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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*Why should a charter school seek accreditation? Isn't accreditation just a lot of busywork and expense, with no real meaning—since nearly any school can get accredited?*

AALE created its charter school program with such criticisms of traditional accreditation in mind. Its program is low-cost, streamlined, and focused on academic substance. AALE accreditation is part of education reform, not a hindrance to it.

*What kind of charter schools should consider AALE accreditation?*

Only schools offering a content-rich academic curriculum to all of its students, regardless of their backgrounds, should consider applying for AALE accreditation.

*How long must a charter school be open to apply for AALE accreditation?*

Two years.

*Does AALE accredit at the elementary, middle, or high school level?*

AALE accredits charter schools at any grade level.

*Does AALE accredit regular public schools or independent schools?*

Not at this time.

*How long does the accreditation process take?*

AALE accreditation can be completed in six months but typically takes one year.

*Who does AALE appoint as site visitors?*

The site team, normally composed of three persons, includes: 1) at least one experienced classroom teacher, principal, or school leader; 2) an expert who knows the local or state context of the charter school; and 3) a prominent researcher, education reformer, or foundation officer. Our site teams bring a broader perspective and more value than one finds in traditional "peer review."

*Do AALE standards surpass those of other accreditors?*

Few if any accreditors pay such detailed attention to academics in assessing the quality of a school as does AALE. AALE accreditation focuses on content-rich, well-sequenced curriculum in core subjects, verifiable evidence of student learning, quality of teachers and teaching, careful governance and financial management.

*Does AALE require charter schools to hire certified teachers?*

No. AALE is concerned with teacher qualifications, not with teacher certification. In fact, the best research shows that the qualifications teachers should possess (at all grade levels and in all subjects) are high verbal ability, liberal arts education, subject matter expertise, leadership traits, and desire to teach. Imposing a certification requirement creates a barrier of entry to talented individuals and interferes with the mission of liberal-arts charter schools.

*Does AALE support high-stakes and objective testing?*

Yes, both at the beginning and end of the academic year. Such assessments help teachers identify problems early that might otherwise go unnoticed, and help hold teachers and students accountable for verifiable gains in academic achievement during the school year.

***What are the costs of accreditation?***

There is a \$35 filing fee for schools wishing to be considered for accreditation. If the school is accepted as an applicant, there is a \$1,000 application fee and an annual membership fee of \$350 plus \$2 per student up to \$1,500 maximum. Schools absorb costs of site visits.

***How do AALE costs compare to regional accreditors?***

AALE fees are comparable to or lower than those of regional accreditors.

***Is it possible for a school to seek both AALE and regional accreditation?***

Yes. AALE provides full accreditation on its own as well as joint accreditation.

***How is AALE funded?***

AALE is a non-profit academic association that has received funding from the U S Department of Education, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, John M. Olin Foundation, Ruth and Lovett Peters Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Pisces Foundation, The Bradley Foundation, and the D & D Foundation.

***Is AALE recognized by the federal government?***

Yes, since 1995 the U.S. Department of Education has recognized AALE as an accreditor of colleges and university programs that offer B.A. degrees in the liberal arts. The U.S. Department of Education only recognizes *post-secondary* accreditors. Therefore no accreditor—whether regional or AALE—is federally recognized at the K-12 level for public, charter, or independent schools.

***What is meant by the word “Liberal” in “American Academy for Liberal Education”? Are you promoting a liberal political agenda?***

The term “liberal education” simply means “education for free citizens.” AALE promotes the study of “the liberal arts,” that is, the academic subjects of history, mathematics, languages, and sciences. AALE is nonpartisan and does not support political indoctrination in schools.

***What charter schools have been granted AALE accreditation?***

AALE has accredited: Academy of Math & Sciences, Tucson, AZ; BASIS SCOTTSDALE, Scottsdale, AZ; BASIS TUCSON, Tucson, AZ; Black River Public School, Holland, MI; The Classical Academy, Colorado Springs, CO; The Franklin Academy, Wake Forest, NC; KIPP Houston, Houston, TX; Humanities and Sciences Institute, Phoenix and Tempe, AZ; Princeton Charter School, Paul Public Charter School, Washington, DC; Princeton, NJ; Sonoran Science Academy, Tucson, AZ; Tempe Preparatory Academy, Tempe, AZ; and W.E.B. DuBois Academy, Cincinnati, OH.

***What charter schools have applied for AALE accreditation?***

Additional schools in the application process include the Charter School of Excellence, Fort Lauderdale, FL; Deborah Brown Community School, Tulsa, OK; Della Lamb Elementary Charter School, Kansas City, MO; Healthy Start Academy, Durham, NC; Horizon Science Academy, Cleveland, OH; Horizon Science Academy, Columbus, OH; Idaho Leadership Academy, Pingree, ID; Littleton Preparatory Charter School, Littleton, CO; Lloyd-Kennedy Charter School, Aiken, SC; Marshall Academy, Marshall, MI; Monument Academy, Monument, CO; New School for the Arts, Tempe, AZ; North Pointe Academy, Glendale, AZ; North Pointe Preparatory, Phoenix, AZ; Old Brooklyn Montessori School, Cleveland, OH; Parma Community School, Parma, OH; Pinnacle Pointe Academy, Glendale, AZ; Ridgeview Classical Academy, Fort Collins, CO; The School of Liberal Arts and Science, Oak Cliff, Dallas, TX; Southwest Charter School, Kansas City, MO, and Veritas Preparatory Academy, Phoenix, AZ.