purpose, direction, and commitment statement was created and disseminated to schools for review and feedback by their respective stakeholder groups. In January of 2015, the district leadership representatives of the Strategic Planning Committee met for two days to review the input received thus far and to develop the goal areas that would be the framework for the district strategic plan. Throughout the remainder of the spring of 2015, several meetings were held to finalize the strategic plan. The plan was unanimously approved by the local board of education in May of 2015.

1. What challenges is your school district facing?

There were several challenges that became clear in the final stages of development of the strategic plan. The district student achievement data indicated that students at all grade levels perform well in the areas of reading and language arts. However, the data indicated that students at all grade levels were not performing at an equivalent level in the areas of math, science, and social studies. Increasing student performance in these areas was recognized as an identified area of need for the entire school district.

As an economically disadvantaged and rural school district, access to extended learning opportunities is often a limitation for students. The inadequate offering of extended learning opportunities quickly surfaced as a second challenge. The economic diversity within the school district should not place limitations on the support opportunities that are available to students.

The school district has been able to provide many varied professional learning activities to instructional personnel throughout all seven schools. It was discovered that although much of the professional learning was determined to be high quality, there is a lack of consistency in measuring the effectiveness of those activities. There is also an inconsistency with a common language and standards covered in the activities. The emphasis on fully evaluating the quality of professional learning activities and their impact on student achievement and/or professional growth was found to be ranging from not important to important across the school district. The Strategic Planning Committee determined this inconsistency to be a third challenge for the school district.

The Dawson County Charter School District would be better able to serve the needs of all stakeholders if the three challenges were completely resolved. The absence of the challenges would indicate that students are performing at high levels in all academic content areas, students have access to the support or enrichment opportunities they may need, and personnel have access to high-quality and effect professional learning opportunities across all schools in the district.

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

The challenges that surfaced in the comprehensive needs assessment were examined to make determinations about the priority ranking in which each should be addressed. The challenges were ranked in order of priority to be addressed as follows:

1. Low district performance in Math, Science, and Social Studies
2. Inadequate extended, rigorous learning opportunities for all students
3. Lack of consistent method of measuring and monitoring the effectiveness of high level, quality, job-embedded professional learning on student achievement and professional growth

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

The benefits that come with the charter school designation will allow the school district to address all three of the challenge areas.

4. What specific actions will your district take to address each of these challenges? (Listed in #3 above) during its five-year charter? (RESPONSES TO QUESTION 4 & 5 ARE BELOW.)

5. Provide a clear explanation of how each of these specific actions (listed in #4 above) will lead the specific challenge being addressed. (RESPONSES TO QUESTION 4 & 5 ARE BELOW.)

In an effort to address challenge 1, the district will provide charter funds to award innovative grants to teachers to improve student achievement in identified academic areas of need. This will be a continuation of a successful program that was implemented during the

FY15 school year. Greater flexibility will be provided to schools in their applications and they will focus on the identified content areas of improving math, science, and social studies at each individual school. Schools will be able to focus on their greatest academic need and not be locked into one or all three areas. Schools will be required to submit applications for an innovative grant. The application will require schools to identify the academic area of need, the plan of improvement, the justification for how the grant will support the academic need, and how the success of the activity will be measured. Principals will be provided instruction for how to submit the grant application.

The school and school district will monitor student achievement data (both formative and summative) each quarter through the use of district approved data collection documents. This will allow district leaders, as well as building administrators, to be proactive in monitoring student progress. Should changes be needed, those changes may occur early on during the school year rather than waiting until the end of the year.

Waivers that may be utilized for addressing this challenge include 160-4-2-.16 (scheduling for instruction), 160-4-2-.05 (middle school program criteria), 160-5-1-.08 (class size).

To address challenge 2, the district will provide students with rigorous, extended learning opportunities that are not presently available. The provision of extended and additional rigorous learning opportunities will support and increase student growth, development, achievement, creative thinking, as well as, exposure to college and career skills. Helping our students gain the knowledge and skills necessary to transition into the work force requires offering rigorous and relevant learning experiences to our students. Involving students in these learning opportunities will engage students at a high level which results in increased attendance and improved graduation rate. Those opportunities may include summer learning communities and camps, such as Camp Invention, at individual schools. Camp Invention is a STEM summer extended learning experience that allows students to “explore science, technology and their own innate creativity, inventiveness and entrepreneurial spirit. These summer opportunities will include scholarships and reduced fees for low-income families and focus on the academic areas of need” (<http://campinvention.org>). Partnerships with post-secondary institutions in the surrounding community will allow students to benefit from specialized instructors, online course offerings, and dual enrollment. Extended learning

opportunities during the school year will be expanded for students who may benefit from before or after school tutorial support services. The school district will participate in the REACH scholarship program. “REACH, an integral tenet of the Complete College Georgia Initiative, is a needs-based mentorship and scholarship program designed to encourage students, starting in middle school, to persist in their educational pursuits. Students are provided with the academic, social, and financial support needed to graduate from high school, access college, achieve post-secondary success, and be prepared for the 21st Century workforce” (http://www.reachga.com/program_overview.cfm). Other options such as student mentoring through the high school work-based learning, community service, and working/tutoring support lunch programs will increase student achievement. The extended learning opportunities will provide students with a platform to increase motivation, self-esteem, and social interaction, as well as, academic growth.

Waivers that may be utilized for addressing this challenge include 160-4-2-.16 (scheduling for instruction).

To address challenge 3, the district will develop a district wide format and process for measuring and monitoring the effectiveness of professional learning. With seven schools operating independently in their methods of measurement for effectiveness of professional learning, a uniform method will better allow the district to communicate and set a common standard and language for quality professional learning.

As schools plan and carry out professional learning activities during the school year, they will report the progress of the implementation of the professional learning using the developed documentation format during quarterly administrative leadership team meetings.

Waivers that may be utilized for addressing this challenge include 160-3-3-.04 (professional learning).

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

During the first charter, the school district utilized the following waivers to accomplish the district goals:

- 160-4-2-.16 (scheduling for instruction)

- 160-4-2-.05 (middle school program criteria)
- 160-5-1-.08 (class size)
- 160-5-1-.02 (school day and school year for students and employees)

Use of the waivers listed above allowed the school district to provide students with a quality instructional program even without having large numbers of personnel or finances available.

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

The school district will begin planning and initial implementation of all three solutions to the challenges during the FY16 school year. The success of the solutions will be reviewed and adjusted as may be necessary based on the data collected. The continuation of the solution plan will continue over the next ten years, the life of the charter, and will operate in tandem with the district strategic plan. Local planning boards of commission predict Dawson County will have a significant population growth over the next ten years. Flexibility with the charter will allow the district to adjust solutions to the challenges to best meet the needs of the school population with each school year.

8. Indicate which of these specific actions (listed in #4) represent an innovation for you school district.

The continued use of mini grants, the implementation of varied extended learning opportunities, and system of monitoring for professional learning effectiveness are all innovative initiatives for the Dawson County Charter School District. Without the charter, the district would not be able to address each challenge with creative solutions. By using the charter to meet the challenges posed to Dawson County Schools, the creative solutions will allow students to continue the upward growth trend in academic achievement.

For additional information, please refer to *The Case*. (EXHIBIT A)

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

9. What are your school system's specific student performance expectations for your five-year charter term?
- As background for your answer to this question, please see the CCRPI and Beating the Odds expectations listed below. These expectations will be included in your charter contract.
 - In your answer to this question you will list the specific areas you will target to achieve your CCRPI and Beating the Odds expectations.
 - For example, you may choose to target Math or ELA to raise your overall CCRPI score – because your current Math or ELA scores are dragging your CCRPI score down.
 - As a way to be competitive on Beating the Odds, you may also choose to focus on closing the gap in your system between educationally advantaged and educationally disadvantaged students – or you may choose to ensure gifted students are well-served, since average-performing gifted students will lower your Beating the Odds ranking compared to schools and districts with high-performing gifted students.

Goal 1: During each year of its first five-year charter term, the Charter System shall “beat the odds” as determined by a formula measuring expected student growth.

- A. The Beating the Odds analysis is a cross-sectional, fixed effects regression model that uses the following factors from the CCRPI school-level dataset, GaDOE student record file, and GaDOE CPI data.
- a. Student-based Factors:
- % African American
 - % Hispanic
 - % White
 - % Other
 - % Free/Reduced Lunch
 - % Students with Disabilities
 - % English Learners
 - % Gifted
- b. School-based Factors:
- School Size (FTE)
 - Student/Teacher Ratio
 - School Configuration/CCRPI Score Type (i.e. Elementary, Middle, High)
 - Locale Type (i.e. City, Town, Rural)
 - District Performance (Fixed Effect)

Renewal decisions for new charter systems first converting in 2014 or later will be based in part on whether the system “beat the odds” in each of the first four years of its first charter term (Years 1-4).

Goal 2: During each year of its first five-year charter term, each System Charter School shall “beat the odds” as determined by a formula measuring expected student growth. If each System Charter School fails to beat the odds in Year 1 of the charter, the Charter System shall decrease the number of System Charter Schools not beating the odds during Years 2 and 3 at a rate so that all System Charter Schools will beat the odds in Year 4.

Renewal decisions for new charter systems first converting in 2014 or later will be based in part on whether each System Charter School “beat the odds” in each of the first four years of its first charter term (Years 1-4).

Goal 3: The Charter System will demonstrate proficiency and/or improvement on the CCRPI.

- A. Measure 1: For new Charter Systems first converting in 2015 or later, using Year 1 of the charter term to establish a CCRPI baseline, the Charter System’s CCRPI score shall be equal to or better than the State in Year 2, and better than the State in Years 3-5 of the charter contract.
- B. Measure 2: If the Charter System’s first-year CCRPI score is lower than the State, the Charter System shall have until the end of Year 2 of the charter term to close the gap between the Charter System and the State.
- C. Measure 3: In Years 3-5 of the charter term, the Charter System’s CCRPI score shall be better than the State.

Renewal decisions for new Charter Systems first converting in 2015 or later will be based in part on whether the Charter System’s CCRPI score was equal to or better than the State in Year 2, and better than the State Years 3-4 of the charter contract.

Dawson County Charter School System, having met the previous established goals set forth in the initial five-year charter, aspires to continue to demonstrate excellence in education by establishing goals that will measure the innovations presented in “The Case.”

Performance Goal 1: The Dawson County Charter School System will demonstrate proficiency and/or improvement on the College and Career Performance Report Index “CCRPI.”

Measure 1: The system CCRPI score will exceed the state CCRPI Score.

Performance Goal 2: The Dawson County School System will exceed the state average in all state assessments.

Measure 1: The aggregate percentage of students who meet or exceed in grades 3 – 8 on the Georgia Milestone will exceed the state average in Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies.

Measure 2: The percentage of students who meet or exceed on the each of the high school EOCs will exceed the state average.

Performance Goal 4: Dawson County Charter School System will reduce the achievement gap on all state assessments between subgroups.

Measure 1: The aggregate percentage of students in subgroups who meet or exceed in grades 3 – 8 on the Georgia Milestone will exceed the state average in Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies.

Performance Goal 5: The Dawson County Charter School System will increase the percentage of students graduating from high school.

Measure 1: The 4 year graduation rate will exceed the state average each year.

Organizational Goal 1: The Dawson County Charter School System will increase the offerings and participation of students in Extended Learning Opportunities.

Organizational Goal 2: The Dawson County Charter School System will provide opportunities for teachers to apply for “Innovation Grants” to support teacher creativity in the classroom to improve student achievement.

Organizational Goal 3: The Dawson County Charter School System will develop a district wide format for measuring the effectiveness of professional learning through face-to-face meetings with school level leadership and student data.

**For additional information, please refer to *Charter Renewal Accountability Report*.
(EXHIBIT B)**

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).

10. Explain how your system will transition from Local School Advisory Councils to effective and fully functioning decision-making Local School Governance Teams (LSGTs).
 - Provide a timeline that shows all the major steps in this transition, including the timing of the formation of LSGTs, the training of principals and LSGTs, and anything you deem important in making this critical transition for decentralized/distributed decision-making.
 - Include information about the steps that have already occurred or will occur to inform all stakeholders of the new governance structure.

Dawson County School System was granted its first charter in FY2011. When Dawson County School System became a charter system, the Superintendent formed the System Governance Council. Over the last five years, the role of our Local School Councils has evolved from a culture of compliance to a culture of collaboration with an increased level of stakeholder involvement in all aspects of decision-making. In 2014-2015, Dawson County Schools approved a new superintendent, who possesses the same level of commitment necessary to accomplish the goals of our charter. The transition from one superintendent to another was smooth as the system has continued to progress toward a culture of transparency and collaboration. The change in culture has created an avenue for the superintendent to hear the voices of all stakeholders.

The system council is composed of the superintendent, principal and one elected member of each School's Governance Council. The System Governance Council meets at least three times each year. The goals of the System Governance Council are to:

- Assess the effectiveness of the SMART goals and objectives of the system charter,
- Review and recommend changes to the system charter to the Superintendent,
- Oversee and recommend to the superintendent on issues submitted by the School Governance Councils with a scope and impact beyond the local school,
- Share information and innovations between system schools,
- Mediate between School Governance Councils and other entities,

- Provide recommendations to the Superintendent on critical issues facing the school Governance Councils, and
- Complete the annual report for the Dawson County Charter School System.

11. 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. Be specific!

The School Governing Councils are elected and length of service is built on the Local School Advisory Council model (LSAC), by-laws presently being used by the schools in Dawson County. The School Governing Council at each school will consist of seven members who include the principal, two teachers of the school elected by the certified staff, two parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school at the time of election and elected by the parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school at the time of election, and two representatives from the business community chosen by the principal and approved by the five non-business members of the School Governing Council. The two representatives from the business community have businesses located in Dawson County and preferably have children attending the school. The members serve two-year terms and no member may serve more than two terms on a single school level council. By utilizing the present service terms of members on the LSAC, the new School Governance Council is insured to serve terms that are staggered, thus insuring continuity and consistency of the council's work.

School Governance Council membership elections occur no earlier than April 1st and no later than May 31st of each school year. Members serve a two-year term beginning July 1st on the year elected and ending June 30th of the second year. Training for members will take place between June and July of each year.

Council member attendance and participation in the council will be of utmost importance. Council by-laws reflect the process for removing members that do not adhere to attendance and participation expectations and/or do not meet the Code of Ethics utilized by the Professional Standards Commission for all school certified staff. The office of School Governance Council members shall be automatically vacated under the following conditions:

- If a member resigns.

- If the member is removed as a member by a majority vote of the School Governance Council.
- If the member is a parent representative and no longer has a child enrolled in the school.
- If the member is a teacher representative and no longer works at the school.

Each school's council meets monthly and the School Governance Council adheres to the open and public meetings act and inspection of public records requirements as outlined in O.C.G.A. 50-14-1, et seq. and O.C.G.A. 50-18-70, et seq. These requirements shall be addressed in the by-laws. All meetings dates and agendas are published as outlined by the ordinance. The School Governance Council will elect a chair and vice chair by secret ballot cast by the council members. The principal will serve as secretary/parliamentary to the council and will assist the chair in establishing the agenda and other duties as needed. The principal may assign a staff member to assist the council as clerk and be responsible for recording all votes and minutes of all proceedings.

All School Governance Council members will be required to sign a conflict of interest certification representing and warranting that they have been truthful in disclosing any conflicts of interest. Council members will also be subject to all Dawson County policies regarding conflicts of interest.

12. 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.

School Level Governance Decision-Making Matrix				
System Name: Dawson County	Minimum LSGT Authority	How and When Minimum Authority will be Implemented	Additional LSGT Authority*	How and When Additional Authority will be Implemented
Personnel Decisions	LSGCs shall provide input for the principal or school leader for recommendation by the Superintendent of School to the local board of education	How: Participates in the process for principal or school leader selection when vacancies occur. When: Continue this practice beginning August 2015	LGSCs shall participate in the interview process for principal or school leader selection when vacancies occur and make recommendations to superintendent.	How: Representative from the LSGC will serve on interview panel that will make recommendations to the superintendent. Provide input/feedback on waivers pertaining to certification and use of staff allotments. When: Continue this practice beginning August 2015
Financial Decisions and Resource Allocation	LSGCs shall provide input and recommendations for school level resources based on the School Improvement Plan	How: Review and provide input into expenditures of federal, state, and local funds annually. Review and provide input on the budget for the charter school funds allocated to the school during the annual budget process. When: Continue this practice beginning August 2015	LGSCs shall approve and/or recommend fund-raisers. Review school-based activity summary and make recommendations for improvement to the principal.	How: Review and recommend the allocation of fundraiser funds. Recommend uses of Charter System funds allocated to the school, aligned with the school improvement plan. Participate in a collaborative process to provide input to related organizations regarding use of funds (PTSOs, Booster Clubs, etc...) When: Continue this practice beginning August 2015

Dawson County School System-Charter Renewal Application 2016

<p>Curriculum and Instruction</p>	<p>LSGCs shall provide feedback for the selection of the curriculum and accompanying materials consistent with the district’s Essential and Innovative Features included in the charter contract.</p>	<p>How: Provide feedback for the selection of instructional materials for the state-approved curriculum consistent with the district’s Essential and Innovative Features as included in the charter contract. When: Continue this practice beginning August 2015</p>	<p>LSGCs shall select and recommend curricular materials for implementation based on school improvement plan and student performance.</p>	<p>How: Provide input to the principal regarding instructional resources aligned with the school improvement plan Provide input/feedback on appropriate use of waivers including but not limited to instructional time, school calendar, enrichment activities, and extended learning for students. When: Continue this practice beginning August 2015</p>
<p>Establishing and monitoring the achievement of school improvement goals</p>	<p>LSGCs shall have input in school improvement planning</p>	<p>How: Reviews school performance data and provides input to the principal and school leadership team. When: Continue this practice beginning August 2015</p>	<p>LSGCs shall participate in school improvement planning</p>	<p>How: Review student performance data and mid-year benchmarks and provide feedback to the principal and leadership team regarding the progress and implementation of the school improvement plan Actively participates in the district/school accreditation process. When: Continue this practice beginning August 2015 (review data at minimum 2X per year)</p>
<p>School Operations</p>	<p>LSGCs shall have input into school operations that are</p>	<p>How: Serve as a resource and</p>	<p>LSGCs shall approve partners in education,</p>	<p>How: Review and recommend actions</p>

	consistent with school improvement and charter goals	support to the school and teachers through volunteer efforts. When: Continue this practice beginning August 2015	stakeholder survey, parent involvement, communication strategies, volunteer, support, field trips, fundraisers	to improve the overall operations and learning environment of the school (examples: school behavior code, dress code, attendance policy, schedule, extra-curricular activities, community service, school calendar, promotion, and retention policy. When: Continue this practice beginning August 2015
*The LBOE retains its constitutional authority.				

13. Highlight the differences between the current local school advisory council structure and the new structure your new charter system will implement.

The Local School Governance Council (LSGC) is charged with the responsibility for providing input and making recommendations regarding aspects of the instructional program of the school and the school’s operational schema. The role of the school council was primarily advisory, and the council was appointed by the principal. The LSGC is a governing body that is elected and is involved in human resources, budget, facilities and school improvement plan which includes reviewing data.

14. 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.

Note that training should occur before the charter begins because your local School Governance Teams will be expected to make decisions beginning in Year 1 of your charter. Be sure to show this in the timeline requested in #10 above.

Training will be an essential component of the charter system. All involved parties will be required to complete training in general responsibilities, protocols of decision-making, conflict

resolution and commitment to both the ideals and processes of decentralized authority. Dawson County Charter School System recognizes the vital importance of providing intense, quality training to its Board of Education members, administrative teams, school governance council members, and teachers. The System Governance Council is a fully functional collaborative decision-making body and training will be ongoing, reoccurring as new members are added. While some of this training will be made available in-house, Dawson County School District recognizes the need for all members to be trained in key areas. Thus, training will be provided so that all members have background in key areas of responsibility, protocols of decision-making, conflict resolution and processes of decentralized authority. Training will be provided to keep all members up to date. Appropriate training shall be provided to all stakeholders to ensure sustainability and build capacity needed to achieve an effective shared, collaborative decision-making culture. Below is a timeline of training that demonstrates our commitment to providing a quality-training program:

Training Topics	Presenter	Audience	Dates/ Yearly
School Governance Council Training 101: Roles and Responsibilities of School Governance Council and Community Connections	Principal	New Members	June & July
Communication & Effective Meetings	Principal	All Members	August
By-Laws & Legal Issues	Principal	All Members	September
School Budgets	Finance Director and/or Principal	All Members	October
Curriculum & Instruction Use of Waivers	Chief Academic Officer and/or Principal	All Members	November
Assessment & Data Interpretation	Director of Student Services and/or Principal	All Members	January
Human Resources & Professional	Principal and/or	All Members	February

Learning	Central Office Staff		
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15. Provide the name of the provider(s) of local School Governing Team training that you are considering approaching, if known.

- Note that such providers can be internal or external to the school district.

Dawson County Charter School System training of School Governance Council will be handled through system professional learning modules and system level staff for the majority of the components. Consultants may be hired to provide additional training as identified or requested by the School Governance Council.

16. 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.

The system level contact for the Department of Charter Systems and Local School Governing Teams will be Mr. Rick Brown, Chief Academic Officer. Mr. Brown may be reached by email, rbrown@dawson.k12.ga.us or by phone at (706) 265-3246 ext. 1016.

17. 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).

An achievement culture must be one in which the central office and the schools work together in a collaborative nature to discuss barriers, determine root causes, and ultimately develop a plan that improves student achievement. The central office staff will continue to support the academic programs in our schools and consistently monitor their effectiveness on student achievement. Results will be analyzed and communicated with all stakeholder groups. A collaborative process will be utilized to make informed decisions about all curriculum-related initiatives. School Governing Councils will be an integral part of each school’s decision-making and implementation of strategies to improve student achievement.

For additional information, please refer to *The School Level Governance Decision Making Matrix* on pages 19-21.

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 Dawson County School System located in Dawson 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;
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;
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.

EXHIBIT C

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

E X H I B I T S

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.

EXHIBIT D – Dawson County Board of Education Resolution

2. Notice that was sent to each principal within the proposed charter system regarding required hearings on the charter system application.

EXHIBIT E – Principal Notification

3. Description of how stakeholders, including parents and community members, were involved in the development of the Charter System Application.

The school district formed a Strategic Planning Committee during the fall of 2014. This committee was challenged with the task of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to make determinations about areas of growth for the school district. This led to the development of a five-year strategic plan to guide the district in improvement. The process began with an open public meeting in October of 2014 where an overview of the state of the schools was presented to over 120 stakeholders. Stakeholders then divided into smaller groups where input was received. In November of 2014, the Strategic Planning Committee met to review the input received at the open public meeting. The Strategic Planning Committee was comprised of 30 members, which included district administrators, teachers, parents, students, business leaders, and system governance council members. Additionally, a Georgia Department of Education/Charter System Consultant served as a member of the Strategic Planning Committee. During this meeting, the district purpose, direction, and commitment statements were reviewed. A draft purpose, direction, and commitment statement was created and disseminated to schools for review and feedback by their respective stakeholder groups. In January of 2015, the district leadership representatives of the Strategic Planning Committee met for

two days to review the input received thus far and to develop the goal areas that would be the framework for the district strategic plan. Throughout the remainder of the spring of 2015, several meetings were held to finalize the strategic plan. The plan was unanimously approved by the local board of education in May of 2015.

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.

<u>School</u>	<u>CCRPI Score</u>	<u>Needs Improvement (Priority, Alert or Focus)</u>
Black’s Mill Elementary School	81.0	No
Kilough Elementary School	80.4	No
Riverview Elementary School	87.1	No
Robinson Elementary School	75.3	No
Dawson County Middle School	89.5	No
Riverview Middle School	88.0	No
Dawson County High School	78.4	No

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.

Your description will be used by the Department to provide information to the public about applicants and new charter systems.

Dawson County Charter School System “Pursuing Excellence for All”

The mission/purpose of Dawson County Charter School System is to be an exemplary school district, with outstanding staff, that prepares students to compete globally. The system will provide quality instruction and student support in a nurturing environment that results in success for all. The staff is committed to the following:

- Graduation for all
- Providing a secure and nurturing/supportive learning environment
- Cultivating relationships with students, families, schools and community
- Treating everyone with dignity and respect
- Providing a challenging curriculum through research-based, data driven, differentiated instruction
- Providing extra-curricular activities and other opportunities, which develop positive personal growth
- Integrating current and emerging technologies to compete in the 21st Century
- Dawson County:
 - Serves grades PreK through twelfth
 - Advances realignment of sixth through twelfth grade
 - Offers dual enrollment for high school students
 - Develops district wide benchmarking, universal screening and common assessments

6. Local school governance training timeline including training topics.

Training Topics	Presenter	Audience	Dates/ Yearly
School Governance Council Training 101: Roles and Responsibilities of School Governance Council and Community Connections	Principal	New Members	June & July
Communication & Effective Meetings	Principal	All Members	August
By-Laws & Legal Issues	Principal	All Members	September
School Budgets	Finance Director and/or Principal	All Members	October

Curriculum & Instruction Use of Waivers	Chief Academic Officer and/or Principal	All Members	November
Assessment & Data Interpretation	Director of Student Services and/or Principal	All Members	January
Human Resources & Professional Learning	Principal and/or Central Office Staff	All Members	February

7. Conflict of interest policy for local school governing teams.

Exhibit F – System Governance Council conflict of interest policy

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.

<u>Partnerships</u>	<u>Services Provided</u>
Lanier Technical College	MOWR/Dual Enrollment
University of North Georgia	MOWR/Dual Enrollment Professional Development Community – Early Childhood Interns housed on Dawson County Campus completing course work and interning their last two years
Dawson County Parks and Recreation	Athletics and Facilities Support
Ninth District Opportunity/Head Start	Special Education Services

Dawson County Sheriff's Department	Resource Officers, Junior Law Enforcement, Backpack Buddies
Dawson County Family Connection	Provides Resources to Families in Need, such as school supplies and food
Dawson County Family and Children Services	Counseling Services, Student and Community Support
Dawson County Chamber of Commerce	Community Communication and New Teacher Resources
Challenged Child	Special Education Services for Birth to PreK
Pioneer RESA/Alpine	Professional Learning
Dawson County Fire and Rescue	School Safety Plan and Safety Education
Business Partners in Education	Financial Support, Volunteers and Stakeholders
Next Generation Clubhouse	Student Support through Mentoring and After School Programs
Lockheed Martin	Partnering with system to implement STEM curriculum and providing both field trip and mentoring in the field of engineering

9. A brief description of the system's fiscal history and whether the system is or has ever operated under a fiscal deficit.

The Dawson County Charter School System has maintained a strong fiscal history. The system is not operating under a fiscal deficit plan and has not operated under a fiscal deficit plan over the last fifteen years. The school system's bond rating is "AA" from Standards and Poors. The analyst for Standard and Poors cited the limited amount of debt carried by the district and fund balance and capacity under the millage cap as factors contributing to the high bond rating. The Dawson County Charter School System FY14 financial audit contained "no findings" or "corrective action" plans.

10. Online link to the school system's most recent annual audit.

[Dawson County Audit Report \(EXHIBIT G\)](#)

(If you have trouble opening the link above, please copy the entire URL address below and paste into your browser)

http://www.dawsoncountyschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_494561/File/Exhibit_G_Dawson_County_Audit_Report.pdf

11. Online link to the school system's most recent accreditation report.

[Dawson County AdvancED Accreditation Report \(EXHIBIT H\)](#)

(If you have trouble opening the link above, please copy the entire URL address below and paste into your browser)

http://www.dawsoncountyschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_494561/File/Exhibit%20H_Dawson%20County%20Accreditation%20Report.pdf

12. Online link to the school system's most recent strategic plan.

[Dawson County Schools Strategic Plan \(EXHIBIT I\)](#)

(If you have trouble opening the link above, please copy the entire URL address below and paste into your browser)

http://www.dawsoncountyschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_494561/File/Exhibit%20I_Strategic%20Plan_%20Dawson%20County.pdf