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AMERICAN ACADEMY FOR LIBERAL EDUCATION



APPLICATION FOR CHARTER SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

American Academy for Liberal Education
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Effective 2005

APPLICATION FOR CHARTER SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

Applicants must complete the AALE Pre-Application Form before submitting this application. Please call AALE for further information and a telephone consultation at (202) 452-8611.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Accreditation is an AALE full membership status that allows public charter schools to establish formal and publicly recognized relations with the Academy. Accreditation is granted for a period of up to five (5) years.

A charter school may apply for accreditation if:

- it can provide evidence of financial stability; **and**
- it has been in continuous operation for at least two (2) years; **and**
- is in good standing with authorizer.

Schools seeking accreditation must complete this application, demonstrate compliance with the Academy's *Standards for Charter School Accreditation* through a detailed and concise self-study report, and receive a peer evaluation visit from the AALE Site Team.

- All schools accredited by AALE are required to complete and submit annual reports in addition to paying annual dues.
- All schools must re-apply for accreditation after five (5) years.

Accreditation entitles a school to all the rights and privileges of AALE membership.

All AALE application materials are available for viewing, downloading, and printing at our website (www.aalecharters.org). Printed copies are available by request from the Academy. AALE lists the names and locations of all accredited charter schools on its website and may, by mutual agreement, include a link to the school website. No other information about accredited charter schools is included on the website, except by mutual agreement.

If you have any questions about AALE charter school accreditation, about this application packet, or about the Academy's accreditation policies and procedures, please feel free to contact us at (202) 245-8611 or email at charters@aale.org.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The time required to achieve AALE accreditation varies from case to case, but it is possible to complete the entire process seven (7) months after submission of a complete application. The following pages offer brief descriptions of steps in the application process, along with an estimated timetable for completing the process. Please note that this schedule is approximate; the process may continue beyond the estimated time frame. Much depends on the speed with which a school acts, on the scheduling of the site visit, and on the schedule of meetings for the AALE Board of Trustees.

ESTIMATED TIMETABLE

	Week	Month
I. School contacts AALE regarding accreditation	First	0
AALE sends out application	First	0
II. School submits completed application	Third	0
AALE reviews application information and materials and notifies school to begin self-study	Fourth	1

Notes to Steps I and II: The information requested in this application is designed to ensure that a school meets the basic criteria for full accreditation. Supplying this essential information, along with a letter of intent and the various requested supporting documents, is the first formal step in the process leading to accreditation. An application processing fee of \$1,000 is also required at this time.

AALE reviews all information and materials returned with the completed application to determine whether the school may proceed with the application process, or whether further information or materials are required. If all is in order, AALE will notify the school to begin developing a narrative self-study.

The narrative self-study should demonstrate that the education provided by a school meets AALE *Charter School Accreditation Standards*. It should explain how the educational aims—its stated mission and objectives and any planned or anticipated changes to these—are related to its actual education programs, services, and resources. AALE publishes a guide which describes the procedures for undertaking and completing the self-study. Contact the Academy for a copy or download one at (www.aalecharters.org). Please contact us with any questions you may have regarding your school’s self-study.

	Month
III. School completes and submits self-study to AALE	2-6
IV. AALE reviews self-study and selects a site visit team	3-11
AALE site visit on campus (3-4 days)	4-12
Site visit team submits report to AALE	5-14
AALE submits report to school for correction	6-15

Note to Steps III and IV: AALE reviews the self-study for completeness and selects site visitors (usually 3 persons aided by an AALE staff member). Using the self-study as a guide, the team makes a campus visit to evaluate the school’s instructional program. The site visit team then prepares a report detailing its findings and recommendations. A copy of this report is sent to the school for review and correction of any factual errors. AALE submits the final version of the site visit team report to its Charter School Board of Review and Board of Trustees for review and recommendation to grant, deny or defer accreditation.

	Month
V. AALE Charter School Board of Review reviews site visit report	6-16
AALE Charter School Board of Review submits recommendation to Board of Trustees for final action	7-18

Notes to Step V: The AALE Charter School Board of Review is composed of recognized scholars from universities and colleges, leaders of government education agencies, national and local policy experts, charter school founders, and officers of educational philanthropies. AALE Charter School site visitors include charter, public, and private school faculty, administrators, and board members, education experts from foundations, testing, publishing, policy groups, and higher education institutions, government officials, and others with appropriate experience and expertise. The AALE Board of Trustees includes distinguished scholars and administrators from the higher education community, AALE member schools, and nationally recognized representatives of other public and private organizations. The award of Accreditation status by the Academy thus confers broad, and truly national, recognition. For more information on AALE Board of Review, site visitors, and Board of Trustee members, please contact the AALE Charter School Accreditation program.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

This application requires three (3) items:

1. School Information Form
2. Eligibility Requirements Form
3. Application fee of \$1,000

Any person authorized by the Chief Executive Officer of a school may complete the information requested in these forms, but the School Agreement included among the Eligibility Requirements **must** be signed by **both** the Chief Executive Officer or school principal and the chairman of the school's governing board. A letter of intent to apply for AALE accreditation must also be submitted with the completed application.

The information requested in the various parts of the application should be readily available from a small number of persons and offices. These may include the CEO, Principal or Headmaster, Comptroller, Registrar, and Counsel. Some of the requested information must be reported twice on these forms; please fill out all forms completely.

Most accreditation agency applications concentrate on questions of fiscal responsibility and school resources. AALE meets and exceeds standards in these areas with its exclusive School Profile Form, an innovative data collection system designed to evaluate an institution's financial health with minimal intrusion. More importantly, the School Profile Form allows a school's narrative self-study to focus on questions of far greater interest to charter school faculty, administrators, parents, and students: substantive teaching and learning.

AALE requires supporting documentation for certain parts of the application for accreditation; these are clearly indicated in the several forms. In many cases a school's catalog, bulletin, or other published sources will contain the requested information. At the appropriate places in these forms we ask for the title(s) of the supporting document(s) and the page number(s) where the relevant information can be found. *Please be sure to include copies of all documents cited in this fashion with the completed application.*

This application packet contains all the forms necessary to complete the application for accreditation. Additional copies of the application may be downloaded at (www.aalecharters.org).

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All schools applying for accreditation must meet AALE's eligibility requirements. **Each eligibility requirement should be addressed by completing the corresponding item in the Eligibility Requirements Form.**

1. INSTITUTION OFFERING AUTHORITY

The school has a charter and formal authority from the appropriate charter school authorizer to offer instruction, diplomas, and/or certificates of completion in the jurisdiction(s) in which the school operates.

2. GOVERNING BOARD

The school has an active, policy-making governing board which has the authority and duty to ensure that the school achieves its mission.

3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

School identifies and supports a presiding officer.

4. ACCREDITATION

The school agrees to disclose to the Academy its current and past accreditation status with any of its school accreditors, including any adverse actions taken against the school.

5. MISSION STATEMENT

The school has a clearly defined, published mission statement that includes a commitment to liberal education and is appropriate to a public charter school.

6. REQUIRED COURSES OR SUBJECT AREAS

The school has clear, accurate, and current published information describing its course/subject-area requirements and other educational programs.

7. PROGRAM AND POLICIES

The school has clear, accurate, and current published materials accurately describing:

- a. Diploma/certificate programs.
- b. Instruction in required and elective subject areas.
- c. Fees, optional or required, and refund policies.
- d. Admissions and retention policies.
- e. Policies and procedures directly affecting parents and students.
- f. Policies and procedures directly affecting faculty, administrators, and other personnel.
- g. Academic credentials of faculty and administrators.

8. OPERATION

The school must be in regular operation and have students enrolled at the time of the site evaluation visit.

9. LEARNING RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The school owns or ensures access to adequate learning resources and appropriate services in support of its instruction.

10. FACULTY OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION

For each required subject area of instruction there is adequate faculty expertise for oversight and coordination.

11. FINANCIAL BASE

The school has established a financial base adequate to support activities consistent with its mission.

12. ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTS

All schools applying for accreditation must submit the eligibility documents specified in item 13 of Part II of the application.

13. SCHOOL AGREEMENT

Schools seeking membership with the American Academy for Liberal Education are required to complete these agreement, which attests to the school’s intention to comply with AALE’s *Standards for Charter School Accreditation*.

APPLICATION FEE

An application processing fee of \$1,000 is required of all schools applying for AALE accreditation. This fee should be submitted with the completed application in the form of a check or money order made payable in United States dollars to the “American Academy for Liberal Education.”

RETURNING THE COMPLETED APPLICATION

Please return the completed application packet, including all forms and required supporting documents, the signed School Agreement Form, the letter of intent, and the application fee, to the following address:

American Academy for Liberal Education
Charter School Accreditation Program
1050 17th Street NW
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036

PART I. SCHOOL INFORMATION

1. SCHOOL

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Main Phone: (____) - _____

Website: _____

2. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER/PRINCIPAL

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: (____) - _____

E-mail: _____

Is the chief executive officer the presiding officer of the governing board?

Yes ____ No ____

3. PRESIDING OFFICER OF GOVERNING BOARD

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: (____) - _____

4. CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: (____)- _____

E-mail: _____

5. SCHOOL ACCREDITATION LIAISON

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: (____)- _____

E-mail: _____

6. SCHOOL CONTROL

Public Charter --Please specify authorizer [University, school district, etc.]:

Is this school _____ for profit or _____ non-profit?

7. GRADE LEVELS AND ENROLLMENT

Year: _____

	Headcount
Kindergarten:	_____
First Grade:	_____
Second Grade:	_____
Third Grade:	_____
Fourth Grade:	_____
Fifth Grade:	_____
Sixth Grade:	_____
Seventh Grade:	_____
Eighth Grade:	_____
Ninth Grade:	_____
Tenth Grade:	_____
Eleventh Grade:	_____
Twelfth Grade:	_____
Post-Graduate:	_____
Total:	_____

8. OPERATION

Year school founded: _____

Years in continuous operation: _____

Calender System: _____ Semester
_____ Trimester
_____ Quarter
_____ Other

PART II. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The information requested in eligibility requirements **6** through **13** will most often be found in a school's catalog, handbooks, bulletins, and other public documents. Please provide the title of the supporting document and the page number(s) where the relevant information can be found. After the first full citation of a document, feel free to abbreviate.

Please be sure to have both the Chief Executive Officer or Principal as well as the Chairman of the Board sign and date the School Agreement Form (item 14).

1. INSTRUCTION OFFERING AUTHORITY

Is the school chartered with formal authority from the appropriate charter school authorizer to offer instruction, certificates of completion, or diplomas in the jurisdiction in which the school operates?

Yes _____ No _____ Date chartered: _____

Name and address of the charter school authorizer:

Instruction, diplomas, and/or certificates the school is empowered to confer by this authority:

Legal name of charter school if different from name publicly used:

2. GOVERNING BOARD

Does the school have an active policy-making governing board which has the authority and duty to ensure that the school achieves its mission?

Yes _____ No _____

Name of governing board: _____

How many members does the board have at this date?

_____ (voting members) _____ (non-voting members)

What is the maximum number of members the board may have? _____

Does the presiding member of the board have a contractual, employment, personal or family, or financial interest in the school?

Yes ____ No ____ If yes, please specify on an attached sheet.

Does a majority of the voting members of the governing board have contractual, employment, personal or family, or financial interests in the school?

Yes ____ No ____ If yes, please specify on an attached sheet.

3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Does the school have a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the school?

Yes ____ No ____

Is the CEO also the presiding officer of the school's governing board?

Yes ____ No ____

4. ACCREDITATION

Has the school ever been accredited? Yes ____ No ____

Indicate agency and date of last renewal: _____

Is this accreditation current _____ or has it lapsed _____ ?

Has this agency ever taken any adverse action against the school (e.g., notices or probations)? If so, please describe each action (attach a separate sheet if necessary):

Please list any and all agencies currently accrediting your school or any of its programs (attach a separate sheet if necessary):

Accrediting agency	Date of last renewal
--------------------	----------------------

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Have any of these agencies ever taken adverse action against the school (e.g., notices or probations)? If so, please indicate which agency and describe each action (attach a separate sheet if necessary):

5. MISSION STATEMENT

Does the school have a clearly defined and published mission statement that includes a commitment to liberal arts education? Yes ____ No ____

Please provide title(s) and page number(s) of the published document containing the full text of the school's mission statement: _____

6. REQUIRED COURSES OR SUBJECT AREAS

Does the school have clearly defined and published information describing its course or subject area requirements? Yes ____ No ____

Please provide title(s) and page number(s) of the published document(s) that describes the school's course/subject area requirements: _____

7. PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

Do the school's published materials clearly and accurately describe:

- | | | | |
|----|---|----------|---------|
| a. | Required areas of study? | Yes ____ | No ____ |
| b. | Optional elective areas of study? | Yes ____ | No ____ |
| c. | Fees (optional or required) and refund policies? | Yes ____ | No ____ |
| d. | Admissions and retention policies? | Yes ____ | No ____ |
| e. | Policies and procedures directly affecting students and parents, including expected/requested contributions of service, etc.? | Yes ____ | No ____ |
| f. | Policies and procedures directly affecting faculty, administrators, and other personnel? | Yes ____ | No ____ |
| g. | Academic credentials of faculty and administrators? | Yes ____ | No ____ |

Please provide title(s) and page number(s) of the published document(s) containing the full statements of the school programs and policies listed above:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____
- g. _____

Please include copies of all documents cited with the completed application.

8. OPERATION

Does the school currently have students enrolled? Yes _____ No _____

How many years has the school been in continuous operation? _____

Is the school currently in operation? Yes _____ No _____

9. LEARNING RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Does the school own or ensure access to adequate learning resources and appropriate services in support of:

- a. Required subjects/courses offered? Yes____ No____
- b. Optional/elective subjects/courses offered? Yes____ No____
- c. Student Services Yes____ No____

Please provide title(s) and page number(s) of the published document(s) that describe the learning resources and other services listed above:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

10. FACULTY OVERSIGHT AND COORDINATION

Is there adequate faculty expertise for oversight and coordination in each required subject area?
Yes _____ No _____

11. FINANCIAL BASE

Has the school established a financial base adequate to support activities consistent with its mission and educational objectives? Yes _____ No _____

Please elaborate on a separate page.

13. ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTS

All schools applying for accreditation must submit the documents specified below:

- a. Evidence of charter school authorization;
- b. Copies of the Articles of Incorporation and/or the legal charter;
- c. Current copy of the school catalog;
- d. Current copy of the faculty/staff handbook;
- e. Current copy of the parent/student handbook;
- f. Copies of the two most recent externally audited financial statements. The most recent of these statements must have been made within one year of the accreditation site team visit.

In place of an audited financial statement, newly established schools may submit special reports that include either statements of positive assurance by independent certified public accountants or an appropriate governmental auditing agency as to the material accuracy of current funds, expenditure classifications and amounts in accordance with generally accepted principles of school accounting, and the current fund balance sheet. Schools must also demonstrate financial responsibility in accordance with relevant state or district government regulations. All accounting practices and financial statements must conform with nationally recognized standards, such as AICPA.

14. SCHOOL AGREEMENT FORM

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for accreditation by the American Academy for Liberal Education

_____ does hereby agree to abide by the following conditions:

Name of School

- a. The school is committed to and intends to adhere to the *Standards for Charter School Accreditation* of the American Academy for Liberal Education, either current or as these may be modified hereafter, consistent with the policy and procedures of the Academy.
- b. The school understands and agrees that the American Academy for Liberal Education, at its discretion, may make known to any agency or member of the public that requests such information, the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding the status with the Academy.
- c. The school agrees to disclose to the American Academy for Liberal Education any and all such information as the Academy may require to carry out its evaluation and accrediting functions.
- d. The school agrees to refrain from making any promotional use of its application for accreditation prior to the actual granting of status.
- e. Its agreement that failure by the Academy to act favorably upon an application for membership or renewal of membership in the American Academy for Liberal Education, absent a showing of actual malice, shall not, in and of itself, constitute grounds for legal action against AALE by the applicant school or individuals therein. In all cases when a disagreement cannot be resolved through normal AALE appeals procedures, the school and the individuals therein agree to AALE's arbitration policy which provides for final action after review in accordance with the Rules of the American Arbitration Association.

Signature – Chief Executive Officer

Printed Name

Date

Signature – Chairman of the Board

Printed Name

Date