

SAMPLE:

Charter Promises

The Basic Premise of a “Charter Promises” Document

- When a charter was granted to your school, your organization presented a plan for how to achieve certain results, articulated to your authorizer in your charter application, and subsequent charter contract and accountability plan.
- These results are the promises your organization’s board has made to uphold and deliver, as stewards of the public trust.
- An effective board focuses on these results.
- The management team is responsible for developing the best means to achieve these desired results.
- Charter applications are extremely dense, complicated documents, ranging from 100 to 400 pages.
- A great part of the charter application is really implementation strategies, which belong to the management team. Good implementation strategies should be constantly evolving based on real-life success.
- The “promises” or results belong to the board and should not change unless there is healthy discussion with between the board and the CEO.
- A Charter Promises document takes the very long, unwieldy charter application and distills it down to a chart form that clarifies the key promises and implementation strategies.
- At least annually, the full board and the CEO should discuss this document and monitor how well the organization is doing in reaching its promises.
- We recommend that the CEO and the management team create this document and receive input from the full board and relevant committees.

ABC Charter School Charter Promises

Key:

- *Items in italics represent promises.* All others are implementation strategies.
- In the DOE column: Items marked “Major” are considered a major change to our charter and require the Board of Education’s approval for an amendment.
- In the DOE column: Items marked “Minor” are considered a minor change to our charter and require the Commissioner of Education’s approval for an amendment.
- # = the page number in our charter application.

#	Promise	DOE
<p>School Characteristics</p> <p><i>ABC will be a small school with a strong school community and an extended day designed to meet students academic, social and emotional needs.</i></p>		
5	The school will be small : approximately 40 students per grade, with a total enrollment of about 300 students in the middle and high schools combined.	Major
9	Our school day will run from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm except Wednesdays, when students will be released at 4:00 pm to allow faculty to meet	Minor
9b	School will open at 8:00 am for breakfast, and the school day will begin at 8:30 am	
9c	Each day, there will be a 30 minute school-wide meeting, 30 minutes of sustained silent reading, 30 minutes for lunch, and a 30 minute Finale period	
10	We will have a school year of approximately 200 days	Minor
14	All students will participate in a school-wide daily silent reading period.	
126	The school will be known as the ABC Charter School (“ABC,” for short).	Minor
127	ABC serves 9 communities of Suffolk, Driscoll, Clarksburg, Lunenburg, Hancock, North Essex, Milton, Hamilton, and New City.	Major
128	ABC serves grades 6–12.	Major
<p><i>ABC’s schedule will allow for significant collaboration among the faculty.</i></p>		
8	Teachers will have one month in the summer and two hours every school day for collaborative planning and professional development.	
66	Students will be released early every Wednesday to allow teachers to meet as subject-discipline teams or work with elective teachers.	

<p>Curriculum</p> <p>General</p> <p><i>ABC will integrate arts and technology throughout a college preparatory curriculum aligned with the State Curriculum Frameworks.</i></p>		
1	<i>The curriculum will be college preparatory.</i>	Major
1a	<i>The curriculum will prepare students for the STATE exams.</i>	Major
2	<i>Students will study humanities, mathematics, and science, and will also learn about and use art and technology in every class, not just in discrete elective classes.</i>	Major
<i>Instruction will be performance-based and assessments will be based on achievement of well-defined standards.</i>		
7	<i>The school will emphasize inquiry-based and performance-based learning.</i>	Major
17	<i>We will integrate the acquisition of basic skills and knowledge with the development of critical thinking skills.</i>	
26	Each grade will grapple with an essential question that serves to focus learning for the year.	
28	We will utilize in all classes participatory activities that allow students to incorporate personal experiences and apply extant knowledge.	Major
29	Regular exhibitions of student work will be a major feature of the school.	
30	We will provide access to experts and practitioners who can give students substantive feedback and model professional standards of quality.	
<i>Teachers will collaborate to create an interdisciplinary curriculum and to address individual student needs.</i>		
6	The school will incorporate team teaching in every grade.	
6a	Teachers will be able to focus on small groups of students and work collaboratively to address their students' individual needs.	
72	When the teachers come together each August for four weeks of planning prior to the arrival of students, they will adapt and arrange the benchmarks into scope and sequences that reflect the resources in the community in the coming year (e.g., exhibitions, performances).	
<i>Students will become self-directed, independent learners</i>		
18	<i>Students will have personal education plans (PEPs).</i>	
19	Each PEP will include both academic goals, such as research skills or content mastery, and non-academic goals, such as being on time, cooperation or fitness.	
31	Students may be grouped in multiple ways, for example, homogeneous groups for learning basic skills and heterogeneous groups for exploring complex ideas.	

32	We will recognize students' developmental stages by starting with concrete ideas and addressing more abstract concepts as students mature cognitively.	
33	<i>We will provide a variety of learning opportunities for students with diverse learning styles and academic strengths.</i>	
34	We will provide educational software and the Internet to permit students to work at their own pace and pursue their individual interests.	
27	Lessons will reference large concepts and themes, pose complex problems with multiple solutions, and use multidisciplinary approaches that require students to expand their frameworks of understanding.	
64	We will explore the possibility of expanding our curricular offerings via online courses through providers such as Apex Learning or Virtual High School.	
<p>Arts Curriculum</p> <p><i>Students will study the arts (all disciplines) both in their own right and integrated in their college preparatory curriculum.</i></p>		
2a	<i>Our students will study drama, music, dance, visual arts, computers, and other digital technology, both as subjects in their own right and as themes integrated into the study of other subjects.</i>	
2c	Our approach to arts education is informed by Discipline-Based Arts Education, a conceptual framework developed by the Getty Education Institute for the Arts.	
3	We plan to work with local museums, art schools, performance companies, and colleges to provide students with access to facilities and professional artists and programs.	
2b	<i>Our students will become familiar with four major arts disciplines—drama, dance, visual arts, and music—and by the end of their high school careers will have developed a deep understanding in at least one area.</i>	
35	<i>Students will have elective classes such as art, computer science, wellness, or foreign language.</i>	
36	Electives will range from one to two quarters in length.	
<p>Technology Curriculum</p> <p><i>Technology will be integrated throughout the college-prep curriculum. Students will have regular access to technology and will learn how to use technology effectively. Budget permitting, all students will be assigned a laptop computer.</i></p>		
4	Every student will be provided a laptop computer to use in every class to prepare them for a world that relies on information and communication technology.	

60	Students will have regular access to computers, the Internet, and word-processing, spreadsheet, database, communication, publishing, and art applications.	
61	We will seek educational software for each discipline that fits with our curriculum and the State Frameworks.	
62	In the middle school, students will take electives that teach them basic computer operations and keyboarding fluency, and how to use technology as a productivity, communication, and research tool.	
63	At the high school level, students will have opportunities to study computer languages.	
ELA Curriculum <i>The ELA standards that students will achieve will be aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.</i>		
21	Students will participate in a regular literacy workshop within their humanities class to sharpen their language skills.	
37	Our approach to literature will be informed by the shared inquiry method of the Great Books Foundation where students learn to search together for answers to fundamental questions raised by a text.	
38	<i>Literature selection for each grade will be coordinated with the social science curriculum.</i>	
42	Students will write regularly ; consistent writing procedures such as the Collins Writing Program will be taught and used throughout the school.	
Social Sciences Curriculum <i>The Social Sciences standards that students will achieve will be aligned with the State Curriculum Frameworks.</i>		
43	History, geography, economics, and civics will be integrated into thematic lessons that align with the State Frameworks.	
44	Middle school students will focus on ancient world history and early United States history.	
45	High school students will focus on modern world history and 20 th century United States history.	
46	Curriculum materials will be selected that promote both collaborative inquiry, such as the <i>History Alive!</i> , series and the use of primary sources such as <i>Jackdaw Publications</i> .	
47	Only textbooks that come with rich supplemental materials and activities will be considered (e.g., McDougal Littell history and literature series).	
48	Students will be expected to master social-science methods such as historiography and economic modeling.	
49	The social sciences curriculum will also take advantage of computers and the Internet for research and simulations, and emphasize art history and the role of technology in society.	

<p>Science Curriculum</p> <p><i>The Science standards that students will achieve will be aligned with the State Curriculum Frameworks.</i></p>		
39/57	We will consult with science programs such as the <i>Modeling for Understanding in Science Education (MUSE) Project</i> at the University of Wisconsin to adapt their educational units and select appropriate additional materials.	
40/58	We will work with professors at nearby colleges to develop lessons and laboratory experiences.	
54	The science curriculum will employ spiraling to reinforce scientific themes and concepts	
55	Students in the middle school will cover earth and life science.	
56	High school students will cover biology, chemistry, and physics.	
59	We will connect many arts learning areas with science study , such as examination of art processes, chemical properties of materials, conservation, physics of movement and force, earth art, landscape architecture, use of scientific tools in art-making (e.g., perspective, camera obscura, motion-capture technologies), and properties of light and light-based media (e.g., video).	
<p>Mathematics Curriculum</p> <p><i>The Mathematics standards that students will achieve will be aligned with the STATE Curriculum Frameworks.</i></p>		
50	We will seek mathematics curricula that supports spiraling, that addresses central concepts repeatedly but in increasing complexity.	
51	In the middle school years, we will select skill-level textbooks and materials, and group students according to ability.	
52	At the high school level, mathematics topics can be taught in a more parallel fashion, and we will consider curriculum that supports thematic instruction such as the <i>Interactive Mathematics Program</i> from Key Curriculum Publishers.	
53	The mathematics curriculum will address concepts from algebra, geometry, trigonometry, logic, probability, and statistics.	
<p>Assessment</p> <p><i>Assessments will be standards-based. Students will understand what the standards are that they are trying to achieve and will understand grade-level benchmarks in order to track their on-going progress.</i></p>		
65	Teachers will use grade level benchmarks to continuously assess student progress and the efficacy of curriculum and instruction.	

70	Over the course of the planning year, the principal will begin to develop grade level benchmarks for each standard in consultation with experts and educators in each field.	
71	Benchmarks will be shared with students and parents at the beginning of each quarter to give them a clear indication of the specific content and skills students are expected to master.	
73	The School will design a standards-based reporting system aligned with the school's standards and benchmarks and the State's Curriculum Frameworks.	
74	At the end of each quarter, teachers will rate students on each benchmark using a four-point scale (4 = Advanced, 3 = Proficient, 2 = Developing, 1 = Beginning). An overall rating for the quarter will be computed by taking a weighted average of benchmark scores, and the average of the four quarterly ratings will determine the overall rating for the entire course.	
75	The benchmarks and examples of different levels of work will be introduced at the beginning of each quarter and referred to regularly so students know what they are expected to learn and the criteria they will be measured against.	
<i>Students will be expected to demonstrate proficiency against the appropriate standards in order to be promoted. Seat time or age will not be enough to move to the next grade level.</i>		
76	Promotion (to the next grade) will be based on mastery of content and skills assessed by team teachers.	
77	Middle school students must be at least Proficient in two of their three core courses (Humanities, Mathematics, and Science) and at least Developing in the third core course to move to the next grade.	
78	Students who do not demonstrate mastery of subject matter will be viewed as Beginning or Developing and be given the time and attention necessary to become proficient.	
79	Students may not be Developing in the same subject for two consecutive years.	
80	Students deemed unready to move to the next grade may conduct independent study over the summer and petition the school for promotion in the fall.	
81	High school students must be Proficient or Advanced in all core courses.	
<i>Students will maintain a portfolio of their work, including core academic work, arts and technology, and personal growth. Students will be required to present their portfolios at various stages of their school career in order to move to the next stage.</i>		
82	<i>Each student will be required to maintain a portfolio that establishes his or her progress in technology and in all four arts disciplines—dance, music, visual arts and drama.</i>	
83	<i>The portfolio must include the student's personal education plans and a written reflective analysis of his or her personal growth.</i>	

84	In order to graduate from middle school and high school, students will be required to present portfolios of their work to a panel of teachers, peers, parents, and community members; they must discuss orally their portfolios and convince the panel they are ready to move to the next level of their education.	
<i>Students will be assessed against internal and external benchmarks to track their progress.</i>		
86	In addition to the STATE test, we will administer annually in every grade a nationally norm-referenced exam such as the Stanford-9 in reading and mathematics. The tests will be given in the fall for new students and again in the spring for all students.	
88	Baseline data will be used to identify individual student's strengths and weaknesses and adapt instruction and curriculum to achieve our objectives.	
89	Subsequent exams will be used to measure students' progress over time and the value-added by participating in our education program.	
90	High school students will also take the PSAT and SAT exams .	
94	Within classes, regular assignments, quizzes, and tests will provide immediate feedback for both teachers and students.	
125	100 percent of students will participate in a student-led conference with a parent and teacher each year.	
<p>School Culture</p> <p><i>The faculty and staff will create and maintain a school culture that promotes the mission (independent thinkers, dynamic workers, active citizens) and emphasizes a strong school community.</i></p>		
11	All students will adhere to a strict dress code .	
12	All students and staff will attend daily school meetings to build a strong sense of community.	
12a	Students and staff will participate in common meals ,	
12b	The school will contract with an outside food provider to serve all students meals, including vegetarian options, which meet state and federal nutrition guidelines.	
12c	We will not allow vending machines with junk food or drinks on our premises; only healthy snacks and juice will be permitted.	
12b	Finale periods will be used to foster a shared sense of community and model the roles and responsibilities of active citizens.	
13	<i>We will create an intellectual community that supports the integration, application, and variation of learning.</i>	
96	During the summer, teachers and administrators will establish parameters for student input into the code of conduct . These parameters will set the stage for a constitutional convention at the beginning of each school year during which students and staff will together develop, and in subsequent years refine, the code of conduct.	

97	We hope to develop a peer mediation program that gives students some responsibility for the health of their community and helps them become active citizens.	
110	We do not plan to have organized sports teams in our initial years, but will help students to access local leagues or organize clubs.	
Student Services (Special Needs, Wellness, Transportation) <i>ABC will have adequate staff and contractors to ensure the learning needs of all students are met.</i>		
22	Students below grade level will work with a literacy specialist during this (literacy workshop) time to accelerate their reading fluency.	
24	Those students who require targeted assistance will receive help during the literacy workshop and Finale period.	
25	Should teachers' attempts at intervention not succeed, they will refer the issue to the Special Needs Coordinator to determine if evaluation and/or services are required. The Special Needs Coordinator will coordinate communication between the student, parents, teachers, and special needs staff to develop and monitor a plan of action.	
103	The school will hire a certified Special Needs Coordinator.	
104	Students whose needs cannot be met by the school's staff will have access to specialists such as physical, occupational, speech, and language therapists.	
105	We plan to have three full-time special needs teachers on staff when the school is at full capacity, and have budgeted for additional contract services such as speech therapy and physical therapy.	
106	The Special Needs Coordinator will arrange a team meeting for every student who enrolls with an existing individualized education plan (IEP).	
<i>ABC will offer a wellness curriculum that will cover physical and mental health, adolescent development, and personal and social responsibility.</i>		
107	<i>We will develop a wellness curriculum that covers physical and mental health, adolescent development, and personal and social responsibility.</i>	
108	The school will contract with counselors to work with students and families on issues of child development and mental health.	
109	A part-time nurse will maintain student's medical records, administer medications, and administer any necessary exams and attend to minor injuries and illnesses.	
<i>ABC will do what we can to ensure that transportation to the school is not a major issue for parents and families.</i>		
118	We do not believe we can afford to provide transportation for students in other districts. We will work closely with parents to arrange car pools and the use of public transportation.	

<p>Faculty/Staff</p> <p><i>All faculty will be members of teams that are dedicated to either a grade or a small grade span to ensure an interdisciplinary curriculum and significant time dedicated to supporting individual students.</i></p>		
15	In the middle school, each grade will have a team comprised of a humanities teacher and a math/science teacher.	
16	At the high school level, teams of four teachers—two humanities, one mathematics, and one science teacher—will devote their attention exclusively to two grades.	
20	Part of a (teaching) team’s daily two-hour planning block will be devoted to assessing individual student progress and creating strategies to meet individual needs.	
67	Professional development activities will include structured reflection on instructional practices (modeled after <i>Critical Friends Groups</i>), design and evaluation of interdisciplinary projects (modeled on <i>Japanese Lesson Study</i>), and collaborative assessment of student work.	
<p><i>Faculty will be skilled in curriculum design and implementation.</i></p>		
41	We will recruit faculty with proven experience in curriculum design and implementation.	
68	The principal and academic coordinators will regularly observe classrooms to ensure alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment.	
121	The school will generally not hire novice teachers, but may consider novice candidates with unique expertise.	
<p><i>Faculty will model themselves as continual learners.</i></p>		
95	(Student) assessment (information) will play a major role in (teachers’) professional development, and the analysis of data will be a regular feature of faculty meetings.	
122	Each teacher will develop a personal education plan (PEP) and establish goals for improving their knowledge and skills in content and pedagogy.	
<p>COMPENSATION/EVALUATION</p> <p><i>ABC will compensate faculty and staff with salaries and benefits that will encourage high-quality personnel to want to work at ABC.</i></p>		
119	The school intends to compensate teachers and staff at levels competitive with other public schools in the region, and will set teachers’ base salaries approximately 10 percent above local pay scale to compensate them for the extra four weeks they will work in August.	
120	Full-time employees will be eligible for health insurance, life and disability insurance, a \$1,000 professional development allowance, and the loan of a laptop computer	

123	Twice each year, the CEO will provide the principal with a written evaluation, and meet with the principal to discuss it. The CEO will similarly evaluate the business manager and non-academic support staff.	
124	We have used the FY10 state tuition rate for all three years; we do not plan for increases in our budget.	
<p style="text-align: center;">Community And Parent Outreach</p> <p><i>Faculty and staff will place a premium on developing a strong working relationship with <u>all</u> parents to ensure that the school and parents are working as a team to educate students. ABC will take responsibility for ensuring that we are doing everything possible to create strong communication channels between the parents and the school.</i></p>		
23	Teachers will maintain regular contact and work with parents to address issues such as motivation.	
69	Classrooms will be open to other staff, parents, and members of the community to observe and critique the efficacy of instruction.	
92	Assessment performance information will be shared with students, parents, the board of trustees, and other stakeholders, and will be published in our annual report.	
93	Before the school year begins, we hope to meet with every admitted student and his or her guardians to establish a personal relationship . During these meetings we will seek information about the student's previous academic performance, study habits, and personal interests and ambitions. The school will use this information to prepare instruction that engages students from the first day and identify areas in which students may require special attention.	
98	<p>We promise to provide parents with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular Communication: We have specifically teamed core teachers with only one or two grades to help them maintain regular contact with the families of their students. Technology will facilitate communication via phone and Internet. Teachers will contact parents in a timely fashion if their child is having academic or other problems. • Progress Reports: Teachers will send progress reports in the middle of every quarter to apprise parents of their children's status and identify areas in which they need help. • Quarterly Conferences: Student-led conferences will give teachers and parents an opportunity to assess student progress and develop strategies together to support the student's learning. Students, teachers, and parents will review and revise PEPs during these conferences. • Inclusion in Community Affairs: We will encourage parents to participate in the school community through the annual constitutional convention, participation in field trips, the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and parent focus groups. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibitions: Parents will have many opportunities to view their children’s work through exhibitions and performances. We plan to make these community events where parents can take pride in their children’s achievements. 	
99	We will conduct focus groups with randomly selected parents at different points during the year. School staff will prepare questions that parents are in a position to answer, and ideally we will have a neutral party facilitate discussions and report findings.	
100	We will also conduct exit interviews with all parents who decide to withdraw their child from the school, in order to determine the reason	
101	We intend to establish a Parent Advisory Council and will expect it to solicit ideas and concerns and communicate them to school staff.	
102	Information gathered from these various sources will be shared with school staff and the Board, and will be used in our annual report.	
<p>Governance</p> <p><i>ABC will be governed by a board of trustees. The board of trustees will hire and evaluate a CEO and delegate to that person full responsibility for implementing the mission and policies of the board.</i></p>		
111	The board of trustees will conduct an annual evaluation of the CEO .	
112	At the beginning of each year, the board will establish a taskforce that is chaired by a trustee and includes members with human resources expertise. This taskforce will work with the CEO to establish performance goals aligned with the school’s mission. The taskforce will review these goals quarterly and provide feedback to the CEO. At the end of the year, the taskforce will evaluate the CEO.	
113	The evaluation will be based on the stated goals, measures of school success in the accountability plan, feedback solicited from school stakeholders (including parents, staff and community partners), and the CEO’s self-evaluation.	
114	The board will provide the CEO with both written and oral feedback.	
115	The board will use the evaluation to determine the CEO’s capacity to achieve the school’s mission, and make decisions regarding the contract.	
<p><i>The CEO will hire, supervise, and evaluate the management team at the school and oversee daily operations.</i></p>		
128	The CEO will (1) implement the decisions and policies of the Board, (2) represent the school to parents, the community, the state, and the media, (3) hire, supervise, and evaluate the principal and non-academic staff, (4) manage and report the financial status of school accounts and oversee fundraising, (5) coordinate the school’s accountability measures and reporting, and (6) work with and inform the board about the operation of the school.	

<i>The board of trustees will establish bylaws by which they will govern. These bylaws will be consistent with legal requirements of the state and best practices for effective governance.</i>		
116	Board officers will have renewable one-year terms, and may serve in the same position for no more than three consecutive years.	
117	The Governance Committee will orchestrate the evaluation of the performance of current board members.	

#	Promise	DOE
Goals/Measures That Have Been Moved to the Charter Renewal Matrix		
1b	<p>Goals. By the end of our fifth year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average student scores on the STATE TEST will surpass the average of students attending the districts from which our students come. We will construct virtual cohorts weighted by the proportion of our students from each sending district. • Average student scores on the STATE TEST will surpass state averages for students who have attended our school for more than a year. • More than 70 percent of students who have attended our school for more than three years will be rated Proficient or Advanced on STATE TEST exams. 	
85	<p>Our goal is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 percent of students will be rated Advanced or Proficient in a public performance or exhibition each year. • 100 percent of students will be rated Advanced or Proficient on their portfolio in 8th and 12th grade. 	
87	<p>Specific goals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will demonstrate an average improvement of at least two Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) points annually in their national rankings in both reading and math. • Every student who has attended the school for two years will increase at least two Normal Curve Equivalent points in their national rankings in both reading and math. 	
91	<p>Our goals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 percent of students will exceed 110 for the PSAT math and verbal combined. • 80 percent of students will exceed 1100 for the SAT math and verbal combined. 	
125	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School will maintain its annual enrollment level at or above 90 percent of capacity. • Beginning in the third year of operation the School's waiting list will exceed 15 percent of the school population. 	