



## NORTH CAROLINA CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

# Discovery Charter School

**Public charter schools opening the fall of 2017**

**Due 5:00 pm EST, September 25, 2015**

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction  
NCDPI/Office of Charter Schools  
301 N. Wilmington Street  
Raleigh NC 27601-2825  
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Raleigh, NC 27699-6303

## **CHARTER SCHOOL**

### **2016 Application Process**

**To open a charter school in the 2017-2018 school year**

#### **APPLICATION DUE DATE/TIME**

**September 25, 2015** A complete **online** application package, in the Office of Charter Schools **by 5:00 pm EST.**

**\*Non-Refundable \$1000 Application fee due to the Office of Charter Schools\***

*Application Fee Payment Details can be found on the Office of Charter Schools Website*

#### **APPLICATION SPECIFICATIONS**

Applicants can submit applications prior to the deadline September 25, 2015 at 5:00 pm EST. **All applications must be submitted using the online portal** and applicants are to use the following specifications:

1. All required Appendices should be clearly titled, include page numbers (i.e. Appendix A and page numbers as- A1, A2, B1...), and submitted in the appropriate places within the application.
2. **Any** answer given within the application which is not original to the applicant, the applicant must provide a citation to the source of the answer.
3. Review all elements of your application for completeness before submitting. **An incomplete application will result in the elimination of the application.**
4. **Any** document attached to the application or within the online system **must be** in PDF format.
5. Late submissions **will not** be accepted. No exceptions.

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**I. APPLICATION CONTACT INFORMATION**

Name of proposed charter school: *Discovery Charter School*

Has the organization applied for 501(c)(3) non-profit status: *Yes No X*

Name of non-profit organization under which charter will be organized or operated: *Discovery Charter School Group*

Provide the name of the person who will serve as the primary contact for this Application. The primary contact will serve as the contact for follow-up, interviews, and notices regarding this Application.

Name of contact person: *Carl Forsyth*

Title/Relationship to nonprofit: *Board Chairperson*

Mailing address: 5025 Pine Way Dr.  
Durham NC 27712

Primary telephone: 919-812-4246 Alternative telephone: 919-810-6915

E-Mail address: *cforsyth@discoverycharterdurham.org*

Name of county and local education agency (LEA) in which charter school will reside:

County: *DURHAM*

LEA: *320-Durham Public Schools*

Was this application prepared with the assistance of a third party person or group?

No: *X*

Yes:

*Is this application a Conversion from a traditional public school or private school?*

No: *X*

Yes:

*Is this application being submitted as a replication of a current charter school model?*

No: *X*

Yes:

What is the name of the nonprofit organization that governs this charter school? *Discovery Charter School Group*

Is this application for Virtual charter school: Yes: No: *X*

**Grade Levels Served and Total Student Enrollment:**

Projected School Opening: Year *2017* Month *August*

*Will this school operate on a year round schedule?*

No: *X*

Yes:

*Proposed Grade Levels Served and Total Student Enrollment (5 Years)*

Academic School Year	Grade Levels	Total Projected Student Enrollment
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*The State Board of Education provides funds to charter schools, approves the original members of the boards of directors of the charter schools, has the authority to grant, supervise, and revoke charters, and demands full accountability from charter schools for school governance, operations, finances and student performance.*

*I certify that I have the authority to submit this application, that the initial board members and I were regularly involved in the development of this application, and that no part of this application is plagiarized. All information contained herein is complete and accurate. I realize that any misrepresentation will result in disqualification from the application process or revocation after award. I understand that incomplete applications will not be considered. The person named as the contact person for the application is so authorized to serve as the primary contact for this application on behalf of the non-profit organization.*

discoverydurham  
*Signature*

Board Vice Chairperson  
*Title*

discoverydurham  
*Printed Name*

09/19/2015  
*Date*

## II. MISSION and PURPOSES

(No more than three total pages in this section)

### **Mission:**

*State the Mission of the proposed charter school in **thirty-five words or less**. The mission statement defines the organization's purpose and primary objectives, describing why it exists. The mission statement provides the foundation for the entire proposal.*

*The mission statement of the proposed charter school is as follows:*

The mission of Discovery Charter School is to prepare students to be self-motivated lifelong independent and collaborative learners through a challenging STEAM-focused curriculum in an innovative and supportive environment.

*Clearly describe the mission of the proposed charter school:*

DCS will use a blended learning model of instruction to deliver a rigorous STEAM-focused curriculum taught by highly qualified teachers who receive ongoing professional development directly related to the school's mission. DCS students will be actively engaged in their learning and encouraged to take risks in a caring, safe environment. DCS will use innovative scheduling, unique building design, and a dedicated Passion Learning Time to drive student motivation, collaboration, and achievement.

### **Educational need and Targeted Student Population of the Proposed Charter School:**

- 1. Provide a description of Targeted Population in terms of demographics. In your description, include how this population will reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the school system in which it is located. Describe the rationale for selecting the location and student body.*

DCS will offer a unique STEAM-based curriculum. Currently, no STEAM-focused schools operate in either Person or Durham Counties which is the school's targeted area. Low- and high-achieving students will be attracted to the school by a curriculum that provides opportunities for differentiated learning and caters to students abilities and interests as they relate to STEAM topics. Real-world, student-driven learning opportunities will also appeal to both struggling and academically gifted learners from diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds. The prospective student population of DCS will likely reflect an average of the demographics of Durham Public Schools and Person County Schools. The average combined student population between Durham and Person Counties is 42% African-American, 35% White, 18% Hispanic, and 5% Other. Free and reduced lunch applications are at about 66% for each county, and EC students account for about 12% of students in each Durham and Person Counties. Discovery Charter may enroll slightly fewer EC students and students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch in earlier years due to limited initial resources, but DCS expects student population to be overall reflective of the Person and Durham County LEAs (see Appendix U1).

In addition to selecting an area that does not currently offer a STEAM-based

curriculum, the target area for DCS was strategically chosen based on several other key factors. First, the proposed location is central to other successful and completely enrolled charter schools with wait lists. Those schools are Roxboro Community School in Person County to the north, Voyager Academy in Durham County to the south, Orange Charter School in Orange County to the west, and Falls Lake Academy in Granville County to the east. Voyager Academy, for example, has historically had a wait list of approximately 200 to 400 students each year just for 6th grade. Combined current wait list numbers for grades 6th through 8th is approximately 600 students just between Voyager Academy in Durham and Roxboro Community School in Person County. The central location of Discovery Charter School would offer another option to families (see Appendix U2).

Population growth was another key factor in selecting a site location. The northern Durham County area is experiencing a growth in population with the addition of large developments. One such development is a unique farm-to-table neighborhood with 141 planned homesites in just Phase I that is scheduled to begin development in early 2016 near the proposed school location. Furthermore, US Census data shows the Durham County population grew 9% from 2010 to 2014, far outpacing the state average of 4% growth.

Finally, a location accessible from Highway 501 would allow convenience for commuters traveling daily from Person County to Durham for work opportunities. Highway 501 is the main corridor that connects Person County to Durham.

- 2. What will be the total projected enrollment at the charter school and what percentage of the Average Daily Membership (ADM) does that reflect when compared to the Local Education Agency (LEA) of the same offered grade levels? (i.e. If the proposed school will be grades 9-12, only compare the total enrollment to the total enrollment of the LEA is grades 9-12).*

The total projected enrollment of Discovery Charter School will be 480 students in grades 6th through 8th beginning in the school's fourth year. The total projected enrollment number of 480 represents 3.76% of the combined ADM for grades 6th through 8th of Durham Public Schools (DPS), Person County Schools (PCS), and combined charter schools in Person and Durham Counties. In the first three years, DCS will have a smaller enrollment number and therefore percentage of ADM will be less than 3.76%. The overall range expected is 2.62% to 3.76% of combined ADM for middle grades in Person and Durham Counties (see Appendix U1).

- 3. Explain how the charter school's education plan will compare to or differ from that of the local LEA(s).*

Discovery Charter School will use a blended learning model that emphasizes the use of technology for independent and collaborative learning opportunities focusing on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) subject areas. The STEAM curriculum combined with experiential and exploratory learning strategies will enhance student creativity and problem-solving skills resulting in real-world learning experiences. DCS will employ highly-qualified teachers and career professionals with backgrounds in STEAM-related fields. Furthermore, DCS aims to provide smaller class sizes of no more than 20 students once fully enrolled and emphasize the need for students, dedicated faculty, parents, and industry professionals working together as central to student success.

Currently, no STEAM programs operate in either Person or Durham Counties. Orange Charter School in Orange County to the west is a STEAM-based school and is currently grades K-8 with plans to grow to include high school. Orange Charter School is the only STEAM-based school in Durham, Person, Orange, and Granville Counties. Discovery has reached out to Orange Charter School as a potential partner for sharing resources including professional development opportunities for teachers and was well-received by their Board of Directors.

DCS's education plan has additional distinctive features. The plan includes Passion Learning Time (PLT) for all students in a collaborative and cross-grade level environment that is similar to that of Google's Genius Hour concept which allows engineers time to spend on their own interests. The facility will offer unique spaces for both teacher and student collaboration and include studio and lab space for digital and applied arts work done by students. All students will be required to maintain a digital portfolio of work, and each semester students will participate in Presentation of Learning (POL) events where they demonstrate skills learned and display their work. As a STEAM school, DCS will employ state-of-the-art technology including a computer lab, mobile devices for students, interactive whiteboards, and a 3D printer.

Unlike other local middle schools, DCS will mandate a uniform for all students. Uniforms promote equality among students and lessen disruptions particularly for middle school students. The DCS Board of Directors believes uniforms will support higher student achievement which is one of Discovery's primary goals.

DCS's education plan supports opportunities for students at the high school level in the districts. Students attracted to DCS for the unique learning opportunities it offers will leave DCS prepared for high school opportunities related to STEAM areas of study including, but not limited to, the following programs in the Durham and Person County LEAs:

- \* Riverside High School's Engineering Magnet Program
- \* Durham School of the Arts
- \* North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics
- \* The School for Creative Studies
- \* Hillside New Tech High School
- \* Southern School of Energy and Sustainability
- \* City of Medicine Academy
- \* Person County's Early College High School with a STEM focus (opening Fall 2016)
- \* Advanced Placement courses in Science and Math at any local high school
- \* Performance and Visual Arts programs at any local high school

4. *In the appendices (Appendix A1), you must provide evidence through a narrative or visual of this educational need through survey data, or times and locations of public meetings discussing this proposed charter school. (Please do not provide more than one sample survey form).*

**Purposes of the Proposed Charter School:** *In one page or less, describe how the proposed charter school will achieve one or more of the six legislated purposes, as specifically addressed in the NC charter school statute GS 115C-218, and the proposed school's operations.*

*The Six Legislative Purposes of a Charter School are:*

1. *Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunities to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.*
2. *Hold schools accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results.*
3. *Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system.*
4. *Improving student learning.*
5. *Increasing learning opportunities for all students, with a special emphasis on at-risk or gifted students.*
6. *Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.*

3. Provide parents and students with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system.

DCS will offer a unique educational opportunity within the community. DCS will use a blended learning model of instruction that encourages the use of online resources for differentiated and self-paced learning to deliver a challenging STEAM-focused curriculum emphasizing science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics integration. Currently, there are no STEAM programs in DCS's prime target market areas of Durham and Person Counties. Orange Charter School in Orange County is a STEAM school, and the DCS Board of Directors has reached out to Orange Charter for partnership opportunities.

As part of the challenging STEAM curriculum, students will learn how to be creative and use that creativity to problem-solve just as one would do in a real-world settings. Students will learn design skills and how they translate to other fields such as technology. Examples of projects students may do include the following: mobile-app development for a math game, using a 3D printer to print a prototype, using computer programming to wirelessly program a robot or RC car, and building a website showcasing knowledge learned. All DCS students will be required to maintain a longitudinal digital portfolio showcasing their skills and growth over their time at DCS.

The blended learning environment will allow for independent and collaborative learning opportunities. Technology will allow for collaboration with peers, teachers, and career professionals beyond the confines of the classroom. Frequent guest speakers and field trips, either physically or virtually, are integral to the curriculum and will be mandated. DCS teachers will work extensively with valuable local resources such as career professionals in the Research Triangle Park area to bring to life what students learn in the classroom.

DCS will further foster collaboration via space and schedule design. Another

unique educational opportunity offered by DCS is the incorporation of a scheduled time each day for all students to have a Passion Learning Time (PLT). During this time students from different grade levels will come together, and under the direction of a teacher with similar interests, students will have the time to work either independently or in small groups on learning of choice. Examples of learning students may choose to participate in during PLT time include participation in the National STEM Video Game Challenge, Science Olympiad, or songwriting.

DCS will also offer student clubs, athletics, free tutoring, and enrichment opportunities.

#### 4. Improving student learning.

DCS will offer small class sizes of 20 students, individualized student attention resulting from strong parent-teacher-student collaborations, and a STEAM curriculum delivered via a blended learning model and inquiry-based teaching strategies. This unique STEAM curriculum and delivery model will increase overall student achievement and better prepare students for their futures. Due to the recent addition of the "A" for arts to the STEM curriculum, a solid body of data about STEAM results is still being developed. Data supporting the importance of a STEM curriculum currently exists (see Appendix U3). In a 2008 report by the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. ranked 24th in science literacy and 28th in math literacy worldwide. In response to this growing need for homegrown STEM students, a federal cohesive strategy led by the Committee on STEM Education is investing millions of dollars each year to growing and sustaining student interest in STEM fields. As of 2015, the ACT high school test will add a separate STEM score. The STEM score will be derived from the math and science portions of the test and is meant to show college readiness for STEM subjects.

Students studying STEAM areas will have better employment opportunities post-graduation. According to the Department of Commerce, STEM-related jobs are expected to grow 17% from 2008 to 2018 which is nearly double the 9.3% rate of growth expected for non-STEM occupations. STEM workers also earn on average 26% more than their non-STEM counterparts.

Increased arts education has been shown to improve student learning. The University of Florida reports that students who take arts classes for four years in high school score on average 98 points higher on the SAT compared to students who take arts classes for half a year or less. The same study reports music appreciation students score 61 points higher on the verbal section and 42 points higher on the math sections of the SAT (see Appendix U3). Arts training also improves student ability to think creatively and abstractly which are necessary skills to innovate and problem solve, critical components of Discovery's curriculum. In a case study involving Loyola High School in California, teacher Craig Bouma integrated arts and music into the Physics First sequence of science and math curriculum using inquiry-based learning strategies. The results were a 150% increase in four-year science graduates, an increase in AP science enrollment from 33% to 50%, and improved standardized test scores. Students involved in the STEAM and inquiry-based curriculum scored higher on the Physics CST and an average of 21.4 points higher on the SAT than those students using the traditional curriculum.

Central to DCS's mission is not only a STEAM-focused curriculum but also the blended learning environment which has also been shown to improve student achievement. Blended learning environments offer self-paced learning that can easily be differentiated to meet student needs. These environments also offer students easy access to the growing number of quality online resources to support self-motivated student learning. In a 2014 article published by Tom Vander Ark, Vander Ark outlines how school districts utilizing a 1:1 laptop program have increased student scores on standardized tests. In Mooresville, NC students proficient on state tests in reading, math, and science jumped an astounding 20 points (68% to 88%) after the implementation of a 1:1 laptop program (see Appendix U4).

6. Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.

Learning will be student-driven using exploratory and experiential learning strategies. Central to the STEAM curriculum is cross-curricular connections rooted in student creativity and problem-solving skills. Students will be taught creative processes and shown how creativity and critical thinking are integral to finding solutions for real-world problems. Teachers will be trained on integration strategies and will be expected to vertically and horizontally align lesson plans within and between disciplines to increase student achievement.

DCS teachers will be facilitatorsof learning in a blended learning environment. A blended learning model will encourage students to be self-motivated independent and collaborative learners while simultaneously offering differentiated instruction. When compared to the traditional school model, less time will be spent in classrooms on traditional delivery models of instruction including lecturing and note-taking, and instead more time will be allotted to small group and individual instruction facilitated by the use of technology. DCS will ultimately have a 1:1 computer program which will grant access to the growing number of quality online instructional tools that allow for self-paced and differentiated instruction. Technology integration will also allow for inquiry-based learning and provide a tool for knowledge synthesis, expression, and real-time assessment. The use of digital resources will assist teachers in meeting students where they are and support DCS's inclusion model of instruction by highly-qualified teachers.

**Goals for the Proposed Charter School:**

1. *Provide specific and measurable goals for the proposed school for the first 5 years of operation outlining expectations for the proposed school's operations, academics, finance, and governance. Address how often, who, and when the information will be communicated to the governing board and other stakeholders.*

1 - Subject Level Competency

Objective: Students should score higher than state averages at every level on EOG and EOC tests every year.

Method of Demonstration: EOG and EOC Test Results

2 - Academic Progress via Benchmark Testing

Objective: All students should increase academic performance in core subjects indicating their progress by a national norm test each year.

Method of Demonstration: NWEA MAP benchmark testing administered in the fall, winter, and spring

### 3 - STEAM Participation

Objective: 100% of students will participate in Presentation of Learning (POL) events for STEAM-related projects during each semester. Also, 100% of students will take an arts and/or technology class each semester.

Method of Demonstration: Fall and Spring POL Events and student schedules

### 4 Student Digital Portfolios

Objective: 100% of students will create and maintain a digital portfolio showcasing work while at DCS each year

Method of Demonstration: Completed student portfolios. Students held accountable for their portfolios via grading and publishing such as on the school website.

### 5 - Student Behavior and Citizenship

Objective: Maintain a safe learning environment. Disruptive behavior should decrease from year-to-year, and student recognition for good citizenship should increase.

Method of Demonstration: Number of discipline incidents and number of positive student recognitions measured quarterly

### 6 Board Involvement

Objective: Board members will regularly attend meetings and receive Board governance training

Method of Demonstration: Monthly meeting minutes and documented attendance at Board training led by our Board Attorney, at charter school conferences, and/or by NC DPI for 100% of Board members annually

### 7 Financial Sustainability

Objective: Meet yearly budget projections ensuring a growing surplus and achieve satisfactory audits

Method of Demonstration: Monthly financial and audit reports

## *2. How will the governing board know that the proposed public charter school is working toward attaining their mission statement?*

Our governing Board of Directors will meet monthly at the school and use the following metrics to determine if the school is working towards attaining the mission statement.

#### \*Metric 1 - Growing Enrollment

The Board will annually review enrollment and application numbers with the goal of application numbers increasing each year.

#### \*Metric 2 - Academic Success

The Board will review EOG and EOC test results each year with the goal of having higher scores than state averages. Students will also be invited to Board meetings at least quarterly to present projects. The principal will report monthly on other student academic successes within the school including MAP data, POL events, etc. Board members will also be able to see student work prominently displayed throughout the school building when they attend the Board meetings.

\*Metric 3 - STEAM Attainment

Students will be invited to Board meetings at least quarterly to present projects related to STEAM. The Principal will report monthly on STEAM-related events at the school including Presentation of Learning (POL) and performance events. Board members will also be able to see student work prominently displayed throughout the school building when they attend the Board meetings. The Board will also annually review student high school choices and pathways with goals of seeing increasing number of students choosing STEAM-related school choices and pathways such as Durham School of the Arts and the Engineering pathway at Riverside High School also in Durham.

\*Metric 4 - Fiscal Performance

The Board will review the budget monthly to ensure the school is on track to meet projected targets with the goals of having a yearly balanced budget and run an increasing surplus from year-to-year. DCS will also meet all audit requirements.

\*Metric 5 - Staff Retention

The Board will review staff turnover yearly with the goal of having no more than a 10% staff turnover rate yearly (of full-time employees) and showing improved staff retention over time.

### III. EDUCATION PLAN

(No more than ten total pages in this section)

**NOTE:** *All sections of the Education Plan should align with all other sections of this application. The State Board of Education shall give priority consideration to the applicants who demonstrate potential for significant, meaningful innovation in education. Provide precise and clear explanations. Lack of response to any question or proper documentation will deem the application incomplete.*

#### **Instructional Program:**

Provide a detailed description of the overall instructional program of the proposed charter school, including major instructional methods, assessment strategies, and explain how this instructional program and model meet the needs of the targeted student population.

DCS is a STEAM-focused, blended learning middle school targeting creative and curious students of varying ability levels and socioeconomic backgrounds. The curriculum emphasis on STEAM subjects is supported by experiential and exploratory learning strategies. STEAM students are taught creative processes and abstract thinking that lead to higher level thinking and problem solving skills.

DCS teachers will be facilitators of learning in a blended learning environment. When compared to the traditional school model, less time will be spent in classrooms on traditional delivery models of instruction, and instead more time will be allotted to small group and individual instruction facilitated by the use of technology. DCS will have a 1:1 computer program to allow access to quality online instructional tools that allow for self-paced and differentiated instruction. In addition to providing a laptop to all students, DCS will also provide e-readers to students and promote their use in lieu of a traditional library setting.

Digital resources will assist teachers in meeting students where they are and support DCS's inclusion model of instruction. DCS's population will include a diverse socioeconomic and ethnic population reflective of the community. In order to differentiate learning based on varying ability levels and needs, DCS's blended learning model will offer online resources that meet students where they are and allow for student-driven learning. Teachers will receive multicultural and multisensory training in addition to PD related specifically to AIG, ELL, and "at risk" students.

DCS will offer unique scheduling that allows students the same time period each day known as Passion Learning Time (PLT) to pursue learning of choice to support DCS's mission of creating independent and collaborative learners. During PLT time students will move between grade levels and pair with the appropriate teachers and students with similar interests. Using digital resources and the teacher as facilitator, students will teach themselves either individually or in small groups about topics they are passionate about. This time is modeled in part after Google's Genius Hour concept. Examples of projects and learning programs students may participate in during PLT time include game design, foreign language learning, playwriting, and preparation for competitions such as Science Olympiad.

DCS teachers will incorporate real-world, hands-on learning in their

classrooms. Students will take frequent field trips (physically or virtually) to relevant places including local hubs of technology innovation such as Durham's American Underground. Guest speakers will also be integral to the academic program, and teachers are expected to invite guest speakers to lead class discussions and share knowledge regularly.

DCS will use the NC Accountability Model as a foundation for assessment and will include additional assessment strategies to support DCS's mission. In addition to state testing, DCS will use MAP benchmark testing administered three times yearly. Teachers will use formative assessments, classroom observation, and comprehensive rubrics for project work. Each semester students will participate in Presentation of Learning (POL) events where they showcase project work in classes including PLT time. Students will be required to maintain a digital portfolio of their work during their duration at DCS, and work will be published and presented in a variety of venues including online, in hallways, at Board meetings, and in the community.

DCS will offer advisory time to students in lieu of a traditional homeroom. Advisory time will be structured to offer academic and emotional support to students to promote positive behavior, relationships, and work habits. Advisory time will be used for team building activities, reviewing school expectations, citizenship activities, and other related exercises that foster a positive and collaborative school climate.

### **Curriculum and Instructional Design:**

*Describe the basic learning environment (e.g., classroom-based, independent study), including class size and structure for each grade span (i.e. elementary, middle, high) the school would ultimately serve.*

DCS will use a blended learning environment to incorporate a variety of online resources into small group and individual instruction to deliver a STEAM-focused curriculum. Teachers will serve as facilitators of learning, and learning will be student-driven and student-centered using exploratory and experiential learning strategies. DCS will offer smaller class sizes of 20 students (not to exceed 25 in the beginning years when enrollment is growing).

DCS's student schedule will also lend itself to cross-curricular connections and collaborative efforts between related classes. Instead of traditional language arts and social studies classes, students will take a humanities block each day that combines Common Core State and NC Essential Standards from language arts and social studies to create greater meaning and connections for students. Other blocks include a math/science block, a design tech block combining visual/digital arts and technology, and a performing arts block combining drama and music (see Appendix U5). The longer blocks of time in strategically designed flexible spacing allow teachers greater flexibility in their classroom design and offer more opportunity for student collaboration.

Essential to collaboration is space design. DCS will employ building design best practices when constructing the facility to promote a cross-curricular collaborative environment to support the school's mission. Modeled in part after High Tech High's innovative and award-winning building designs in San

Diego, California, DCS will use moveable walls, glass walls, and niche spaces with comfortable and flexible seating for small group collaboration (see Appendix U6). The facility design will also include a state-of-the-art technology lab and studio space for performing arts.

DCS will offer unique scheduling that allows all 6th through 8th grade students the same time period each day known as Passion Learning Time (PLT) to pursue passion projects and learning of choice to support DCS's mission of creating lifelong independent and collaborative learners. During PLT time students will move between grade levels and pair with the appropriate teachers and other students with similar interests. Using technology resources and the teacher as facilitator, students will teach themselves either individually or in small groups about topics they are passionate about. This time is modeled in part after Google's Genius Hour concept that allows engineers time each week to work on a project of choice and has resulted in major successes for Google including Gmail. Examples of projects and learning programs students may choose to participate in during PLT time include: game design (National STEM Video Game Challenge), Engineer your Life (a program for middle school girls), foreign language learning, playwriting or songwriting, and preparation for competitions such as Science Olympiad, Battle of the Books, Odyssey of the Mind, and chorus competitions.

DCS will offer advisory time to students in lieu of a traditional homeroom. Advisory time will be structured in a way to offer academic and emotional support to students to promote positive behavior, relationships, and work habits. Advisory time will be used for team building activities, reviewing school expectations, citizenship activities, and other related exercises that foster a positive and collaborative school climate.

Furthermore, because DCS's targeted student population will include a variety of ability levels and backgrounds, DCS students will wear a uniform. It is the belief of the Board of Directors that wearing a uniform will promote equality among students and lessen unnecessary disruptions to the learning environment.

Provide a synopsis of the planned curriculum, including:

1. *One sample curriculum outline (in graph form) in the Appendices (Appendix B) for one core subject (specific to the school's purpose) for each grade span (i.e. elementary, middle, high) the school would ultimately serve.*
2. *If you are proposing a high school, as Appendix B2, provide a visual disseminating what courses (core content and electives) will be offered at the charter high school to ensure students meet the proposed charter school's graduation requirements. Please ensure the projected staff and budget aligns with the course offerings.*
3. *Identify how this curriculum aligns with the proposed charter school's mission, targeted student population, and North Carolina Accountability Model.*

Discovery's curriculum is directly aligned to the mission statement. DCS will offer a STEAM curriculum delivered via a blended learning model and utilizing research-based experiential, inquiry-based learning strategies to improve student achievement. The curriculum includes independent and collaborative learning time driven by student interests, as well as a strong elective offering including technology and digital arts courses. Once full

enrollment is reached, DCS staff will include technology and arts integration specialists to support the STEAM curriculum. Field trips and guest speakers, particularly career professionals in STEAM-related fields in the community, are integral to curriculum delivery. All core content teachers will be highly-qualified, and all teachers will receive substantial professional development to support the school's mission and individual learner needs. The Passion Learning Time (PLT) each day using technology resources in a blended learning environment also supports DCS's mission to create lifelong self-motivated learners.

DCS's target student population will include a diverse socioeconomic and ethnic population reflective of the LEA and nearby Person County Schools. In order to differentiate learning based on varying ability levels and needs, DCS's blended learning model will offer a variety of online-based resources that meet students where they are and allow for student-driven learning with the goal of engaging all DCS students. Teachers will receive multicultural and multisensory training in addition to professional development related specifically to AIG, ELL, and "at risk" students in order to successfully teach the diverse student population expected at DCS.

DCS's curriculum will also align with the NC Accountability Model in that lessons will be planned in accordance to the Common Core State and NC Essential Standards to support student achievement on state-mandated EOG and EOC tests. DCS will also utilize an online progress monitoring system for assessment-driven instruction, the Response to Intervention framework, and parent involvement to further support student learning. Teachers will work with leadership to set goals for student achievement early in the school year and meet regularly to discuss progress based on benchmark testing and other performance assessments.

*4. Describe the primary instructional strategies that the school will expect teachers to master and explain why these strategies will result in increased academic achievement for the targeted student population for each grade span (i.e. elementary, middle, high) the school would ultimately serve.*

DCS teachers will be facilitators of learning and will meet students where they are to encourage students to be active participants in their own learning. To achieve this, DCS teachers will be expected to master differentiation and exploratory learning strategies. Teachers will be expected to differentiate content, processes of learning, and expectations based on individual student needs. Teachers will be expected to challenge all students using rubrics, evaluations, peer reviews, and higher-level questioning. As a STEAM school, teachers will also be trained in interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to learning to assist students in being collaborative learners and making real-world cross-curricular connections. Arts and technology integration across all subject areas is integral to the DCS curriculum. DCS will use an advisory model, and all teachers will also be expected to use the model to promote positive interactions between students and a school environment supportive of learning. DCS will target a diverse socioeconomic student population with a natural curiosity for STEAM subject areas, and these instructional strategies will help teachers reach all students and support student exploration of their curiosities.

5. *Explain how the proposed instructional plan and graduation requirements will ensure student readiness to transition from grade to grade and to the next grade span upon program completion.*

DCS will use the NC Accountability Model as a foundation for assessment and will include additional assessment strategies to support DCS's mission. In addition to state testing, DCS will use NWEA's MAP benchmark testing administered three times yearly to show student progress over time. Teachers will also use formative assessments, classroom observation, and well-designed comprehensive rubrics for project work. Each semester students will participate in Presentation of Learning (POL) events where they showcase project work in classes including PLT time. All students will be required to maintain a digital portfolio of their work during their duration at DCS, and work will be published and presented in a variety of venues including online, in hallways, at Board meetings, and throughout the community. Promotion from grade to grade will be based on a multitude of factors including but not limited to student achievement in the classroom, proficiency on state testing, and digital portfolio work. An intervention plan is in place (See "Special Programs" section) to ensure no student falls behind and all students are ready to transition to the next grade level.

6. *If you are proposing a high school, describe how the proposed charter school will meet the Future-Ready Core requirements. Provide details on how the students will earn credit hours and how grade-point averages will be calculated?*
7. *Provide a school academic calendar in Appendix C (minimum of 185 instructional days or 1,025 hours).*
8. *Describe in a brief narrative below on how the calendar coincides with the tenets of the proposed mission and education plan.*

DCS's calendar is designed to closely align with the LEA's traditional calendar and also takes into consideration the calendar of neighboring Person County Schools from which DCS will also attract students (the PCS calendar is similar to that of the LEA). In aligning with the LEA calendar, DCS will meet current parent expectations in an effort to help parents and students feel more comfortable making the transition to DCS. Also, because DCS is a middle school only, DCS must take into consideration parents who have children at multiple schools. By aligning with the LEA calendar, DCS will minimize hardships put on parents when their children are on different school schedules.

### **Special Programs and "At-Risk" Students**

1. *Describe the methods and clear systems of prevention and intervention teachers will utilize to provide assistance to students that are not performing at expected levels: ensuring continued progress and academic student growth.*

DCS will seek to prevent students from falling behind academically by quickly identifying students who need assistance and employing early intervention that is both intense and individualized within the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework. Early diagnosis of these "at risk" students (considered to be any student not meeting grade level expectations) will include on-going observations and frequent assessment such as MAP benchmark

testing by highly-qualified teachers. As part of RtI, general education teachers will screen students in their classrooms to identify struggling learners and apply the appropriate level of intervention to accelerate learning. The three tiers of intervention in order of increasing intensity are: Tier 1 - High-Quality Classroom Instruction, Screening, and Group Interventions; Tier 2 - Targeted Interventions; and Tier 3 - Intensive Interventions and Comprehensive Evaluation.

DCS will utilize the RtI framework as defined by the RtI Network and summarized below.

\*Tier 1: All students receive high-quality, scientifically based instruction provided by qualified personnel to ensure that their difficulties are not due to inadequate instruction. All students are screened on a periodic basis. Students identified as being "at risk" receive supplemental instruction during the school day in the regular classroom. Students not showing adequate progress are moved to Tier 2.

\*Tier 2: Students not making adequate progress in the regular classroom in Tier 1 are provided with increasingly intensive instruction matched to their needs on the basis of levels of performance and rates of progress. These services and interventions are provided in small-group settings in addition to instruction in the general curriculum. Students who continue to show too little progress at this level of intervention are then considered for more intensive interventions as part of Tier 3.

\*Tier 3: Students receive individualized, intensive interventions that target the student's skill deficits. Students who do not achieve the desired level of progress in response to these targeted interventions are then referred for a comprehensive evaluation and considered for eligibility for special education services.

DCS will offer the following intervention strategies depending on a student's appropriate tier level:

\*Differentiated instruction specific to student needs by highly-qualified teachers

\*Before and/or after school tutoring either individually or in a small group setting

\*Push-in instruction by the appropriate staff including EC teachers and instructional coaches within the general education classroom

\*Pull-out instruction in the event push-in instruction is insufficient. In pull-out instruction students will receive intensive instruction by EC teachers and/or qualified instructional coaches in areas of skill deficiencies.

Within these intervention strategies, DCS will use research-based computer adaptive and other resources such as Reading Eggs and Think Through Math to meet students where they are and help them progress. DCS will also actively involve parents in the intervention process early on to gain the support needed to keep students motivated both at school and at home. To further assist "at risk" students, DCS will offer exciting real-world opportunities of interest to students in an effort to achieve self-motivated lifelong independent and collaborative learners through PLT time.

Furthermore, teachers will create Progress Monitoring Plans (PMPs) for individual students requiring intervention. The PMP will use data to assess the current skill level of the child, outline an intervention strategy including type and frequency of interventions, and set goals for the intervention. PMPs will be signed by all relevant stakeholders including parents, teachers, and an administrator. PMP progress will be monitored and communicated to the parents regularly through parent conferences, email or phone calls to parents, and Parent Portal.

2. *Explain how the instructional plan and curriculum will meet the needs of English Language Learner (ELL) students, including the following:*

- a) *Methods for identifying ELL students.*
- b) *Specific instructional programs, practices, and strategies the school will employ to ensure academic success and equitable access to the core academic program for ELL students.*
- c) *Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of ELL students, including exiting students from ELL services.*

DCS will offer an English immersion delivery model program to English Language Learner (ELL) students with the goal of equipping these students for the necessary language skills to be successful in high school and beyond.

Students will be identified as ELL using the following process:

\*During enrollment families will be complete a Home Language Survey.

\*If English is not the primary language and/or if the student is foreign-born, the student will take the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) within 30 days of enrollment. Parents will be notified.

\*Any student who qualifies as ELL as evidenced by W-APT results will receive a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) and prescribed ELL program. The PLP will be created through a collaborative effort by the student, parents, teachers, and school counselor with the goal of helping the student meet the North Carolina English Language Proficiency Standards. Any student deemed Limited English Proficient based on testing results will re-test annually.

The ELL program will provide the following to the student:

\*Instructional strategies such as scaffolding and modifications by highly-qualified teachers that support English language growth and content knowledge

\*A minimum equal amount of instructional time and the same scope as sequence as the non-ELL students with the appropriate accommodations and modifications such as supplemental text, modified assignments, and other resources.

\*Age, grade level, and proficiency level appropriate English language development

\*Opportunities to learn English through speaking, listening, reading, and writing

\*Additional before and/or after school tutoring

Teachers will receive professional development related to working with ELL students and appropriately document the ELL strategies used in lesson plans, the PLP, and in the ELL program folder maintained by the school counselor. Although it is the school's goal to protect a student's Passion Learning

Time (PLT), if a student is not making successful gains using previously mentioned instructional strategies and interventions, the PLT time may be used for English language instruction via an online resource such as Rosetta Stone and facilitated by a teacher.

The W-APT will be administered again later in the student's first year and annually as needed moving forward. Once a student has passed the assessment and is deemed proficient, the student will exit the ELL program. Regular monitoring will continue by the general classroom teachers and in particular the language arts teacher. All monitoring documentation will be placed in the student's ELL folder. If a student is not making the intended progress, the student may be referred to an ELL Committee for further review. The ELL Committee will make the decision about whether or not to put a student back into an ELL program.

3. *Explain how the school will identify and meet the needs of intellectually gifted students, including the following:*
  - a) *Specific instructional programs, practices, strategies, and opportunities the school will employ or provide to enhance their abilities.*
  - b) *Plans for monitoring and evaluating the progress and success of intellectually gifted students.*

DCS will identify and serve academically or intellectually gifted (AIG) students as mandated by North Carolina legislation. AIG students will be identified using multiple criteria including but not limited to state testing, benchmark testing, classroom assessments, and research-based tests for giftedness. All screening and evaluation procedures will involve parents and adhere to NC AIG Standards. Students who are found to qualify as AIG will receive a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) that includes targeted and measurable goals for the student, appropriate instructional strategies, and current performance standards. The DEP can span up to three years and will be written at least once during a child's 6th through 8th grade career. The DEP along with any relevant data used in the screening and evaluation process such as test scores will be kept by the school counselor in an AIG Program folder. Students who come to DCS already identified AIG will be re-evaluated using the same criteria used for students not previously identified.

As with other students with special needs, DCS will utilize a "push-in" delivery model to provide services to AIG students. An example of differentiated instruction provided to AIG students is a special rubric for project work that includes a top tier "challenge" level above and beyond the standard rubric. DCS will employ highly qualified teachers and train them regularly on differentiation and other instructional strategies of benefit to AIG students. Furthermore, DCS will support and encourage AIG add-on licensure for teachers.

In addition to highly trained teachers who challenge AIG students in the regular classroom, DCS will offer other growth opportunities to AIG students. All AIG students will participate in PLT where students are given the opportunity to pursue learning that is of particular interest to the student such as a foreign language, advanced game design, or preparing for competitions such as Battle of the Books. As with all students participating in PLT, AIG students will also keep records of how they spend

their PLT on their digital portfolios and have the opportunity to present their work at Presentation of Learning (POL) events, at Board meetings, and at special events throughout the community.

### **Exceptional Children**

*The public charter school cannot deny admission to any child eligible for special education services as identified under the federal legislation Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), IDEA regulations, and Article 9 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes, North Carolina Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities. **All public schools are responsible for hiring licensed and 'highly qualified' special educators pursuant to law.** Public schools are required to provide a full continuum of services to meet the unique needs of ALL students with disabilities.*

#### **Identification and Records**

1. *Explain how you will identify students who are enrolled within the charter school that have previously been found to be eligible for special education services or are protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.*
2. *Provide the process for identifying students who may be eligible for special education services as identified in the federal 'Child Find' mandate. Be sure to include how student evaluations and assessments will be completed.*
3. *Provide a plan detailing how the records of students with disabilities and 504 Accommodation plans will be properly managed.*
  - a) *Requesting Records from previous schools*
  - b) *Record Confidentiality (on site)*
  - c) *Record Compliance (on site)*

DCS will follow all state and federal requirements for special education services to ensure all DCS students receive a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE).

To identify students who have previously been found eligible for special education services or are protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, DCS will:

\*Request complete documentation from the previous school and review for EC and/or 504 indicators. The school registrar is responsible for obtaining records and the EC teacher is responsible for reviewing records.

\*Request information from families as part of the enrollment process allowing families the opportunity to self-identify and provide previous copies of 504 or Individualized Education Program (IEP) documentation.

\*Use the Comprehensive Exceptional Children Accountability System (CECAS) which tracks EC student information across schools in NC.

The Child Find mandate is part of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and requires schools to locate and identify all children with disabilities. To identify students who may be eligible for special education services as identified in the federal Child Find mandate, DCS will adhere to the following identification and evaluation plan. Students may be referred to this team by a teacher or parent with the goal of helping to identify all students suspected of having a disability and requiring accommodations. The committee will monitor and track student performance using instructional

data and other forms of assessment and provide appropriate interventions using the RtI system. Intervention strategies will be regularly monitored and assessed. If intervention is deemed successful, the team will continue to monitor student progress.

If intervention is deemed unsuccessful and evidence exists to support a disability, the student will be referred for an evaluation in compliance with NC 1503 which governs evaluations and eligibility determinations. If written parental consent is obtained for an evaluation, the appropriate licensed professionals will conduct an evaluation. Evaluations will be comprehensive and include testing for all areas related to the suspected disability. As required, licensed professionals will be contracted to assist in the evaluation process. An eligibility meeting will be held once the evaluation process is complete.

Once evaluations are complete, a determination will be made by the IEP team as to whether or not the student requires specific EC services or a referral for a 504 Plan. This team includes at a minimum a parent, regular education teacher, EC teacher, and an LEA representative. Professionals whose services may be contracted based on student needs may also be included on the IEP team. If EC services are required, the student will receive an IEP written by the IEP team. If EC services are not required but accommodations are, the student will be considered for a 504 plan. The 504 committee will include at least the school counselor, a regular education teacher, and a parent.

Throughout the process, parents of students with disabilities will be provided written documentation of all procedures and processes. In the event a parent's native language is not English, DCS will work to provide the parent with the appropriate communication in the parent's native language.

DCS will follow FERPA requirements and state policies to ensure all IEP and 504 plans are kept in a separate and secure confidential file. Records from previous schools will be requested by the school registrar, and only authorized personnel will have access to these records including the student's teachers, EC staff, the counselor, and school administrators. All school employees will be trained on the importance of record confidentiality. Staff will receive training on NCDPI's Compliance Checklist and use it as an evaluation tool to ensure proper protocol when managing student records. Areas of non-compliance will be immediately corrected by DCS.

### Exceptional Children's Education Programming

- 1. Describe the educational programs, strategies, and additional supports the school will provide to ensure a full continuum of services for students with disabilities.*
- 2. Describe the methods and support systems that will be in place to ensure students with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).*
- 3. Describe how implementation of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be monitored and reported to the student, parents and relevant staff.*
- 4. Describe the proposed plan for providing related services.*

DCS will provide support to all students, including students with disabilities, who are not performing at grade level. Examples of support include supplementary resources, services, modifications, and/or accommodations. As determined by the IEP team, students with disabilities

needing special education and related services will be served in the general education classroom or in an EC classroom with consideration being given to the least restrictive environment. The separate EC setting is reserved for those students with more severe disabilities who are unable to be satisfactorily served with accommodations and services in the regular classroom.

DCS will use an inclusion, "push-in" model of instruction when appropriate, and teachers will be trained on best practice instructional strategies including differentiation, scaffolding, modeling, and guided practice to help students with disabilities achieve success in the classroom. Using classroom observation and assessments as well as benchmark MAP testing, general education teachers will collaborate with EC teachers to identify areas of weakness and provide the appropriate remediation and support. Additional instruction will take place during regular class time, before/after school tutoring, lunch or recess time, and although it is the goal of DCS to not have to interrupt a student's Passion Learning Time, this time is also available each day and will be used for remediation if deemed absolutely necessary. In addition to individual instruction, small group instruction will be provided by qualified instructional coaches and/or EC staff when needed. DCS will also employ research-based, proven intervention programs such as Reading Eggs and Think Through Math to assist with remediation, and student progress will be monitored regularly.

DCS will hire the appropriately qualified EC staff to ensure all federal and state requirements for caseload and class size are met. DCS will also contract with the appropriate certified and licensed professionals to ensure all specifications of a student's IEP are met. Contracted services will be determined by a student's IEP and include all necessary related services such as speech or occupational therapy. Training for EC and general education teachers will be provided regularly to better meet the needs of all students including those with disabilities.

DCS will ensure all students including those with disabilities have access to a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) as required by law. DCS will provide a full continuum of services to meet the needs of all students with disabilities. As outlined previously, DCS will follow a legally compliant process for identifying and evaluating students eligible for EC and related services. As determined by the IEP team, provisions will be made to students to ensure access to education and include, but is not limited to, assistive technology, an extended school year, and other requirements such as supplementary resources for extracurricular activities. Furthermore, staff will be trained on best practice instructional and discipline strategies for students with disabilities to ensure DCS meets all requirements for teaching and disciplining students with disabilities.

IEPs will be implemented by teachers and EC staff. EC personnel will keep records indicating proper delivery of services, and teachers and EC staff will work together to monitor student progress towards IEP goals. Teachers will be responsible for regularly communicating relevant data from the classroom such as observations, grades, and MAP testing results to IEP stakeholders including parents and EC staff. EC staff will be responsible for regularly communicating IEP expectations to the general education teachers. Parents will receive at least quarterly communication from the EC

staff regarding student achievement towards IEP goals. DCS will contract with the appropriate certified and licensed professionals to provide services to students with disabilities as determined by the IEP team. Examples of services include but are not limited to speech therapy, occupational therapy, psychology services, and social work services. All contracted services for the school year will be planned prior to the start of the school year so there is no gap in provisions to students due to lack of proper personnel. All service providers will maintain student confidentiality in accordance with FERPA and be required to maintain professional liability insurance. Contracted personnel will also be expected to participate in the student evaluation and monitoring phases of the IEP process including such tasks as attending IEP meetings and assisting in the development of the IEP.

### **Student Performance Standards**

1. *Describe the student performance standards for the school as a whole.*
2. *Explain the use of any evaluation tool or assessment that the proposed charter school will use in addition to any state or federally mandated tests. Describe how this data will be used to drive instruction and improve the curriculum over time for the benefit of students.*
3. *Explain the policies and standards for promoting students, including students with special needs, from one grade level to the next. Discuss how and when promotion criteria will be communicated to parents and students.*
4. *Provide the public charter school's exit standards for graduating **ALL** students. These standards should set forth what students in the **last grade served** will know and be able to do. Be sure to include plans for the "At-Risk" population.*

The NC Accountability Model will serve as a foundation for student performance standards. Additional performance standards are expected of all students unless otherwise specified in an Individualized Education Plan. DCS will utilize the following student performance standards:

- \*Higher than state averages on EOGs and EOCs
- \*All students increase academic performance continually in core subjects as measured by MAP testing
- \*STEAM Participation (Presentation of Learning event participation and participation in an arts or technology course each semester)
- \*Regularly maintain a digital portfolio
- \*Minimize discipline referrals and maximize positive student recognition
- \*Grades of 60 or better in class (60 representing a "D" using the 10 point grading scale)

In addition to state-mandated testing, DCS will use the following assessment measures to guide instruction: MAP testing administered three times a year, formative assessments, classroom observation, project work, rubrics, formal POL events, and digital portfolios.

Teachers will receive regular professional development on how to use assessment data to drive instruction. A Curriculum Committee consisting of teachers and leadership will regularly meet to analyze data school wide (prior year testing scores, MAP data, etc.) and use it to plan PD and improve curriculum over time. Furthermore, the principal and other qualified

personnel performing staff evaluations shall include student performance data in teacher evaluations and prioritize student performance results in evaluation meetings.

DCS will use the following promotion criteria and considerations:

\*A 60 or better (60 representing a "D" on the 10 point scale) in core classes and/or proficiency levels (Level III) on state assessments (after remediation in the event remediation is needed)

\*Other considerations will be given to student portfolios and classroom observations

\*Pursuant to North Carolina public school law, the school principal reserves the right to determine promotion eligibility in the event a student does not meet the first criterion stated above.

\*Unless otherwise stated in a student's IEP, EC students are held to the same promotion requirements as general education students.

\*Students will have the opportunity to take recovery coursework for credit in order to be promoted to the next grade level.

Promotion criteria will be communicated to parents in the Student-Parent Handbook. Teachers will maintain regular contact with parents regarding student progress. Examples of parent contact include but are not limited to email communication home, use of PowerSchool Parent Portal which notifies parents of student grades in real-time, parent-teacher conferences, parent participation in student Presentation of Learning (POL) events, and notification of MAP benchmark testing scores. Students who are not making needed progress and deemed "at risk" will receive a Progress Monitoring Plan (PMP) within the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework. At a minimum, the PMP will be updated quarterly, and all updates will be communicated to parents.

DCS will use the following exit standards for promoting all students from 8th grade. These standards represent the minimum knowledge and skill sets students will need prior to leaving DCS for high school.

\*Proficiency in math, reading, and science (grade 8) end-of-grade testing

\*A digital portfolio showing cognitive growth and STEAM-related connections in project work throughout the student's duration at DCS

\*"At risk" students will be expected to meet minimum proficiency requirements for EOG tests and will also have a basic portfolio requirement.

### **Student Conduct:**

*Provide a brief narrative that disseminates how student conduct will be governed at the proposed charter school and how this plan **aligns** with the overall mission and proposed Education Plan of the charter school.*

*Provide a draft copy of the student handbook specific to the proposed charter school within the appendices (Appendix D).*

*Be sure to include:*

- 1. Practices the school will use to promote effective discipline.*
- 2. A preliminary list and definitions of the offenses which may result in suspension or expulsion of*

*students.*

- 3. An explanation of how the school will take into account the rights of students with disabilities in regards to these actions that may or must lead to suspension and expulsion.*
- 4. Policies and procedures disseminating due process rights, including grievance procedures, for when a student is suspended or expelled.*

DCS will take steps to promote positive student behavior and effective discipline. DCS will provide a Student-Parent Handbook to all students and parents at the onset of the school year. The Handbook will include a Code of Conduct that teachers will review with students at the beginning of the school year. Students and parents will be asked to sign a form indicating they have read the Handbook including the Code of Conduct. Classroom teachers will use rubrics for team assignments that include a component for behavior and citizenship to promote effective teamwork and collaboration. DCS will also use an advisory model in lieu of traditional homeroom time. In advisory, students will do citizenship and team building exercises, as well as have class discussions surrounding positive student behavior and general respect for all fellow students and staff members. DCS will use a positive behavior support system where students are recognized and rewarded for good behavior.

The following is a preliminary list of offenses which may result in suspension or expulsion from DCS:

- \*Possession of dangerous objects, weapons, or facsimiles of weapons
- \*Possession or use of tobacco, narcotics, or alcohol
- \*Abuse or distribution of prescription or over-the-counter drugs
- \*Property damage
- \*Assault, threats, and harassment including bullying and cyberbullying
- \*Robbery, theft, or extortion
- \*Repeated disruptive behavior

DCS will follow all federal and state requirements with regards to disciplining students with disabilities. For students with disabilities who have behavior problems, the EC teacher and administrators will work to identify causes and functions of student behavior issues using a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and develop an appropriate Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) for students whose behavior interferes with their own learning or the learning of peers. The BIP will outline interventions including curriculum adaptations, modifications, and strategies such as positive behavior support to assist the student. Multiple disciplinary actions for a student with a disability will be addressed following all applicable state and federal laws including the Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities.

All due process rights, including grievance procedures for when a student is recommended for suspension or expelled, are outlined in the Student-Parent Handbook provided to parents and students at the beginning of the school year. The below steps summarize the grievance procedure found in the handbook:

1. A Good Faith Effort - An appeal is made in good faith to the appropriate staff member (usually the Assistant Principal for discipline issues resulting in suspension or expulsion) to contend a discipline action.

2. Appeal to the Principal - In the event a solution is not reached by making a good faith effort appeal to the Assistant Principal, an appeal may then be made to the Principal.

3. Appeal to the Board of Directors -In the event a solution is still not reached after appeal to school leadership, a student and his/her parents may then appeal to the Board of Directors to contend a discipline decision.

Prior to receiving a suspension or expulsion, parents will be notified and provided reasoning for the suspension or expulsion. In the event the parents are not native English-speakers, notification will be provided in a manner understood by the parents.

**IV. GOVERNANCE and CAPACITY**

(No more than ten total pages in this section)

**NOTE:** Please answer all sections completely. Do not use "same as LEA" or "whatever the law states". Lack of proper documentation could deem the application incomplete.

**Governance:**

**Private Nonprofit Corporation:**

\*The nonprofit corporation must be officially authorized by the NC Secretary of State upon application submission.

*Name of Private Nonprofit:* Discovery Charter School Group

*Mailing Address:* 3102 Red Mountain Rd

*City/State/Zip:* Rougemont NC 27572

*Street Address:*

*Phone:* 919-810-6915

*Fax:*

*Name of registered agent and address:*

Toni Shellady  
3102 Red Mountain Rd.  
Rougemont, NC 27572

**FEDERAL TAX ID:**

**Tax-Exempt Status 501 (c)(3)**

The private nonprofit listed as the responsible organization for the proposed charter school has received 501 (c)(3) status:

Yes (copy of letter from federal government attached: Appendix E)

X No

**NOTE:** If the non-profit organization has yet to obtain the 501(c)(3) status, the tax-exempt status must be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service within twenty-four (24) months of the date the Charter Application is given final approval.

**Governance and Organizational Structure of Private Non-Profit Organization:**

The private nonprofit corporation is the legal entity that has responsibility for all aspects of the proposed charter school. Its members should reflect the ability to operate a charter school from both business and education perspectives.

Please complete the table provided depicting the initial members of the nonprofit organization.

Board	Board	County/State	Current	Past or Present	Has any disciplinary
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Member Name	Title	of Residence	Occupation	Professional Licenses(s) Held	action been taken against any of these professional licenses?

**Please provide the following in this location of the APPLICATION:**

1. *A description of the governance structure of the proposed charter school, including the governing board's functions, primary duties, roles and responsibilities as it relates to overseeing the charter school. Include how the board will recruit, hire, and supervise the lead administrator.*

Governance of the school will be the direct responsibility of the Discovery Charter School Board of Directors. The Board's primary goal will be to increase student learning for all of its students. The Board will ensure that the school is in compliance with all laws governing charter schools in North Carolina.

The Board will be responsible for the overall operations of the school. This will include developing and maintaining a balanced budget, selecting outstanding personnel, overseeing a vibrant academic program, and creating and maintaining a safe, caring, and nurturing school environment.

The Board will be responsible for implementing the school's mission, philosophy, and values. The Board will develop policies that will enhance the school's mission, philosophy, and values. The Board will ensure that all policies and programs will reflect the educational mission of the school. The Board will be responsible for all legal and financial obligations of the school. This will include creating, approving, and maintaining a responsible school budget; reviewing monthly financial statements; and ensuring sufficient funds are available to meet the school's mission.

The Board will regularly review the overall academic performance of the school, monitor the school climate, and supervise the progress of meeting annual school goals. The Board will be responsible for strategic planning and updating school policies as needed. The Board will be responsible for ensuring that the school is complying with all state and federal laws and reporting requirements.

Leadership matters in the success of all schools. The Board has already identified our school leader. This person has had a long and distinguished career in education and many years of experience as an effective school leader. The school leader has prior experience as a teacher and administrator, has a strong understanding of and experience in successfully implementing a school's educational mission, has exceptional oral and written communication skills, has experience in implementing and maintaining a responsible school budget, and is well-respected in the local community. The lead administrator will be directly supervised by the Board of Directors and evaluated as described below.

Furthermore, the prospective school leader has been involved since day one in the planning of Discovery Charter School and has been an integral part of the development of the charter application.

2. *Describe the size, current and desired composition, powers, and duties of the governing board. Identify key skills, areas of expertise, and constituencies that will be represented on the governing board. Explain how this governance structure and composition will help ensure that*

*a) the school will be an educational and operational success; b) the board will evaluate the success of the school and school leader; and c) there will be active and effective representation of key stakeholders, including parents.*

The Board of Directors will consist of seven members. After the initial three years of the school's operation each member will serve a staggered three year term or until a successor is appointed. The powers of the Board will be broad and comprehensive in nature to ensure successful operation of the school. The duties of the Board will include regularly attending all Board meetings, actively contributing to the Board's decision making process, and voting on matters that are in the best interest of the school's mission and goals and not in one's personal interests. The Board officers will consist of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. The officers will be selected by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

The founding Board of Directors represent the local area and have expert experience in teaching, education administration in public and charter schools, finance, technology, and building construction. All members have a strong commitment to the mission of the school, to public schools, and to increasing student learning.

The structure and composition of the Board of Directors will ensure success through a well-defined organizational and decision making structure, effective school policies, open lines of communication between all stakeholders, clearly defined responsibilities, and the educational expertise of our Board members. Furthermore, our Board Chairperson successfully founded, opened, and led Voyager Academy Charter School for seven years.

The school principal will be formally evaluated yearly by the Board of Directors. The principal will complete a yearly Performance Measurement Plan (PMP) with no fewer than three and no more than five improvement SMART goals. The PMP will be submitted to and approved by the Board. The principal's PMP will be reviewed midyear by the full Board. At the end of the school year the principal will complete a self-assessment listing progress and completion of the PMP goals. The Board will review the self-assessment and evaluate the success of the PMP. The Board will determine if the principal exceeded expectations, met expectations, or did not meet expectations.

The Board will comply with the North Carolina Open Meetings law. The Board will post on the school website the yearly board meeting schedule with dates, times, agendas, and minutes of meetings. The Board will actively seek input by all stakeholders by providing a public comment period at the beginning of each Board meeting and by posting Board member email addresses. The Board will seek input from the faculty by asking the faculty to choose an ex-officio non-voting faculty member to attend Board meetings and interact with the Board.

A yearly Satisfaction Survey will be administered to all parents and students. The purpose of the survey is to evaluate school performance and to determine school strengths and weaknesses. The results will be used as an important tool to determine the success of meeting the school's mission and goals and will be used in strategic planning.

- 3. Explain the procedure by which the founding board members have been recruited and selected. If a position is vacant, how and on what timeline will new members be recruited and added to the board?*

The members of the founding Board have been meeting for the previous nine months planning a STEAM-themed educational program that is currently not available to students in the local area. Board members were identified and recruited based on each individual's commitment to improving student learning, empowering teachers, and building a strong school community. The Board has various and diverse areas of expertise that when blended together result in a strong, highly functioning Board. The genesis of creating the founding Board of Directors came from a grassroots effort to provide an innovative education program for middle school students that does not currently exist.

In the event of a Board vacancy, the vacant seat will be announced to the parents and to the local community. After a period of no less than two weeks and no more than four weeks, the Board will meet and fill the seat with a qualified candidate. The ideal candidate will reflect the ideals of the founding Board and will share a strong commitment to the school's mission and goals. The new member will serve out the remaining term of the previous member.

- 4. Outline below the strategic board calendar detailing how often the board will meet according to the bylaws established.*

The Board will meet no fewer than ten times each school year. The Board will meet on a monthly basis. The Board will schedule additional meetings as needed and publicly announce the dates of these meetings.

- 5. What kinds of orientation or training will new board members receive, and what kinds of ongoing professional development will existing board members receive? The plan for training and development should include a timetable, specific topics to be addressed, and requirements for participation (Board Policies Draft: Appendix J).*

The Board understands that new member training is critical to the long term success of our school. High quality orientation of new Board members will ensure the continuity of the school's mission and goals. Our Board attorney will meet with new Board members and will review with them the school's Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, the charter application, the minutes of previous meetings, and the current financial update. They will also receive governance training and related training on various topics as determined by the current Board and the school attorney. New Board members and current Board members will also attend workshops offered by the Office of Charter Schools. The new member training sessions that are conducted by our Board attorney will also be open for current Board members.

Founding Board members will receive training beginning in August of 2016 and will continue the training monthly until the school opens in August 2017. The topics covered will include the role of the Board, drafting Board policy, North Carolina charter school law, review of the Open Meetings Law, understanding the monthly financial statement, parliamentary procedure, establishing Board policies, strategic planning, and other topics that are deemed important by the Board and the Board attorney including STEAM awareness training. Board members will also receive governance training and training offered by the Office of Charter Schools beginning immediately after approval of the application.

- 6. Describe the board's ethical standards and procedures for identifying and addressing conflicts of interest. Identify any existing relationships that could pose actual or perceived conflicts if the application is approved; discuss specific steps that the board will take to avoid any actual conflicts and to mitigate perceived conflicts.*

The Board of Directors will comply with all state and federal laws that govern conflict of interest issues that apply to non-profit organizations. Specifically, the Board will require each member to comply with the guidelines set out by Section 55A-8-31 of the North Carolina General Statutes. A Board member will be required to inform the full Board of any potential conflict of interest when there is any transaction or decision that the Board is discussing or scheduled to vote upon. A Board member conflict of interest shall exist in instances including but not limited to when a Board member has a material financial interest or if the Board member is serving as an officer, general partner, trustee, or director of the organization or business being discussed. The Board member with the conflict of interest may participate in the discussion, but will be ineligible to vote on the decision or transaction. The vote will take place by the remaining Board members with no conflict of interest.

The Board of Directors will conduct itself with only the highest standards of moral and ethical standards. To ensure the compliance the Board will follow the guidelines set forth by the North Carolina School Boards Association.

Furthermore, each board member will be required to sign a Conflict of Interest statement that will require each member to disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

There are no current relationships that pose an actual or perceived financial conflict of interest within the Board of Directors. Two Board members are sister and brother-in-law, but have worked with Board attorney David Hostetler to ensure Discovery complies with all legal requirements regarding the Conflict of Interest policy. The Board members will have no financial interest in the school. (See Appendix H1 for the Board's detailed Conflict of Interest policy.)

- 7. Explain the decision-making processes the board will use to develop school policies.*

The Board of Directors are committed to an open and transparent decision making process. The Board will seek input from all stakeholders when developing school policies. In making policy decisions, the Board will rely heavily on the advice of our Board attorney to ensure that the policy being considered meets all state and federal guidelines. The Board will also involve the faculty, school administration, School Improvement Team, and parents when establishing school policies.

The Board will follow best practices when developing school policies. This will include examining the effectiveness of teacher professional development, ensuring high student expectations, maintaining a safe, nurturing and caring school climate, and by reviewing school accountability data to ensure that instruction is data driven.

- 8. Describe any advisory bodies, councils, or associations listed in the organization chart or to be formed, including the roles and duties of that body, and the reporting structure as it relates to the school's governing body and leadership.*

In year one of the school's operation, DCS does not plan to establish any formal advisory bodies, councils, or associations other than the creation of a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). As the school grows, DCS will add a School Improvement Team and a Leadership Team. The School Improvement Team (SIT) will consist of the parents, students, and teachers. The primary role of the SIT is to advise the principal in strategic planning. The Leadership Team will consist of administrators and grade-level teacher representatives, and their primary role will be to advise the principal in all areas of school life.

Even though the PTA will operate as a separate non-profit to support the schools mission, it is the Board's intention in year one to work closely with the PTA to build a positive school culture, to ensure that parents have a voice in school decisions, and to communicate with parents that their input and participation is vital to the success of the school.

*9. Discuss the school's grievance process for parents and staff members.*

The Discovery Board of Directors has established the following grievance policy for students and parents:

Step One: In the event of a disagreement involving a student's academic performance or long-term suspension, the student or parent/guardian must try to resolve the disagreement by meeting with the appropriate staff members to identify the problem, suggest possible solutions, agree on a timeline for implementation, and outline a follow-up plan. A written plan of the good faith effort must be given to the principal.

Step Two: If the good faith effort is unsuccessful, the student or parents/guardians may submit a grievance in writing to the principal within five (5) working days. The principal will schedule a hearing at a mutually convenient time and place for discussion of the grievance with all parties involved. The principal will set a date for a meeting within five (5) working days.

Step Three: If the student or parents/guardians wish to appeal the principal's decision, the next step is to submit a request for an appeal to the Board of Directors within five (5) working days of the principal's decision. After receiving an appeal request, the Board will schedule a meeting to consider the appeal as soon as is practical. Board members with a conflict of interest, as defined in the Bylaws, shall excuse themselves from participating in the hearing.

For cases that involve long-term suspension, appeals must be submitted to the Board of Directors within two (2) days of the student's dismissal. The suspension will remain in place until the Board of Directors meets and reviews the appeal.

The decision of the Board of Directors is final and may not be appealed.

The student disciplinary matters that may be appealed to the Board are those taken under N.C. General Statute 115C-390.7, 115C390.10 or 115-390.11.

The Discovery Board of Directors has established the following grievance policy for staff members:

In the event of a dispute involving employment or the implementation of the personnel policies and after a good faith effort with the supervisor to thoroughly resolve the dispute, all employees may submit their complaint following the procedures outlined below. Such effort will include identification of the problem, possible solutions, selection of resolution, timeline for implementation, and follow-up. A written summary of the good faith effort will be included in the personnel file.

Failure to follow the procedures and timelines below constitutes a waiver of the employee's right to grieve.

1. The employee may submit his/her grievance in writing with the principal within five (5) days of a failed good faith effort to resolve the dispute.

2. Within five (5) working days of receipt of the written complaint, the principal shall schedule a hearing at a mutually convenient time and place for discussion of the complaint with all parties involved, to be held no later than twenty (20) days after receipt of the written complaint and after notification to the employee.

3. The decision of the principal shall be final unless appealed by the employee to the Board of Directors which may review and modify the decision of the principal if it finds that the principal failed to properly follow the grievance process described above. A request for an appeal may be submitted to the Chairperson of the Board within five (5) days of the decision of the principal. After receiving an appeal request, the Chairperson shall schedule a meeting to consider such an appeal as soon as practical. Board members with a conflict of interest, as defined in the Bylaws, shall excuse themselves from reviews of the principal's action. Any such proceedings shall be conducted in closed session unless requested otherwise by the employee.

The decision of the Board of Director's is final and cannot be appealed.

### Governance and Organizational Structure of Private Non-Profit Organization (continued)

#### Include in the Appendices:

1. *A well-defined organizational chart showing the relationship of the Board of Directors to the parents and staff of the proposed charter school. This chart should also include lines of authority to and from any outside entity that will play a role in managing or supporting the charter school (such as educational service providers, advisory bodies or parent/teacher councils). (Appendix F)*
2. *A one-page resume from each founding board member and responses to the questions found on the Charter School Board Member Form (Appendix G).*
3. *The proposed by-laws, which must include a Conflict of Interest Policy for board members and a stated commitment to the NC Open Meetings Law (Appendix H).*
4. *A copy of the articles of incorporation from the NC Department of the Secretary of State. (Appendix I)*
5. *Copy of any board policies if adopted already (Appendix J).*
6. *Copies of meeting minutes (if available), relevant to the development of the charter school plan, during the application process (Appendix K).*

### Proposed Management Organization (Educational Management Organization or Charter Management Organization)

*If the proposed school does not intend to contract with an education service provider, mark "Not Applicable" and follow the direction #3 in the Application Specifications.*

**X Not Applicable**

**Private School Conversions:** *complete ONLY if the proposed charter is a private school conversion. Otherwise, mark "Not Applicable" and follow the direction #3 in the Application Specifications.*

**X Not Applicable**

**Charter School Replication:** *complete ONLY if the proposed charter is a replication of an existing charter school. Otherwise, mark "Not Applicable" and follow the direction #3 in the Application Specifications. Understand that the replication means that a new charter school will be governed separately from the charter school the application is modeled after.*

**X Not Applicable**

### **Projected Staff:**

Outline below, a list of positions anticipated for the charter school; (e.g., principal or director; finance officer, administrative support staff; teachers (part-time and full-time); paraprofessionals/teaching assistants, clerical, and maintenance.). Be mindful that your predicted administration and staff match the projected enrollment noted in Section I, course offerings and align with the proposed budget.

The following are anticipated positions beginning year one (200 students). Personnel will be added as enrollment increases each year until year four at which time Discovery will be at its full capacity of 480 students.

Year 1 (200 students)

Full-Time Staff:

8 Core Teachers

1 Principal

1 Counselor

1 Admin Assistant

1 EC Teacher

1 PE/AD

1 Tech Facilitator and Teacher

1 Arts Integration Specialist and Music Teacher

Part-Time Staff:

1 PT Visual/Digital Arts Teacher

1 PT Drama Teacher

Other Contracted Services:

Finance Officer

Bus Drivers

Custodial Staff

Substitutes

Year 2 (360 students)

Full-Time Staff:

16 Core Teachers

- 1 Principal
- 1 AP
- 1 Counselor
- 1 Secretary
- 1 Admin Assistant/Registrar
- 2 EC Teachers
- 1 PE Teacher/Athletic Director
- 1 Tech Facilitator and Teacher
- 1 Arts Integration Specialist and Music Teacher
- 1 Visual/Digital Arts Teacher
- 1 Drama Teacher

Part-Time Staff:  
(none)

Other Contracted Services:  
Finance Officer  
Bus Drivers  
Custodial Staff  
Substitutes

Year 3 (420 Students)

- Full-Time Staff:
- 20 Core Teachers
  - 1 Principal
  - 1 AP
  - 1 Counselor
  - 1 Secretary
  - 1 Admin Assistant/Registrar
  - 3 EC Teachers
  - 1 PE Teacher/Athletic Director
  - 1 PE Teacher
  - 1 Curriculum Director/Tech Facilitator
  - 1 Tech/Engineering Teacher
  - 1 Visual/Digital Arts Teacher
  - 1 Music Teacher/Arts Integration Specialist
  - 1 Drama Teacher
  - 1 IT Support Technician

Part-Time Staff:  
(none)

Other Contracted Services:  
Finance Officer  
Bus Drivers  
Custodial Staff  
Substitutes

Years 4 and 5 (480 students)

- Full-Time Staff:
- 24 Core Teachers

1 Principal  
1 AP  
1 Counselor  
1 Secretary  
1 Admin Assistant/Registrar  
3 EC Staff  
1 PE Teacher/Athletic Director  
1 PE Teacher  
1 Dance Teacher  
1 Curriculum Director/Tech Facilitator  
1 Tech/Engineering Teacher  
1 Visual/Digital Arts Teacher  
1 Music Teacher  
1 Arts Integration Specialist  
1 Drama Teacher  
1 IT Support Technician

Part-Time Staff:  
(none)

Other Contracted Services:  
Finance Officer  
Bus Drivers  
Custodial Staff  
Substitutes

### **Staffing Plans, Hiring, and Management**

Include the following information for the proposed charter school:

Discovery Charter will follow non-discriminatory personnel procedures for hiring and termination, complying with State laws and the NCLB Act. The heart of the school is quality teachers. The hiring of staff is the most important task of administration and as such Discovery will actively pursue recruiting the highest qualified candidates available. Positions will be posted on the school website, social media, and made known to Universities in the surrounding area. The Board will hire the principal who will be ultimately responsible for the hiring of the staff. Key staff will work collaboratively with the principal to interview candidates after the first year. A committee will meet with prospective candidates and submit finalists to be interviewed by the principal who will make the final determination. All employees of Discovery are "at will" and will be retained (or terminated) annually.

2. *Provide a description of the relationship that will exist between the charter school employees and the nonprofit board. Provide as Appendix O, a draft of the employment policies to be implemented by the proposed charter school.*

All employees work for the Board of Discovery Charter and are hired and terminated based on the recommendation of the principal. It is the responsibility of the Board to set policies which the Administration will execute. The principal serves at the pleasure of the Board. The principal is responsible for the supervision and evaluation of employees.

4. *Outline the board's procedures for hiring and dismissing school personnel, including conducting criminal background checks.*

Vacant positions will be advertised and a pool of applicants will be assembled by a selection committee to interview. Applicants for core subjects shall be licensed or eligible for licensure, and all core teachers will work toward licensure if they do not possess a valid license at the time of recommendation for hiring. The committee will select a minimum of two finalists who will be interviewed by the Administration. The principal shall check three references before recommending a candidate to the Board. The Board will require a candidate be checked for criminal history as stated in G.S. 115C-332 before a contract is signed. Discovery employees are "at will" employees and as such may be non-renewed at the end of the year without cause. Similarly, employees may decline to continue in their position the following year. Dismissal before the end of the contract year for poor performance is only as a last resort after the principal has counseled the employee and provided substantive feedback and support as evidenced by a written Plan of Action for improvement. Violations of laws and policies pertinent to employment are cause for immediate dismissal (drug/alcohol use, criminal activity, etc.).

*5. Outline the school's proposed salary range and employment benefits for all levels of employment.*

Discovery Charter School will offer salaries aligned with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) pay scale. For budgetary purposes the school is using an average salary of \$40,000 not including benefits. Part-time and contracted staff is budgeted at \$15 to \$30 per hour depending on the position. Full-time staff will have the opportunity to participate in the State Retirement System and the State Health Plan. Annual and sick leave will be offered to all full-time employees and accrued at a rate comparable to the LEA.

*6. Provide the procedures for employee grievance and/or termination.*

In the event of a dispute involving employment or the implementation of the personnel policies and after a good faith effort with the supervisor to thoroughly resolve the dispute, all employees may submit their complaint following the procedures outlined below. Such effort will include identification of the problem, possible solutions, selection of resolution, timeline for implementation, and follow-up. A written summary of the good faith effort will be included in the personnel file.

Failure to follow the procedures and timelines below constitutes a waiver of the employee's right to grieve.

1. The employee may submit the grievance in writing with the principal within 5 days of a failed good faith effort to resolve the dispute.

2. Within 5 working days of receipt of the written complaint, the principal shall schedule a hearing at a mutually convenient time and place for discussion of the complaint with all parties involved, to be held no later than 20 days after receipt of the written complaint and after notification to the employee.

3. The decision of the principal shall be final unless appealed by the employee to the Board which may review and modify the decision of the principal if it finds that the principal failed to properly follow the grievance process described above. A request for an appeal may be submitted to the Chairperson of the Board within 5 days of the decision of the

principal. After receiving an appeal request, the Chairperson shall schedule a meeting to consider such an appeal as soon as practical. Any such proceedings shall be conducted in closed session. The decision of the Board of Director's is final and cannot be appealed.

Dismissal before the end of the contract year for poor performance is only as a last resort after the principal has counseled the employee and provided substantive feedback and support as evidenced by a written Plan of Action.

*7. Identify any positions that will have dual responsibilities (within or without the organization) and the funding source for each position.*

Potentially custodial workers may also serve as bus drivers. The Athletic Director will also teach physical education. The Technology Facilitator and Arts Integration Specialist may also teach a technology or arts class respectively. The Curriculum Director may also be responsible for technology services if qualified. The School Counselor will manage AIG services. Funding is expected to be derived from local LEAs, the State of North Carolina, and the Federal Government.

*8. Describe the plans to have qualified staffing adequate for the anticipated special needs population, means for providing qualified staffing for ELL and gifted students.*

Discovery Charter School will have one certified Exceptional Childrens (EC) teacher before opening and will add an additional EC teacher each year if needed up to a total of three certified EC teachers (one per grade level). The school will make every effort to hire qualified teachers already licensed in AIG. DCS will encourage teachers to earn ELL and AIG add-on licensure. Professional development will be offered for the entire staff in differentiation to meet needs of AIG, ELL, and "at-risk" students.

*9. Provide a narrative detailing the roles and responsibilities, qualifications and appropriate licenses that each position must have to be hired by the non-profit organization and effectively perform the job function(s).*

The Principal is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the school and serves at the pleasure of the Board. He is responsible for maintaining an environment that is safe, orderly and conducive to teaching and learning, as well as following all laws mandated in G.S. 115C-288, G.S 115C-118, and other pertinent State and Federal laws. His priority at DCS is to advance learning and foster student achievement and growth. The Principal will work collaboratively with all stakeholders to build a strong learning community. He will report to the Board monthly on the state of the school. The Principal shall have a Master's degree in Educational Leadership and a minimum of five years teaching experience.

The Assistant Principal will assist the Principal in all administrative leadership duties and shall be qualified to serve as Principal in his absence.

The School Counselor will work together with the Principal (and Assistant Principal) as a part of the school leadership. The counselor's role is primarily focused on student advocacy. In addition to providing counseling services, the counselor supervises student 504 plans, assists with schedule and the scheduling of students, facilitates parent conferences, and works with administration in developing PD particularly related to ELL, AIG and RtI. Qualifications for counselor include appropriate licensure, master's degree, and experience in the classroom as well as a school counselor.

The EC facilitator / teacher will ensure that services to students with IEPs will be met and that Discovery Charter complies with all State and Federal laws relative to IDEA and related acts. This position requires certification and licensure as an EC teacher, as well as a master's degree, and related experience.

The Curriculum Director / Technology Facilitator is responsible for assisting teachers in aligning appropriate resources and assessment instruments to curriculum objectives. This person will suggest methods of integrating instruction across grade levels to support the school's STEAM-focused curriculum and will collaborate with the principal to arrange professional development supportive of teacher needs and the school's mission. This person will work with students and staff to support cross-curricular technology integration in the classroom and will collaborate with the principal and IT support to plan and purchase technology needs to support the school's mission. This person is also responsible for keeping up with emerging trends and best practices related to technology planning and implementation to support student achievement.

The Arts Integration Specialist will work with the schools leadership team to implement and evaluate arts integrated lessons into the STEAM curriculum. Responsibilities will include: participation in planning of PD for the staff to ensure quality of arts integration, assessment, and curriculum mapping; creating an awareness for the arts programs in the DCS community and beyond; networking with artists and other arts programs in the area; working directly with parents to support the arts; acting as a resource person for the faculty; and supporting arts-related cross-curricular activities. The Arts Integration Specialist will have the appropriate valid licensure, experience in the classroom and in the arts, and experience collaborating with teachers in a facilitator role.

Teachers are responsible for delivering appropriate instruction that follows the NCSCOS, guiding the learning of their students, ensuring the safety of their students, and following the program outlined by Discovery that results in student achievement. Additionally teachers are required to adhere to all State and Federal laws related to the performance of their duties as outlined in, but not limited to, G.S 115C-307. Teachers will communicate regularly with parents on the progress of their students.

### **Staff Evaluation and Professional Development**

1. *Identify the positions responsible for maintaining teacher licensure requirements and professional development.*

Core teachers will be required to maintain a valid NC teaching license. All full-time teachers are responsible for attending required PD and maintaining their PD records. The principal will ensure teachers are compliant with licensure requirements.

2. *Provide a detailed plan noting how the school will mentor, retain, and evaluate staff in a format that matches the school's mission, educational program, and meet the teacher certification and licensure requirements for teachers as prescribed by state law and No Child Left Behind. Be sure this overview matches with the projected staff and funding of the proposed budget section.*

Teachers will be formally observed and evaluated employing the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES) system by the Principal and Assistant Principal. Additionally, informal walk-through observations will be routine practice. Administrators will use opportunities to dialogue with

teachers to mentor and coach them shortly after classroom visits to instill a climate of professionalism and collegiality. Peer observations are encouraged as well and feedback will be shared in Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. Staff will work independently and collaboratively on professional development plans as a part of NCEES. Beginning teachers with three years or less experience will be paired with a qualified mentor, and both mentee and mentor will participate in a structured mentor program. Furthermore it is a goal of the school as outlined in the "Mission and Purposes" section to have no more than a 10% staff turnover rate yearly of full-time employees and show improved staff retention over time. As such, DCS administrators, designated peer teachers, and the Curriculum Director will work with employees showing less than desirable performance to provide substantive feedback and support. If necessary, the principal will implement a Plan of Action for improvement.

3. *Describe the core components of professional development plan and how these components will support effective implementation of the educational program. Describe the extent to which professional development will be conducted internally or externally and will be individualized or uniform.*

Monday afternoons are set aside expressly for professional development. Students will be released two hours early each Monday to allow for intensive collaboration and/or study. The two hour time set aside Monday afternoons for PD is also utilized by Voyager Academy in Durham. A unique feature of Discovery Charter will be the collaborative approach to PD with other charter schools in the area. Discovery intends to partner with Voyager Academy and Orange Charter School, as well as other potential local charters, to provide high quality professional development opportunities for staff members at all schools. DCS Board members have presented to Voyager's and Orange Charter's Board of Directors about potential partnership opportunities particularly with regards to professional development and was well-received by both Boards. Orange Charter is also a STEAM school. Together, DCS and Orange Charter can devise plans focusing on STEAM components that will enhance the instructional programs at each school. Emphasis will also be placed on AIG training and differentiation. Continuous training in technology will be a feature as Discovery will utilize a 1:1 laptop model for curriculum delivery. Professional development related to arts and technology integration as well as differentiation will be mandated for all staff; however, other opportunities will exist for staff to tailor PD to their own unique interests and needs. DCS will use staff members such as the Technology Facilitator and Arts Integration Specialist to deliver some PD but will also outsource PD when needed.

4. *Provide a schedule and explanation of professional development that will take place prior to school opening. Explain what will be covered during this induction period and how teachers will be prepared to deliver any unique or particularly challenging aspects of the curriculum and instructional methods.*

Teachers will report to school five days prior to students' first day of school. Extensive staff development focused on STEAM training will be offered as well as one-to-one computer training and explanations of "systems" such as PowerSchool and Google Docs. The latter training may be individualized as teachers will arrive with a variety of familiarity and expertise. Throughout the year teachers at Discovery will make extensive use of online opportunities for staff development such as webinars and Edivate. Teachers will also receive basic training in the advisory model with plans to do more training throughout the year. For teachers who wish to lesson

plan and prepare over the summer, online resources such as toolkits and webinars available from Education Closet, a STEAM resource, and other relevant resources will be provided to jumpstart their professional development and understanding of DCSs expectations.

5. Describe the expected number of days/hours for professional development throughout the school year, and explain how the school's calendar, daily schedule, and staffing structure accommodate this plan.

DCS has a minimum of 80 hours a year dedicated to professional development opportunities for staff culminating in a possible 8 CEU credits for staff members. Each week two hours on Monday afternoons are dedicated to professional development in addition to a minimum eight hours of PD planned for the week of workdays at the beginning of the school year. Workdays throughout the year also offer opportunities for professional development. The school's calendar as outlined in Appendix C, the daily bell schedule, and staffing structure allow for the needed generous amount of time dedicated to professional development for staff.

## **Enrollment and Marketing:**

Reaching the full capacity for enrollment will be critical to obtain the necessary financial resources to keep your school viable and operating efficiently. In addition, it is required by law that charter schools provide equal access to all students. Read the charter school state statute regarding admissions GS 115C.218.45(a-i) carefully.

### **Marketing Plan**

*Marketing to potential students and parents is vital to the survival of a charter school. Provide a plan indicating how the school will market to potential students and parents in order to reasonably reflects the racial/ethnic and demographic composition of the district in which the charter school will be located or of the special population the school seeks to serve: (G.S.115C-218.45(e)).*

DCS will not discriminate on any basis including but not limited to the basis of race, religion, gender, or disability. Any student eligible to attend a North Carolina public school is eligible to attend DCS. As such, DCS will implement a marketing plan that fairly and appropriately targets a diverse population in the geographic area of the school. Specifically, DCS will target any middle school age student in the northern Durham, Bahama, Rougemont, Timberlake, and other nearby areas with a strong interest in and natural curiosity for STEAM-related topics.

The DCS Board of Directors has already begun implementing marketing strategies to engage the local community in the school. The Board has created a website ([www.discoverycharterdurham.org](http://www.discoverycharterdurham.org)) and launched a Facebook campaign targeting parents of children ages six to twelve (these parameters are pre-defined by Facebook's demographic selections) who live in Durham, Bahama, Rougemont, and Timberlake. The initial Facebook campaign resulted in a diverse group of over 300 followers for Discovery's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/DiscoveryCharter](http://www.facebook.com/DiscoveryCharter)). Discovery will draw many students from rural areas, and in these rural areas word-of-mouth marketing is invaluable. The DCS Board of Directors has already begun a word-of-mouth campaign targeting families of current elementary age students as well as prominent community members. The Board has been invited to and participated in neighborhood forums and has shared at Board meetings of other local charters in an effort to generate community discussions about the school and form

partnerships with other area charters.

If approved, DCS will move forward with the following marketing plan:

- \* Build upon the current website and market it online using Google AdWords
- \* Continue the Facebook social media campaign
- \* Continue the word-of-mouth campaign through active community engagement
- \* Hold community meetings / information sessions at local places such as churches and neighborhood community centers
- \* Advertise in local papers including The Herald-Sun (Durham), The Courier-Times (Roxboro), The News of Orange County, and Butner-Creedmoor News (Granville County)
- \* Place print media such as flyers and brochures at area businesses, community centers, churches, farmers markets, and childcare facilities
- \* Place signage along Highway 501 where possible including at intersections and at businesses frequently patronized by community members on their daily commutes such as gas stations.

DCS will work to ensure language is not a barrier to enrollment by providing print materials also in Spanish where possible which aligns with the LEA and targeted demographics. All stated marketing strategies will commence immediately upon application approval with emphasis placed initially on online and word-of-mouth advertising followed by a stronger emphasis on print advertising closer to the lottery date.

All marketing efforts will reflect the school's mission and emphasize the school's focus on STEAM areas with the goal of creating lifelong independent and collaborative learners.

### **Parent and Community Involvement**

1. *Describe how you will communicate with and engage parents and community members from the time that the school is approved through opening.*
2. *Describe how you will engage parents in the life of the public charter school. Explain the plan for building engaging partnerships between the family and school that strengthen support for student learning.*

In person collaboration with the surrounding communities is vital in the success of opening DCS. The Board will spend significant time initially in community meetings, churches, neighborhood board meetings, sporting events, and other open avenues discussing the exciting opportunities Discovery will provide children. We will meet with existing school Boards and talk with others working in nearby Orange Charter School, another STEAM-focused school, to explore partnership opportunities. This transparent and collaborative approach will minimize unnecessary hurdles and gain community support to open DCS. We will also use social media to inform and update the community as well as the local newspapers and other marketing strategies as outlined in our Marketing Plan.

To ensure that all parents and stakeholders understand the unique education plan, parents and students will be given thorough explanations of the curriculum and school expectations prior to enrollment. This information is delivered through a variety of ways: open houses, published information, brochures, online applications, social media, and website question/answer modules. After enrollment and the start of school, parents continue to have

flexibility to monitor their child's progress online and through parent conferences.

The Board members of DCS understand that parents are the most important partners in a child's learning experience. We will collaborate regularly with parents by scheduling regular parent/teacher/student conferences for the student to share their learning with their parents (POL events, for example) and holding parent information meetings including Internet Safety seminars. On a larger scale the school will work with parents to develop a strong parent organization (PTA) that will support the school and provide support to families as needed. The school will also use its website and social media as a vehicle to communicate with parents and students regularly. The school will create a safe open door policy in which parents will always be welcomed partners.

### **Admissions Policy**

Provide the school's proposed policies and the procedures for admitting students to the proposed charter school, including:

1. *Tentative dates for the open enrollment application period; enrollment deadlines and procedures. \*Please be advised schools cannot accept applications until after final approval from the SBE.*
2. *Clear policies and procedures detailing the open enrollment lottery plan including policies regarding statutory permitted student enrollment preferences.*
3. *Clear policies and procedures for student waiting lists, withdrawals, re-enrollment, and transfers.*
4. *Explanation of the purpose of any pre-admission activities (if any) for students or parents.*
5. *Clear policies and procedures for student withdraws and transfers.*

DCS will admit students without regard to race, sex, disability, religion, nationality, or ethnic origin.

Admission to DCS will adhere to the following application and admission procedures:

\*All applicants may apply online or via a paper application. Access to the online application will be provided upon request to those who lack reliable Internet access. A paper copy of the application will also be provided to applicants who prefer not to use or are unable to use the online system. Paper and online applications will also be available written in Spanish. The online application will be made public on the school's website.

\*All applicants must apply for the grade they will enter in the following school year.

\*Students may only submit one application for admission.

\*Applicants must reside in North Carolina at the time of application. DCS will admit any student chosen by the random lottery regardless of which North Carolina county the student resides.

\*Applicants must submit an application on or before the application deadline date. Applications received after this date will be considered for any eligible remaining spots. In the event no spots are available after the lottery, the applicant will be placed on the waiting list.

\*Current students do not need to re-apply for admission but are required to submit a signed non-binding Commitment Letter by a specified due date.

\*Siblings of current students and children of current full-time staff members will be given priority admittance to any open spots for the grade level in which the student is applying. If there are more siblings applying than spots available, a lottery will be held among the siblings to determine admittance.

\*Students who are twins, triplets, etc. seeking admittance will each submit an application. Only one application will be entered into the lottery for those students. If the application is accepted, the sibling's twin, triplet, etc. will also be admitted.

\*Applications received by the required due date will be entered into a random lottery which will be publicly held to determine student admittance. The lottery will be completed electronically whereby a computer program randomly assigns a number to each applicant. The number assigned by the program will determine the student's acceptance or position on the waitlist.

\*All students accepted through the lottery will be mailed an acceptance letter. The letter must be completed, signed, and returned to the school by the required due date. This documentation will be used to confirm a family's commitment to the school and to release student records from their previous school. Failure to return this documentation will nullify the student's acceptance into DCS.

\*Students not accepted by the lottery will be placed on a waitlist. Students will remain on the waitlist until the end of the following school year. In the event a spot becomes available, the school will contact students in order of their waitlist number.

\*If a student does not gain acceptance into DCS, the student must re-apply to be considered for acceptance for the following school year.

\*All families admitted to DCS will be required to read and agree to DCS policies and procedures as stated in the Student-Parent Handbook.

#### Proposed Admissions Timeline for the 2017-18 School Year:

January 2, 2017	Application period begins
February 28, 2017	Application deadline
March 11, 2017	Lottery held, open to the public
March 14, 2017	Acceptance letters mailed
March 31, 2017	Acceptance confirmation deadline

All students who withdraw will be required to complete the paperwork ensuring student records be sent to the new school. New students will also be required to complete the appropriate paperwork to request student records. If a student withdraws from the school, the next student on the waitlist will be offered a spot. If a student seeks to re-enter DCS, he/she will be required to follow the same admissions process as any other student.

**PROJECTED ENROLLMENT 2017-18 through 2021-2022**

IDENTIFY LEA FROM WHICH  
STUDENTS WILL PROBABLY COME

LEA #1 Durham Public Schools  
LEA #2 Person County Schools  
LEA #3 Orange County Schools

In the following tables, please list for each year and grade level, the numbers of students that the school reasonably expects to enroll. In addition, please indicate any plans to increase the grade levels offered by the school over time and be sure these figures match those on the initial cover page.

	2017-2018			2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021			2021-2022		
	LEA 320	LEA 730	LEA 680												
	120	60	20	216	108	36	252	126	42	288	144	48	288	144	48
	200			360			420			480			480		

## V. OPERATIONS

### **Transportation Plan:**

*Describe in detail the transportation plan that will ensure that no child is denied access to the school due to lack of transportation. The details of this plan should align with the Mission, identified need for the charter school, targeted student population, and the budget proposal.*

Discovery Charter School (DCS) will provide transportation options for students and parents. Discovery has researched various options for safely transporting students and has sought guidance from Principal Steven Hester of Bethel Hill Charter School in Roxboro, NC which successfully operates a fleet of six buses that transports approximately 75% of their student population. Based on the research, DCS will at a minimum offer the following transportation options and will increase the transportation budget in the beginning years to expand the transportation program so that transportation is not a barrier to enrollment for students. DCS will evaluate the need for transportation yearly and continue to grow the program as needed. Transportation costs are reflected in the budget.

The proposed location for Discovery Charter School is northern Durham County between Roxboro (to the north) and Durham (to the south). At a minimum, DCS will provide bus services to a northern depot and a southern depot for morning pick-ups and afternoon drop-offs. Depots will be strategically located and evaluated for safety and proximity to the greatest concentration of students. Examples of potential depot sites include churches or businesses.

School leadership and the school administrative assistant will facilitate the use of carpools using free mobile apps such as Carpool-School Edition. Information about carpooling will also be provided on the school's website and in regular communication such as newsletters to parents. For students with disabilities, suitable transportation will be provided as needed per the students Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

In addition, all personnel contracted for transportation services will be required to pass a background check and wear appropriate identification to protect student safety. All buses will meet required safety standards and be properly maintained.

### **School Lunch Plan:**

*Describe in detail the school lunch plan that will ensure that no child is lacking a daily meal. The details of this plan should align with the targeted student population and school budget proposal.*

Discovery Charter School (DCS) will ensure all students are provided lunch daily. Students will have the option to bring lunch or receive a lunch from the school provided by selected vendors. The vendors will be required to follow all health and sanitation requirements set forth by the Food and Drug Administration and provide appropriate documentation supporting their compliance. Menus will be provided to the school monthly and meet all

nutrition guidelines of the National School Lunch Program. DCS will use the online system OrgsOnline to manage payments, track orders, and keep food counts. OrgsOnline has a proven success record in lunch order management at other nearby charter schools. Parents will have the option to place orders monthly using the online system. DCS will assist any family with lack of internet access in placing online orders as needed.

DCS will follow all required procedures for managing Free and Reduced Lunch applications and maintain thorough records of student participation in the National School Lunch Program. For students who qualify for free or reduced lunch, DCS will provide the vendor lunches to them free of charge. DCS will use data from OrgsOnline to keep records of meal counts.

Students who forget their lunch will be provided lunch by the school in the event they are unable to have a parent or other adult bring them lunch. A fee will be assessed to the parents to cover the cost of the lunch. A small contingency budget is planned to help cover initial costs of providing lunches to students. Revenues received from the vendor program will also be used to help offset costs for lunch provision.

### **Civil Liability and Insurance (GS 115C-218.20):**

The Charter School shall obtain and maintain insurance at a minimum in the following amounts:

1. Errors and omissions: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per claim;
2. General liability: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence;
3. Boiler and machinery: the replacement cost of the building;
4. Real and personal property: the appraised value of the building and contents;
5. Fidelity bonds: no less than two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) to cover employee dishonesty;
6. Automobile liability: one million dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence; and
7. Workers' compensation: as specified by Chapter 97 of the General Statutes.

Area of proposed coverage	Proposed amount of coverage		Cost (Quote)
Comprehensive General Liability	\$1,000,000		\$1,363.00
Officers and Directors/Errors and Omissions	\$1,000,000		\$3,057.00
Property Insurance	\$920,000		\$1,020.00
Motor Vehicle Liability	\$1,000,000		\$3,450.00
Bonding Minimum/Maximum Amount	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$332.00
Other	\$1,000,000		\$16,546.00
Total Cost			\$25,768.00

\*The applicant must provide a quote from an insurance provider as part of this application (as Appendix P) to demonstrate the levels of insurance coverage and projected cost.

### **Health and Safety Requirements:**

All public charter schools are required to follow the regulations regarding health and safety as stated in §

115C218.75.

We, the Board members at (Charter School Name) will develop a written safety plan and policies to be shared with staff, parents and students and be available upon inspection from the Department of Public Instruction and local Health Departments.

discoverydurham

09/23/2015

(Board Chair Signature)

(Date)

**Facility:**

*Note that the SBE may approve a charter school prior to the school's obtaining a facility; however, students may not attend school and no funds will be allocated until the school has obtained a valid Certificate of Occupancy for Educational use to the Office of Charter Schools.*

What is your plan to obtain a building? Identify the steps that the board will take to acquire a facility and obtain the Educational Certificate of Occupancy. If a facility has been identified please fill out the Facility Form (Appendix Q).

Discovery Charter School (DCS) is working with an experienced real estate developer who has a proven track record building numerous charter schools in North and South Carolina to identify a site and build a facility (see Appendix S). The developer has already identified several undeveloped properties for sale in northern Durham County with convenient Highway 501 access in our target area (see "Mission and Purposes" section for more information about the strategic selection of the target area). Upon application approval, the developer will negotiate a land purchase and development will commence. Once constructed, the developer will then lease the facility back to the School. The new facility will be constructed for move in in year three, and the budget accurately reflects a lease payment starting in this year of \$581,000.

During the first two years open, DCS will use modular units strategically situated on the site. DCS has received quotes from Williams Scotsman for modular units (see Appendix U7). The developer will assist with the set-up of the modular units. In year three, the School will transition into the newly constructed facility. Costs are reflected in the budget.

The proposed site layout will occupy an estimated 30 to 35 acres with a facility allowing an approximate 86 square foot per child. The facility floor plan will include space for a computer lab, visual and performing arts spaces, and feature open-floor, community spaces to foster student and teacher collaboration. Further consideration will be given to outdoor space for athletic fields, adequate parking, carline and bus requirements, and safe schools best design practices. The facility layout will be mutually agreed upon by the developer and Board.

The facility will satisfy all occupancy requirements, including but not limited to meeting fire code and accessibility standards. Prior to opening, the Educational Certificate of Occupancy and any other required

documentation will be presented to the Office of Charter Schools.

Please attach copies of Facilities Inspections as Appendix R.

*What is the breakdown of cost per square foot for the proposed facility? Outline how this cost is comparable to the commercial and educational spaces for the proposed school location.*

DCS is estimating \$14 per sq. ft. per year based on current market rent rates of \$10-\$16 per sq. ft. At \$14 per sq. ft., the lease payment would be \$581,000 assuming a 41,500 square foot facility which would allow for about 86 sq. ft. per student.

**Facility Contingency Plan:** *Describe the method of finding a facility if the one the board has identified will not be ready by the time the public charter school will be opening. Include information regarding the immediate spatial needs of the school and identify any programs that will not be immediately offered because a permanent facility has yet to open.*

In the first two years, DCS plans to use modular units until the new facility is constructed. In the unlikely event the modular units are not in place and able to be occupied prior to the school opening, the School will seek to temporarily locate to church space or the Little River Community Complex nearby. It is expected programs will continue as planned in the event a contingent location is utilized.

The new facility is planned to open in the third year. The Board will work closely with the developer and be updated at least weekly of construction progress. In the unlikely event the facility is not ready on time, DCS will continue using the modular system put in place for the first two years and add modular units as needed to support growing enrollment until such time that the new facility is ready to be occupied. The School will have no financial obligation for the primary facility until it is ready for use.

## VI. FINANCIAL PLAN

In the following sections present a detailed description of assumptions and revenue estimates, including but not limited to the basis for revenue projections, staffing levels, and costs. The narrative should specifically address the degree to which the school budget will rely on variable income.

### **Budget: Revenue Projections from each LEA 2017-18**

**SHOW  
CALCULATIONS  
FOR FIGURING  
STATE  
AND LOCAL  
DOLLARS  
FOR THE  
PROPOSED  
CHARTER  
SCHOOL**

*Refer to the  
Resource Manual  
Finance Section  
for guidance on  
estimated funding  
amounts*

**State Funds:** Charter schools receive an equivalent amount per student as the local education agency (LEA) receives per student receives from the State. Funding is based on the 1<sup>st</sup> month average daily membership.

- In year 1 – Base state allotments are determined by the LEA in which the student resides
- In year 2 and beyond- Base State allotments are determined by the LEA in which the school is located.

**Local Funds:** Charter schools receive a per pupil share of the local current expense of the LEA in which the student resides.

**Federal Funds:** Charter schools must qualify and apply for the individual federal grants based on their population of students.

#### **REFER TO RESOURCE GUIDE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SOURCE DOCUMENTS**

#### LEA #1 320 - Durham Public Schools

Revenue	2015-2016 Per Pupil Funding	Projected LEA ADM	Approximate funding for 2017-2018
State Funds	\$4,759.31	120	\$571,117.20
Local Funds	\$3,076.56	120	\$369,187.20
Federal EC Funds	\$3,768.11	12	\$45,217.32
<b>Totals</b>			\$985,521.72

#### LEA #2 730 - Person County Schools

Revenue	2015-2016 Per Pupil Funding	Projected LEA ADM	Approximate funding for 2017-2018
State Funds	\$4,911.01	60	\$294,660.60
Local Funds	\$1,689.28	60	\$101,356.80
Federal EC Funds	\$3,768.11	6	\$22,608.66
<b>Totals</b>			\$418,626.06

#### LEA #3 680 - Orange County Schools

Revenue	2015-2016 Per Pupil Funding	Projected LEA ADM	Approximate funding for 2017-2018
State Funds	\$4,916.44	20	\$98,328.80
Local Funds	\$3,296.24	20	\$65,924.80
Federal EC Funds	\$3,163.55	2	\$6,327.10
<b>Totals</b>			\$170,580.70

**Total Budget: Revenue Projections 2017-18 through 2021-2022**

<b>INCOME: REVENUE PROJECTIONS</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>

**\*If the applicant is depending on other funding sources or working capital to balance the operating budget, please provide documentation such as signed statements from donors, foundations, bank documents, etc., on the commitment of these funds. If these figures are loans, the repayment needs to be explained in the narrative and found within the budget projections.**

**Assurances are needed to confirm the commitment of these additional sources of revenue. Please include these as Appendix S.**

**Personnel Budget: Expenditure Projections 2017-18 through 2021-2022**

*The personnel list below may be amended to meet the staffing of individual charter schools: This list should align with the projected staff located in the Operations Plan.*

<b>BUDGET EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS Personnel</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>			<b>2018-2019</b>			<b>2019-2020</b>			<b>2020-2021</b>			<b>2021-2022</b>		
	<i>Num Staff</i>	<i>Avg Salary</i>	<i>Total salary</i>	<i>FTE</i>	<i>Avg Salary</i>	<i>Total salary</i>									

**Operations Budget: Expenditure Projections 2017-18 through 2021-2022**

BUDGET OPERATIONS EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022

**Overall Budget:**

<b>BUDGET OPERATIONS EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>

**Budget Narrative:** (No more than one and a half pages)

Please include additional information that showcases all assumptions for your budgetary calculations.

1. *How was the student enrollment number projected?*

*Provide an explanation as to why you believe there is a demand for the school that will meet this enrollment projection.*

*Provide the break-even point of student enrollment.*

The school's budget is based on an enrollment of 200 students for the first year, 360 students in the second year, 420 students in the third year, and 480 students in the fourth year which is full enrollment. The school conducted research and reviewed its ability to reach full student enrollment. Durham and Person County residents exhibit strong demand for choice schools and specifically charter schools. Current charter schools in Durham and Person Counties are at capacity and many have extensive student waiting lists. Two neighboring charter schools have over 600 students on their waitlists for grades 6th through 8th. The school reached out to families through a Facebook campaign that generated a lot of positive community feedback and resulted in over 300 followers in just three weeks. The school would also be the only STEAM school of choice in Durham and Person Counties.

For these reasons the school anticipates reaching full enrollment. However, the school developed a break even budget in the unlikely event that enrollment does not reach projected capacity each year. During the first year the school will be able to break even if the student enrollment is at least 80 students which is a 60% reduction in projected enrollment. This will result in a corresponding reduction in revenue to \$629,891. The School will reduce expenses commiserate to enrollment reduction and use a 60% decrease to sustain operations. The expense budget reduces to \$603,412. If this situation arises the school will adjust staffing, supplies, buses, trailers, and other budgetary items commiserate with the lower enrollment figures.

*Discuss the school's contingency plan to meet financial needs if anticipated revenues are not received or are lower than estimated.*

If anticipated revenues are lower than estimated the school is prepared to take the necessary measures to remain fiscally sound. The following steps will be taken depending on the reasons for lower revenues. In the event state or local funding is lower than anticipated the school will: apply for grants, fundraise through the parent organization, and seek additional corporate donations. If the revenues are lower due to lower student enrollment the school will: reduce staff positions and adjust the amount of money spent on instructional supplies, staff development, hardware, and software to align with the lower student enrollment and number of staff positions. The school will also revise the marketing plan in an effort to

increase enrollment.

*Does the budget rely on sources of funds other than state, county, and federal (e.g. loans, donations etc.? If so, please provide the source and amount. Be sure that the appropriate assurances documentation is provided in the appendices*

*The School will not rely on other sources of funds besides state, county, and federal funding in years 1 through 5. The School plans to apply for grants and seek corporate sponsorships; however, these funds will be used for supplemental materials or positions and not required operational budgetary items.*

*Provide the student to teacher ratio that the budget is built on.*

The teacher-student ratio ranges from 17:1 to 15:1

- 2. Does the school intend to contract for services such as student accounting and financial services, exceptional children instructional support, custodial etc. Describe the criteria and procedures for the selection of contractors and large purchases.*

The school plans to contract for student information and financial management services (see Appendix U8), custodial services, speech therapy, psychological services, and other services required for legally compliant delivery of EC services. For these services and any future contracts for services, the school will follow the following steps. The school's lead administrator will receive multiple bids for any contract over \$5,000. The bidding vendors must provide proof of insurance, background checks, and any other necessary liability coverage. Vendors will provide references and experience specifically related to NC charter schools. Recommendations will be taken to the Board of Directors, and the Board will be required to approve all contracts.

- 3. Explain how the budget aligns with the school's mission, curricular offerings, transportation plans, and facility needs.*

The school's budget directly aligns to the school's mission by setting aside funds to be able to purchase hardware and software required for the school's blended learning model. Professional development for STEAM integration is essential to the school's mission and has been included in the budget. The school's mission seeks to integrate arts and technology; therefore, additional support staff in each of these areas is also included in the budget. The school seeks to remove barriers for student enrollment which is evident in the funds allocated to student transportation. The budget also includes an adequate lease amount for the size building we plan to have.

- 4. What percentage of expenditures will be the school's goal for a general fund balance? Describe how the school will develop the fund balance.*

DCS will carry a fund balance ranging from 3 to 6% in each of the first five years. The school's operational goal is to achieve a minimum cumulative fund balance of 19% of operating expenses by year 5. The fund balance will be developed using careful consideration and planning for expenditures so that they do not exceed expected minimum revenues. DCS believes the allotted general fund balance amount will provide security while allocating the majority of funds to support student instruction.

- 5. Provide a description of proposed financing structure. Include financing of facilities, other asset financing and leases.*

The school will enter into a partnership with an experienced charter school developer. Through the developer agreement, the school will first lease trailers. The trailers will be placed on land purchased for the trailer site and long term site for the permanent building. The school will lease trailers for the first two years, during which time construction on the permanent facility will take place. DCS will transfer operations to the permanent facility at the beginning of year three. The developer will lease the permanent structure to the school with an option to purchase. DCS plans to exercise the options to purchase in year six.

*6. Will the school have assets from other sources (e.g. building, furniture, chairs, computers, etc.)? If yes, please provide a list. Note which are secured and which are anticipated, and include evidence of commitment for any assets on which the school's core operation depends.*

Currently the school has collected \$2,000 worth of office furniture through individual donations. DCS will continue searching for donations of furniture and computer equipment from other schools and local businesses.

**Financial Compliance:** (No more than a half of a page)

*How will the school ensure adequate internal controls, including segregation of duties, safeguarding of assets, accurate and adequate recording keeping?*

The school's use of a finance contractor provides for separation of duties and safeguards between the different levels of organizational authority. The school will require two signatures on all checks. Authorized signing authority will reside with the principal and two other Board members. The finance contractor will not retain any authority to sign checks. The school will designate a person to open the mail who will be different than the person remitting payments. All checks will be made through the accounting software ISIS. No handwritten checks or debit cards will be used on a bank account. The individuals with access to process checks through ISIS will have no signing authority on the bank account. Deposits will have two reviewers verifying the money received and deposited. There will be a separate person reconciling the bank statements from the person that makes the deposits. All purchases will be made through purchase orders. A monthly financial review will take place with the Board Treasurer and if applicable the finance committee. The finance contractor will also present the budget at each Board meeting.

*Provide any known or possible related party transactions (relationship, description of transaction and estimated dollars involved)*

There are no related party transactions. The school has a strict policy on related party transactions and a Conflict of Interest policy.

*Provide the name and contact information of the independent audit firm who will conduct the annual financial statement audit. If a firm has yet to be identified please list the firms the board has investigated.*

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Concord, NC 28025  
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