

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 405: Charter School Expansion Policy and Application

Part 405, Chapter 1: Charter School Expansion Policy and Application

The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board

Charter School Expansion Policy and Application



Table of Contents

Charter School Expansion Overview	4
Charter School Eligibility	4
Expansion Evaluation.....	5
Application Overview	5
Application Timeline.....	5
Submission of Application Materials	5
Completeness Check.....	7
Applicant Opportunity for Discussion	7
Expansion Application Report and Recommendation	7
Board Action	7
Section 1: Expansion Plan and Timeline.....	7
Section 2: Community Need & Student Enrollment.....	8
Section 3: Organizational Capacity	8
Section 4: Facility Capacity & Viability.....	9
Section 5: Financial Viability	9
Section 6: Educational Program.....	10
Journal of School Choice Charter School Models	11
Resources	14

Introduction

The Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board’s mission is to “authorize high-quality charter schools, particularly schools designed to expand opportunities for underserved students” as we pursue excellence through options. “Great authorizers are dedicated to a mission of giving **more children** access to **better schools** through the proactive creation and replication of high-quality charter schools and the closure of academically low-performing ones.” National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA).

Expansion Defined

Significant expansion of enrollment in charter schools is defined as a **substantial** increase in the number of students attending a charter school due to a **significant event that is unlikely to occur on a regular basis**. To further clarify this, the following conditions will be applied to this definition. A charter school will be considered significantly expanding if: The charter school is expanding for one of the following reasons: a. adding one or more grades outside the current contract terms; b. relocating to new space that allows for an approved expansion previously restricted by inadequate facilities; c. adding grades that significantly impact or fundamentally change the schools’ current model (ex. changes to current grade configurations such as an elementary to high school or high school to middle school.) Examples of school models may be found in **Appendix A**.

Expansion Readiness

When considering an expansion application, Governing Boards should evaluate their readiness for expansion in order to ensure that the expansion is likely to result in the addition of high-quality education options for students and families. The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) has compiled a list of readiness indicators for authorizers and schools when considering expansion and is presented below¹.

Readiness for Expansion

In alignment with national best practice, readiness is defined as an application that provides:

- A clear and compelling mission;
- A strong educational program with demonstrated effectiveness;
- Evidence of community need and support;
- A solid business and financial plan;
- Effective governance and management structures and systems;
- Strong and stable leadership demonstrating diverse and necessary capabilities; and
- Clear evidence of the applicant’s capacity to execute its plan successfully.



¹ This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

Charter School Expansion Overview

A Charter School Governing Board seeking school expansion of one or more of its approved schools must submit a contract amendment request to MCSAB. An approved amendment request will require the submission of an application detailing the request for expansion as defined and described in this policy. MCSAB staff and/or a 3rd party evaluator will review the application against the criteria set forth in the application provided in this document. The application outlines the criteria used by the MCSAB Staff and/or its 3rd party evaluator and Board to evaluate a charter schools' expansion application. The MCSAB Staff and/or its 3rd party evaluator will accept and evaluate applications and recommend to the MCSAB those requests that are likely to provide additional high-quality educational opportunities to students. In accordance with the MCSAB Expansion Policy, the MCSAB has the final authority to approve requests for expansion.

Charter School Eligibility

Charter schools that meet the definition for high quality may submit an expansion amendment request. Following MCSAB approval of a school's contract amendment request, an expansion application may be submitted by a high quality school, demonstrating success over time and in good standing with MCSAB. The execution of the school's contract amendment request is dependent upon the approval of a successful expansion application.

High Quality School Defined

To meet the definition of a high quality school eligible for expansion, Mississippi's charter schools must meet or exceed the academic standards for student achievement and growth, post-secondary readiness, and mission specific goals as determined by the Mississippi Performance Framework. Additionally, the school shall have no significant audit findings (including material findings and/or going concern) within the previous three years of operation and must exhibit sound organizational health. Consideration for expansion is granted only to schools in good standing, that are financially viable, and have been faithful to the essential terms of the charter, and applicable laws.

Submission of Application Materials

Step 1 Complete the [Amendment Request Form](#)

Step 2 Complete the Expansion Application

MCSAB strives to ensure appropriate and transparent oversight through our Performance Framework, charter contract, Intervention Ladder, and authorization & renewal processes. This document seeks to provide clear expectations for schools requesting an expansion to their current school. This document includes the standard application questions that are generally considered a part of the expansion evaluation; however, each expansion application may be modified if needed based on the proposed expansion, the school's existing body of evidence (academic, financial, and organization performance over time), the time since the school's most recent charter renewal, and any other relevant circumstances. Additionally, the depth of response for each section will vary significantly based on the scale of the proposed expansion. For example, adding enrollment to existing grades (additional grade level sections) may require substantially less detail from the charter's current educational program when compared to those school's seeking expansion into new grade levels beyond the current contracted terms or changing the school's model.

Expansion Evaluation

It is generally assumed that all schools requesting an expansion of their current program have met the NACSA readiness indicators and MCSAB's definition of a high quality/high performing school. The table found on page 6 outlines the standards and criteria used to evaluate a charter school expansion application and the source of the material used for the review.

Application Overview

Applying for the expansion of an existing school is a **separate process and distinctly different than that of applying for a new school**. Expansion involves the evaluation of an existing operator's success in terms of its overall academic, financial, and organizational performance. In addition to evidence of providing high quality educational opportunities and outcomes for scholars, schools seeking expansion will demonstrate community support and high demand for enrollment into the charter school. A request for expansion is not an automatic approval, even for schools that meet past performance indicators. The Authorizer must also consider capacity of leadership and enrollment trends.

Expansion applications should focus on providing **evidence** of the effectiveness of the currently operating school(s). The narrative should be as concise and clear as possible. All requested documentation should be provided as attachments or links to or within the narrative. This includes any specific, documented evidence, tables, statistics, and other information which may require elaboration beyond the scope of the narrative.

Application Timeline

Schools should submit expansion application materials in accordance with the timeline established by MCSAB unless waived for extenuating circumstances (such as a natural disaster, global pandemic, etc.). The standard expansion application timeline includes an MCSAB amendment request prior to an application submission in the fall or spring. (see table below)

Summary of the Standard Expansion Application Process Components	Fall Submission	Spring Submission
Amendment Request Form	Applicant submits amendment request in June for board consideration in July	Applicant submits amendment request in December for board consideration in January
Application Due	October 1	April 1
If Applicable Applicant Discussion with the Performance and Accountability Committee	By December 1	By June 1
Board Discussion of the Report and Recommendation	By January 1	By July 1
Official Board Action	January Board Meeting	July Board Meeting

Submission of Application Materials

All application materials must be submitted via the MCSAB online platform. The Applicant must address all items within the Expansion Application Narrative. **If a particular prompt does not apply, please indicate by responding not applicable or N/A.** If additional context would support your position, please elaborate beyond the N/A response. **Please limit your responses so that the completed version of this Expansion Application narrative does not exceed 25 pages.** If the Applicant would like to provide additional attachments to supplement information provided in the application narrative or to provide additional information not required as part of the Expansion Application, the additional attachments should be clearly referenced within the Expansion Application Narrative by filename and/or document title/page number.

Review Area	Standard	Existing Material MCSAB	School Provides Application Material
School Quality			
Academic Performance	School has a track record of academic growth and is performing at or above on state assessments when compared to the district in which the school is located. Track record is defined as a minimum of three consecutive years.	X	
Academic Performance	School has a track record of meeting or exceeding all Academic Performance Indicators. Track record defined as a minimum of three consecutive years.	X	
Leadership and Organizational Capacity			
Leadership and Governance	School has strong and stable school leadership. The school governing board demonstrates the capacity to expand the current program with fidelity, implement the mission, and replicate and perpetuate success for all students	X	X
Leadership and Governance	The school governing board has taken official action to approve a school expansion as evidenced in its board minutes.	X	X
Organizational Performance	School does not have unresolved notices of noncompliance and has not recently received a Notice of Concern or Breach of contract	X	
Facility Capacity & Viability			
Existing Certificate of Occupancy	Current facility occupancy capacity is sufficient to support the expansion without major renovations or changes		X
Facilities Plan	Adequate plan is submitted with the application that will satisfy the facility requirements		X
Financial Viability			
Financial Plan	School operates in a fiscally responsible manner and has a plan to ensure financial solvency during expansion	X	X
Financial Performance	School currently meets or exceeds all financial Performance Framework Indicators	X	
Financial Performance	School does not have significant or unresolved audit findings within the previous three school years.	X	
Community Need & Student Enrollment			
Evidence of Need and Support	School provides evidence of strong student and family demand for the addition of high quality seats and provides evidence that the community will benefit from the expansion		X
Student Enrollment	School has a history of meeting and/or exceeding enrollment projections	X	
Evidence of Planning	School has a comprehensive plan for the expansion and provides an explanation of how the requested expansion will enable the school to better serve educationally disadvantaged students	X	X
Rationale	School has a clear rationale and defensible reason for expanding that does not focus solely on increasing revenue		X
Other			
Length of Operation	School has been in operation for at least three years	X	
School Network Performance	School network has successfully expanded its program previously and has adequate central office staff to support the continued expansion	X	
Educational Plan	School provides an educational plan that details how the school will meet the needs of all students, sustain the core academic program through the expansion, and demonstrate high levels of success		X

Completeness Check

An application is considered filed when submitted via the online platform by the published deadline. Within 15 business days of receiving an application, MCSAB shall determine whether the application satisfies the requirements listed in the Application Checklist and is therefore complete. If the application is not complete, staff shall notify the applicant within the 15 day period and provide a list of the information required to complete the application. The applicant has 15 business days after the date it receives the notice to provide the required information for review. MCSAB is not required to act on the application if the applicant does not provide the required information within the 15 day period. Upon submission of a **complete** application, the window of review begins. Staff may request additional information during the review period and provide reasonable time for the applicant to respond.

Applicant Opportunity for Discussion

Depending on the scope of the proposed expansion, Applicants may be asked to engage in a discussion with the MCSAB's Performance and Accountability Committee and take questions from committee members. Additionally, applicants may be asked to provide a summary of the proposed expansion, addressing any questions identified by the Performance and Accountability Committee, to the full Board during a regularly scheduled board meeting.

Expansion Application Report and Recommendation

Applicants will receive a copy of the recommendation report in advance of the board meeting.

Board Action

The Board will rule on the application during a regularly scheduled board meeting. MCSAB can vote to approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application. All documents will be public records and posted on the MCSAB website.

Evaluation and Criteria

Meets the Standard ~ the applicant responded thoroughly and completely addressing all components of each prompt or question. The applicant provided a comprehensive, coherent, and realistic response demonstrating expansion readiness.

Fails to Meet the Standard ~ the applicant failed to respond thoroughly and completely. The applicant failed to address all required components of each prompt or question. The applicant did not provide a comprehensive, coherent, or realistic response that demonstrated readiness for expansion.

Section 1: Expansion Plan and Timeline

School has a **comprehensive plan** for expansion and provides a detailed explanation of how the requested school expansion as defined above will enable the school to increase opportunities for underserved students, consistent with the purposes of the Mississippi Charter School Act.

1. Clearly describe the rationale for the expansion request. The detailed response should include the following:
 - a. Why the school is requesting this **particular** school size/configuration.
 - b. Why the school is requesting the expansion **at this specific moment in time**; and
 - c. How the proposed expansion **will enhance or expand opportunities** within this community including how the proposed expansion will enable the school to adequately serve educationally disadvantaged students.

2. Summarize the school's plan for expansion including the timeline and staff responsible for implementation.
3. If applicable, indicate whether the school plans to apply for the federal Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant for a one-time significant expansion and provide evidence of eligibility to apply for the CSP grant.

Section 2: Community Need & Student Enrollment

School demonstrates convincing student and family demand for the addition of high quality seats or grade levels **and** provides evidence that the community will benefit from the expansion.

1. Provide an enrollment table that reflects the proposed expansion. The enrollment table should:
 - a. Include as many years as necessary for the school to reach its maximum proposed enrollment noting and acknowledging that grade levels exceeding current charter **term are subject to an approved renewal**.
 - b. Include enrollment by grade and total enrollment.
2. Describe the **targeted anticipated** student population for the proposed expansion. The description should include, but not be limited to, the percent of students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, [English Learners](#), and students eligible for free or reduced price lunch.
3. Provide specific evidence of need including current school enrollment waiting lists by grade level and letters of support from community stakeholders. The evidence will demonstrate that the student/family demand actually exists for the proposed expansion and is aligned to the enrollment projections.
4. Discuss the degree to which the charter school has engaged community members regarding the proposed expansion.
5. Describe the school's recruitment and enrollment process for the expansion.
6. Address any changes to the school's current enrollment process, including, but not limited to, the school's lottery considerations. A clear rationale for each proposed change should be provided and all changes must be in accordance with charter school statutes and regulations. If the school does not anticipate changes to current practice, please indicate by responding Not Applicable.

Section 3: Organizational Capacity

School has strong and stable school leadership, and the school's governing board has demonstrated the capacity to implement the current program with fidelity and ensure success for all students.

1. Describe the school's current governance and administrative structures. Discuss anticipated changes resulting from the proposed expansion. The description should include the key staff and board members involved in the planning of the proposed expansion **and** evidence of their ability to provide sound oversight.
2. Describe any other significant operational adjustments that will be required to fulfill the proposed expansion (i.e., food services, transportation, etc.).
3. Describe key personnel changes as a result of the expansion. Key changes should include, at minimum: the identification of the charter school's leadership team; and, **if applicable**, how the network-level staff will evolve over time to meet the needs of the school staff and students.
4. **If revised**, include copies of the following:
 - a. The school enrollment policy (redlined version to indicate approved changes)
 - b. The governing board bylaws (redlined version to indicate approved changes)
 - c. A copy of the board minutes demonstrating policy or policies adoption

Section 4: Facility Capacity & Viability

Current facility occupancy capacity is sufficient to support the expansion, **or** an adequate plan is submitted with the application that will satisfy the facility requirements.

1. Describe how the facility will be impacted by the school's requested expansion (that is, how enrolling more students in subsequent years will impact the use of space).
2. If applicable, discuss the timeline by which the school would make significant capital investments, add space, or move from one space to another.
 - a. For any changes in facilities that would need to occur by the next school year, describe the current plan and progress towards realizing the necessary changes.
 - b. For any changes in facilities that would occur beyond the next school year, describe the school's strategic approach to realizing those changes. Describe any potential challenges and the strategies the school would apply to overcome those challenges.
 - c. For any changes requiring **significant renovations**, describe how those renovations will be financed in line with the school's budget.
3. If changing locations, please provide the following:
 - a. Resolution from the school's governing board
 - b. Lease or purchase terms of the facility including term sheet from lender, if financing, and lease terms from landlord, if renting;
 - c. An assurance included in the board's resolution approving expansion that no other financial, legal, or other liabilities exist; and
 - d. Contingency plan in the event the school is unable to move to the proposed new or additional facility due to financial or other circumstances.

Section 5: Financial Viability

School operates in a fiscally responsible manner and has a plan to ensure financial solvency during expansion.

Before voting to request an expansion amendment, the charter holder governing board has considered a business plan, has determined by majority vote of the board that the growth proposed is financially prudent relative to the financial and operational strength of the charter school, and **includes such a statement in the board resolution approving an expansion request.**

1. Using the budget template provided [here](#), provide a complete and realistic **three-year budget** projection (current year + two additional years) that appropriately reflects the expenses and revenue related to the school, considering the requested expansion.
2. Provide a **budget narrative** that thoroughly justifies the revenue and cost assumptions made in the budget projection. The narrative should provide detail on specific changes to the budget that will occur as a result of the requested expansion including the cost of acquiring additional facilities, (if applicable), furniture, staff, and equipment to accommodate the anticipated increase in student enrollment.
 - a. Detail how the budget will align with required resources to support special populations. The narrative should address curricula, instructional materials, and staff training needed to serve special populations.
 - b. If the school intends to apply for and use federal CSP funds to support curriculum, materials, equipment, travel, staff training, and/or any purchases that require meeting the federal cost principles of reasonable, necessary, allowable, and allocable, please include in the budget narrative.
3. Discuss the school's ability to secure and manage the funding necessary for expansion. This should include:
 - a. Procedures to regularly review budget to actual activity and expenditures against the school's mission and vision over time; **and**
 - b. A contingency plan to mitigate the impacts of decreased funding or increased expenditures.

Section 6: Educational Program

School provides an educational plan that details how the school will meet the needs of all students through the expansion and will demonstrate high levels of success while maintaining its mission and Essential Terms.

1. Describe how the charter school will ensure that key elements of its program will be kept intact and/or strengthened for all students as it expands. The narrative should include:
 - a. A detailed examination of the school's mission and vision, pedagogy, and other practices to date, and a compelling rationale for why the school believes these practices have yielded strong student outcomes.
 - b. A detailed description of how the school will continue to implement and build upon these practices with all new and existing students.
2. Describe substantial changes that will take place as a result of the requested expansion. If decisions have not yet been made in certain areas listed below, please explain how and when decisions will be made.

Curriculum and Coursework

- a. If applicable, in a table organized by **each new grade level**, outline the course of study/ course offerings at the school. Include core academic subjects as well as special, elective, alternative, and other coursework.
- b. Provide a narrative that further explains the course of study and curriculum at the school. Include sufficient detail in areas of study that are specific to the mission of the school (for example, engineering, arts, etc.).
- c. Describe how any changes to the charter school's learning environment and pedagogy will ensure that your academic program is accessible and appropriate for all students at all levels. Changes may include, but are not limited to, classroom environment/structure and instructional methods/techniques.

Special Populations

- d. Describe how the school will accommodate different learning styles and meet the needs of all students for the new proposed grade levels.
- e. Detail plans to provide adequate numbers of qualified, in-field staff to meet the needs of exceptional students in alignment with state and federal requirements. If applicable, include information about the proposed contract model to employ staff, any secured agreements, or MOUs.

Assessment System

- f. Describe any changes to the school's comprehensive benchmark assessment system for the new proposed grade levels. The description should include the type of benchmark assessments that will be used by the school for the new grade levels, organized by content area, and frequency of administration.

Promotion and Graduation Policy

- g. Describe any changes or additions to the school's promotion and graduation policy for the new proposed grade levels. For schools expanding into high school for the first time, include school-specific graduation requirements and a draft graduation policy. The school must ensure all state graduation options are available to students beginning in the 9th grade and aligned to the [MDE's graduation requirements](#).

APPENDIX A

Journal of School Choice Charter School Models

Art: A curricular focus on the fine arts, music, performing, or visual arts. These schools infuse art into their core curriculum or treat art as a comprehensive subject much like English or math. An “Arts” school has a school-wide focus on the arts (fine arts, drama, dance, music, etc.). The school shouldn’t just offer above average extra-curriculum options. The arts should be a central focus of the school. Some schools may be “STEAM” schools (+Arts). Code these as both “STEM” & “Arts” only if there is strong evidence of a both a STEM and arts focus.

Career Technical Education (CTE)

A Career and Technical Education (CTE) school has a clear focus on preparing students to enter the workforce across a wide range of industries and occupations such as architecture and construction, health sciences, manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, technology, communications, and more. Students often earn industry certifications as part of their high school learning, and programs may include classes as well as apprenticeships, work study programs, etc. Often, these schools still have a focus on college attendance, e.g. part of the day students are in an internship and the rest of the day they attend class in a traditional college-prep model.

Civics: A curricular focus on law, economic justice, social justice, public policy, community engagement, or citizenship.

Classical: A curricular focus on traditional or classic texts, antiquity, Western heritage, Greek philosophy, or Latin. Many Classical schools also employ the Socratic method in the classroom and typically focus on the “trivium” or classical liberal arts (grammar, rhetoric, and logic). Older students may also learn the “quadrivium,” which is composed of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. Many classical schools also have a strong virtues-based curriculum based on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (Durkin, [Citation2014](#)). A “classical” school is a school rooted in the teachings of Plato, Socrates and other famous thinkers of western civilization. A classical school’s curriculum is rooted in the liberal arts (logic, rhetoric, etc.), and the curriculum often includes the study of Latin or Greek. You’ll often see the word classical in the school’s name.

Credit Recovery

A “credit recovery” or “alternative” school is a school that serves non-traditional students who are not well served in traditional school settings. Often, these student populations are “over-aged and under-credited” and need to regain credits to graduate on time or at all.

Cultural: A curricular focus on a particular cultural tradition. This is often, but not always, paired with language immersion. Cultural schools often serve indigenous populations, immigrant communities, or other diaspora. Culture-centric schools are designed to center the culture, history, heritage and experience of a particular cultural group. While open to students of all backgrounds they typically serve high percentages from the target cultural group, and staff typically reflect that group as well. Such schools may or may not have a language component to their programs. Examples include Afrocentric, Latino-centered, and Indigenous-centered schools.

Diverse by Design

A school that is “diverse by design” purposely promotes equality by ensuring that the school is racially, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse. There must be a sense of intentionality. These schools are making a conscious effort to improve diversity through recruitment, school design, etc.

Gifted Ed

A “gifted” school is one designed for academically gifted and talented students. The school may have an accelerated curriculum.

Special Ed

A special education school is designed for students with special needs and could be focused specifically on students with a particular disability such as autism spectrum disorder, deaf and hard of hearing, etc.

International Baccalaureate (IB): A curricular focus found around the world. Schools using this curriculum received certification or are in the process of certification to become an official IB schools (Organization, I.B., n.d.). They have six main subjects: language and literature, language acquisition, individuals and societies, sciences, mathematics, and the arts.

Language Immersion: A curricular focus on learning a second language. This is different from a school that offers a second language, in that there is a particular emphasis on the acquisition of the second language. Often referred to as “dual-language immersion,” this model typically teaches students in more than one language and may create a two-way immersion program whereby some students learn English while others learn the second language (Li, Steele, Slater, Bacon, & Miller, [Citation2016](#)).

These schools have as a central component a focus on developing multi-lingual learners. While immersion programs typically focus on native English speakers learning a new language (e.g., Chinese or Spanish), dual language or bilingual programs can focus on native speakers of a second language (e.g., Chinese or Spanish), native English speakers, and students who enter the school bilingual or multi-lingual. Content are instruction in these schools is typically in both languages (i.e., English and the second language).

Military: A curricular focus on military training, strategic warfare, advanced physical fitness through military drills, military history etc. In a “military” school, all or most students are involved in military training for part of the school day (beyond ROTC extra-curricular). Students often wear uniforms, but uniforms alone are not sufficient.

No Excuses

A “no excuses” school has high expectations for all students and the goal of 100% college attendance. There is usually an extended day and/or year with increased focus on ELA and math instruction. These schools often have a strict behavioral code with uniforms and highly structured rules and procedures (be advised that many schools have uniforms/extended school days, so you may have to look further to identify a no excuses school). There can also be a focus on a strong school culture, with reference to core values (“grit” “persistent”), parent/student/teacher contracts, and respect.

STEM: A curricular focus on the science, technology, engineering, and mathematic disciplines. A “STEM” school has a school-wide focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. The school shouldn’t just offer above average extra-curriculum options. STEM should be a central focus of the school. Some

schools may be “STEAM” schools (+Arts). Code these as both “STEM” & “Arts” only if there is strong evidence of a both a STEM and arts focus.

Single Sex

A “single sex” school is organized by sex, either across the school or in part of the school. This might apply to one group in a school, e.g., the middle school in single sex, but the high school is co-ed. This separation by sex can be voluntary.

Social Justice

These schools have a central focus on social justice, public policy, citizenship, civics, or law.

Alternative Pedagogy

Blended Learning: A pedagogical focus on technology enhanced learning. Blended learning is the integration of technology such as computers and tablets within a traditional brick-and mortar setting. Unlike hybrid for virtual schools, students attend a brick-and-mortar setting full-time.

Expeditionary Learning (EL): A pedagogical focus on learning through experiences. Expeditionary Learning shares similarities with Project-Based Learning but is unique in that students at EL schools learn through expeditions often called “voyages.” These expeditions often incorporate projects related to nature or to their surroundings. These expeditions and projects may be aligned with personal development goals or aim to teach students about the environment or community they live in.

Dual College Enrollment: A pedagogical focus where students take college courses while still in high school. These schools often partner with local colleges or universities and allow students to receive college credit or even associates degrees before they graduate.

High Expectations: A pedagogical focus on high academic rigor and behavioral expectations. Many schools formerly referred to as “No-Excuses” no longer use the term and instead embrace “high-expectations” for both academics and behavior. It is the combination of these two attributes that constitutes this focus.

Inquiry-Based Learning: A pedagogical focus that lets students explore material they find personally or socially interesting. While, many schools differ on the precise methods and degree of freedom, the distinction lies with an emphasis on allowing students to posit and discover answers to questions or inquires they may have. This is typically done with the help of teachers who serve as mediators or facilitators in the learning process (Levy, Thomas, Drago, & Rex, [Citation2013](#)).

Personalized Learning: A pedagogical focus that allows students to advance at their own pace rather than the pace of their class. The concept is one of individualized learning whereby students make progress based on their mastery of the subject.

Project-Based Learning: A pedagogical focus on teaching through projects. Students either independently, or in groups, work on creating and executing activities and projects that facilitate their learning (Craig & Marshall, [Citation2019](#)).

Montessori: A pedagogical focus that follow the methods of Maria Montessori. The Montessori method of teaching is well established in the literature and has notable features such as uninterrupted blocks of work time, classroom environments that foster exploration and discovery, self-directed learning, and mastery-based age groupings (Hiles, [Citation2018](#)).

Waldorf: A pedagogical focus that emphasizes stories and artistic expression over traditional direct instruction. Waldorf schools often have teachers follow student cohorts year to year and have less of an emphasis on testing, or more traditional forms of instruction. The focus is on creative expression, drawing, and stories (Hallam, Egan, & Kirkham, [Citation2016](#)). A school using one of these models as core and central to the school program, including teachers who are formally trained or certified to teach in these models. Additionally, the school facility, curriculum materials, school day, etc. are all consistent with one of these models, or a blending of these or other very similar approaches. These include multi-aged learning environments, student-driven learning, independent and group learning, projects, outdoor learning, etc.

Resources

[Arizona State Public Charter School Authority Amendment Policy](#)

[Charter Schools Nonregulatory Guidance](#)

[Central Michigan University Contract Amendment Checklist](#)

[Colorado Charter School Institute](#)

[D.C. Public Charter School Board](#)

[International Research and Reform Journal of School Choice](#)

[Minnesota Statute](#)

[National Association of Charter School Authorizers \(NACSA\) Qualifying as a High Performing Charter](#)

[New Jersey State Department of Education Charter Amendment Guidelines](#)

[North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Office of Charter Schools Amendment Process](#)

[Shelby County Schools Office of Charter Schools Petition for Amendment Application Process](#)

[Tennessee Quality Standards Toolkit](#)

[Texas Statute, Amendment Process, Charter Expansion Amendment Request, Non-Expansion Amendment Request](#)

[The Mayor's Office Indianapolis](#)

[Utah](#)