

AMERICAN ACADEMY for LIBERAL EDUCATION

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Application for Charter School Accreditation

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 five (5) years. Accreditation entitles a school to all the rights and privileges of AALE membership.

A charter school may apply for accreditation if it:

- can provide evidence of financial stability;
- has been in continuous operation for at least two (2) years; and
- is in good standing with a recognized 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 host an accreditation site visit from an AALE evaluation team.

All schools accredited by AALE are required to complete and submit annual reports on the anniversary of their accreditation in addition to remitting dues annually.

All AALE application materials are available for viewing, downloading, and printing at 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 include a link to the school website. No information about accredited charter schools is included on the website, except by mutual agreement.

If there are 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.

OVERVIEW OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The time required for AALE accreditation varies from case to case, but it is possible to complete the entire process in as few as 7 months after submission of a complete application. The following are brief descriptions of steps in the application process, along with an estimated timetable for completing the process. Please note that this schedule is approximate. 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

- I. School contacts AALE regarding accreditation and AALE sends out application
- II. School submits completed application; AALE reviews application information and materials and notifies school to begin self-study

NOTE: 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 fee of \$2,750 is required at this time.

- III. 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 discuss how to begin the self-study process and the self-study itself.

NOTE: AALE staff is available to assist applicant schools with Customized Consultation. Customized Consultation provides guidance -- tailored to applicant schools -- in the design of a self-study strategy and also in the development of an outline for the self-study and associated documentation. The fee for this consultation is \$1000 plus any travel costs. This fee includes a one-day Self-Study Development workshop and eight hours of by-phone follow-up. Please contact AALE if you would like additional information or if you wish to schedule Customized Consultation.

- IV. School completes and submits self-study to AALE

The 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 self-study guide that describes the procedures for undertaking and completing the self-study. Contact the Academy for a copy or download one at www.aale.org/charters. Please contact us with any questions you may have regarding your school's self-study.

- V. AALE reviews self-study and selects a site visit team

NOTE: AALE selects site visitors who are charter, public, and private school faculty, administrators, and board members, charter education experts from foundations, testing, publishing, policy groups, and higher education institutions, government officials, and others with appropriate experience with and expertise in charter schools. AALE reviews the self-study for completeness and selects site visitors (usually 3 persons)

- VI. AALE site visit on campus (3 days) and Site visit team submits report to AALE

NOTE: Using the self-study as a guide, the team makes a campus visit to evaluate that school's educational program and operations. 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.

- VII. AALE Charter School Expert Reviewers review the site visit team report
Expert Reviewers submit recommendation to Board of Trustees for final action

NOTE: The AALE Charter School Expert Reviewers are recognized charter school experts and expert operators. These reviewers may also include scholars from universities and colleges, leaders of government education agencies, national and local policy experts, and officers of educational philanthropies. 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. For more information on AALE Reviewers, Visitors, and Board members, please see the literature accompanying this Application Packet or visit the Academy's website.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

This application contains two (2) forms:

- School Information
- Eligibility Requirements

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 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. Please fill out all forms completely.

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. Convenient electronic versions of these forms, that can be completed on-screen and printed, may be downloaded from the AALE website (www.aalecharters.org).

APPLICATION FEE

An application fee of \$2,750 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."

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
1050 17th Street, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
202.452.8611

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Part I

1. School

Name:

Address:

City

State

Zip Code

Main Phone: ()

Website:

2. Chief Executive Officer

Name and Title:

Address:

City

State

Zip Code

Phone: ()

Email:

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

Yes No

3. Presiding Officer of Governing Board

Name and Title:

Address:

City

State

Zip Code

Phone: ()

Email:

4. Chief Academic Officer

Name and Title:

Address:

City

State

Zip Code

Phone: ()

Email:

5. School Accreditation Liaison

Name and Title:

Address:

City

State

Zip Code

Phone: ()

Email:

6. Authorizer

Name:

Address:

City

State

Zip Code

Liaison:

Phone: ()

Email:

Is this authorizer for-profit? Non-profit?

Has the school's authorizer changed in the last two years? Yes No

If yes, please detail the reason or this change.

7. Grade levels and Enrollment

Grade Enrollment by grade

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:

Total Enrollment:

8. Operations

Year school founded:

Years in continuous operation:

Calendar system: Semester
Trimester
Quarter
Other

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All schools applying for accreditation must meet AALE's eligibility requirements. Each eligibility requirement must be addressed.

A. School Agreements and Administrative Structure

Schools seeking membership with the American Academy for Liberal Education are required to complete this agreement, which attests to the school's intent to comply with AALE Standards for Charter School Accreditation.

The school must attest to:

- a. Its commitment and intent to comply with the Standards of the Academy, either current or as these may be modified hereafter, consistent with the policies and procedures of the Academy;
- b. Its understanding and agreement that the Academy may, at its discretion, make known to any agency or member of the public that requests such information, the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding its membership status with the Academy;
- c. Its agreement to disclose all such information to the Academy as it may require carrying out its evaluating and accrediting functions;
- d. Its agreement to refrain from making any promotional use of its application for accreditation prior to the actual granting of an accreditation status; and
- 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.

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.

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

The school agrees to disclose to the Academy its current and past accreditation status, including any adverse actions taken against the school by an accreditation agency.

B. Mission and Published Information

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

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

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.

C. Operations, Learning Resources, and Student Services

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

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

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

D. Financial Resources and Auditing

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

The school has accurately completed the School Profile Form included with the application.

E. Eligibility Documents

All schools applying for accreditation must submit the following eligibility documents:

- a. Evidence of instruction-offering authority.
- b. The legal charter.
- c. Copies of the articles of incorporation.
- d. Current copy of the school catalog.

- e. Current copy of the faculty/staff handbook.
- f. Current copy of the student and/or parent handbook (if available).
- g. Copies of the two most recent externally audited financial statements, including management letters.

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 regulations. All accounting practices and financial statements must conform to nationally recognized standards, such as AICPA.

G. Governance

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

Names and titles of governing board members:

Do any members 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.

H. Accreditation

Has the school ever been accredited? Yes No

Indicate agency and date of last renewal:

Is this accreditation current?

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).