

CHALLENGE FOUNDATION ACADEMY

PURPOSE

It is the intent of the Challenge Foundation to lend its name, financial start-up, and operating support to charter schools that are willing to embrace our model school concept and become Challenge Foundation Academies. The model school as presented in this application sets forth those facets considered to be important in developing a sound Challenge Foundation Academy program. In addition to subscribing to the model school concept, each Challenge Foundation Academy will be guided by the following Mission and Goal statements.

MISSION

The mission of the Challenge Foundation Academy is to offer each student the opportunity to attain a K-12 education of the highest quality. Academics will be guided by clear and attainable world-class standards. Student mastery will be achieved through a scientifically-based, content-rich curricula that imparts core knowledge, essential learning skills, and a positive disciplined attitude, all laying a foundation for the highest social, ethical, and civic standards.

We will seek out and encourage parental involvement at all levels of the program. From the governing board to the classroom, parents will be enlisted to serve the needs and best interests of all students in attaining the educational goals of the school.

GOAL

The Challenge Foundation Academy believes that the quality of a student's education determines the quality of each child's future and the future of society. Our goal is to assure that each student:

- Becomes a motivated and capable learner.
- Acquires the essential skills needed to compete in an increasingly competitive world.
- Builds character and makes choices that will result in a better life for themselves and others.
- As a result of the three items above, develops the confidence to realize their full potential.
- Has the active involvement of parents, caretakers, mentors, and the community throughout the educational process.
- Benefits, not detracts from civil society.

The Challenge Foundation will also expect each charter school that receives support from and bears the name of the Challenge Foundation Academy to adhere to the Academic, Governance, and Business Plans outlined in this document. Each school must also devise its own program for providing facilities and transportation. The specific programs devised by each Challenge Foundation Academy will be approved by the Board of the Challenge Foundation Academy and by the appropriate chartering institution.

ACADEMIC PLAN

In addition to meeting any academic requirements of the appropriate chartering authority, the Challenge Foundation Academy will incorporate, at a minimum, the best practices currently recommended by the Core Knowledge Foundation in its K-8 curriculum. Core Knowledge is a scientifically-based, sequential, content-rich curriculum that helps all students, including those who have not had the benefits of a home rich in literature or multiple learning experiences, interact with the world through theme-based classroom studies.

The Core Knowledge program provides a detailed outline of specific knowledge in Language Arts, American and World History, Geography, Visual Arts, Music, Math, and Science. It supports the need of elementary and middle school students to have a specific, shared core curriculum in order to help them establish a strong foundation of knowledge, grade by grade. This structural approach will provide the knowledge essential for higher levels of learning and build the confidence necessary for student achievement. Additionally, this program will assist the teaching staff in developing plans with students for individual learning.

Core Knowledge is designed to comprise only 50% of the school's curriculum. It provides a solid coherent foundation for learning while allowing flexibility to meet local needs or add other subjects that may be required. Where required, Core Knowledge can be supplemented with other programs such as Direct Instruction, Saxon Math, Arts and Music, Paideia, Great Books, Technology/Computer Use, and Character Education.

The Challenge Foundation Academy will be focused on college preparatory strategies at all grade levels. Minimum standards for grades 9-12 will be those laid out by either the International Baccalaureate program or advanced placement criteria. Accordingly, there will be an emphasis on accelerated language arts, math, and science. Similarly, beginning in middle school, project-based learning, Great Books, and Saxon Math programs may be increasingly employed. All of these will be directed at preparing all high school graduates for college.

The Challenge Foundation Academy recognizes that both federal and state testing programs will be a first level of assessment required of all charter schools. This will allow us to measure progress in assessing each charter school and each subgroup within the school. However, it will also be important to assess the school against all schools both in this country and internationally. Each Challenge Foundation Academy will incorporate academic assessment tools that will include clear national and international normed tests that are broken down into various subcategories of reading and mathematics. Minimal national testing standards shall be those set out in the Stanford 10 test. Internationally, standards will be set by those in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). All assessment techniques will be predefined and access to results will be shared as widely as possible within the bounds of students' privacy rights. The Challenge Foundation Academy Board will approve the assessment program in each school.

GOVERNANCE PLAN

The Challenge Foundation Academy governance plan must be formulated to be consistent with the laws of the state within which the charter school resides. Accordingly, in each state we will retain an attorney familiar with that state's charter school legislation to draft appropriate Articles of Organization, bylaws, and application for tax-exempt status. These will be reviewed and approved by counsel and trustees of the Challenge Foundation.

The bylaws will provide that the founding Board of the organization be approved by the Challenge Foundation and be constituted by those who are in agreement with the principles of the Challenge Foundation Academy as outlined in this document. The founding Board will include at least one representative from the Challenge Foundation.

It is the intent that the founding Board will serve for a period of 5 years during which time it will establish the performance and evaluation standards for the school. If these original standards are met, a new local Board will gradually replace the founding Board over an additional three-year period. The new Board will continue to evaluate the performance goals based upon the criteria adopted by the founding Board. If, however, the original standards are not met, the founding Board will determine what course of action to take.

The Board will have at a minimum the authority to approve all budgets, the academic program, and school policy; approve all faculty, staff, and consultant positions; set employee benefits and policies; and nominate and elect future Board members and officers, except that parent Board members will be elected by the parents.

Subsequent Board members must understand and agree with the content-driven philosophy of the Challenge Foundation Academy. In addition, it is the intent of the Challenge Foundation Academy that a continuing significant representation (one third) of the governing Board be parents. Other Board members can be drawn at large from those who believe in and support the mission and goals of the Challenge Foundation Academy.

The Board will hire a School Director to head each Challenge Foundation Academy. In addition to being responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school, the School Director will also be a non-voting member of the Board. The School Director will be responsible for the evaluation of the faculty and staff, and will report at least annually to the Board making appropriate recommendations for changes in work responsibilities and compensation. The School Director will also be responsible for the development of clear safety practices, student and staff disciplinary procedures, teacher development, parental relations, dispute resolution, and transportation programs, all subject to Board approval. The Board will annually review and evaluate the School Director's overall work responsibilities, job performance, and adequacy of compensation making any appropriate changes.

BUSINESS PLAN

The Challenge Foundation Academy business plan must also be formulated to be consistent with the laws of the state within which the charter school resides. A start-up plan must be made to cover the first 5-6 years of operation for the charter school. Operating budgets, capital budgets, balance sheets, and a description of the cost and location of the school facilities must be reviewed and approved by the Challenge Foundation Academy. Clear breakdowns of expected sources of revenues, expenses, staff sizes, and projected student enrollment should be provided.

The ongoing monthly accounting and software system, financial control system, student record-keeping and privacy system, and the staff requirements to accomplish each should be clearly spelled out. The charter school should use a reporting system that aligns itself with the state requirements whenever possible. Accordingly, we will be encouraging each school to use common administrative systems.

It is the long-term intent of the Challenge Foundation Academy to outsource as many of the administrative services as possible. Strong attempts should be made to use third party suppliers for help with payroll, accounting, janitorial, etc. In-house staff should only be used when it can be clearly shown to be less costly. An annual audit by outside auditors will be required. This should provide significant cost savings to each school and leave the schools free to concentrate on the academic program and parental relations.

Plans should be put in place to cover insurance, safety and health, student discipline, professional development and assessment, transportation, and marketing to insure that the school can be expected to operate with a full complement of students.