

LEARNS Charter School Work Group Meeting #2

September 7, 2023

Meeting Objectives and Norms

Today's objectives

- ▶ Review Arkansas Charter School Policy
- ▶ Review Legislative Intent for Charter Schools
- ▶ Review LEARNS Executive order and ADE Commitment
- ▶ Define and Discuss High quality Charter Schools

Norms

Prior to Meeting

- ▶ ADE will send out agenda at least 3 business days in advance of each meeting.
- ▶ Members review all materials and come prepared to share feedback.

During Meeting

- ▶ Mute yourself when not speaking.
- ▶ Keep feedback centered on topic at hand.
- ▶ Stay engaged (e.g., actively participate and use the chat function).
- ▶ Be mindful of how much “air time” each member receives.
- ▶ All ideas are valued.

Materials (notes, slides) will be posted after the meeting for members who can not attend.

Review of Arkansas Charter School policies

A Review of Arkansas's Charter School Policies



Executive Summary

All Arkansas students should have access to high-quality educational choice opportunities, and the state's public charter schools are a key piece of the puzzle. Arkansas aims to align state policy and processes to national best practices in order to recruit, retain, and expand the best charter operators in America. Specifically, the Arkansas

Department of Education (ADE) commits to:

- **Streamline charter application processes:** Create a more transparent charter approval and renewal process.
- **Improve charter policies:** Work with the State Board of Education to revise charter policy to codify a more transparent application process, tie charter renewal and expansion decisions to performance criteria, and remove barriers for high-quality, out-of-state charter operators to open in Arkansas.

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Overview of LEARNs Executive Order

On January 11th, 2023, Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders published the Executive Order to prioritize Literacy, Empowerment, Accountability, Readiness, Networking, and School Safety (LEARNs) in Arkansas. Included in this Executive Order is a call for the Secretary of the Department of Education to empower parents by coordinating, alongside the State Board of Education, policies that streamline processes to continue, expand, and replicate effective charter schools.

This report overviews commitments and recommendations for the State Board of Education as Arkansas considers how to improve its charter schools and networks.

Background and Current State: Arkansas's Charter School Sector

The Arkansas Department of Education's (ADE) Charter Authorizing Panel is Arkansas's designated public charter authorizer. Arkansas currently has 102 charter schools enrolling 41,399 students, just 8.7% of the total students in the state. Eight percent of Arkansas's public schools are charters, fewer than [national leaders](#) like Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. Among the 77 charters receiving a letter grade in 2018-19, 28 (36.4%) were [D- or F-rated](#).

Process	Arkansas Current State	NACSA Best Practice
Applying for a New Charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 40 open-ended questions organized into the following sections: Mission/Vision,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Application organized by academic, financial, and organizational

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<https://learns.ade.arkansas.gov/File/44yteh0.pdf>



ADE shall empower parents by coordinating, alongside the State Board of Education, policies that streamline processes to continue, expand, and replicate effective charter schools (LEARNS Executive Order 1/11/23 (2a))

All Arkansas students should have access to high-quality educational choice opportunities, and the state's public charter schools are a key piece of the puzzle. Arkansas aims to align state policy and processes to national best practices in order to recruit, retain, and expand the best charter operators in America. Specifically, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) commits to:

- **Streamline charter application processes:** Create a more transparent charter approval and renewal process tied to academic, financial and organizational performance with clear, measurable standards and targets.
- **Improve charter policies:** Work with the State Board of Education to revise charter policy to codify a more transparent application process, tie charter renewal and expansion decisions to performance criteria, and remove barriers for high-quality, out-of-state charter operators to open in Arkansas.

[LEARNS - Reports \(arkansas.gov\)](https://arkansas.gov)

Engagement from this group and other stakeholders is essential to ensure that Charter School policies are representative of the perspectives of all part of the state's Charter system.



Legislative Intent

Universal Citation: [AR Code § 6-23-102 \(2020\)](#)

It is the intent of the General Assembly, by this chapter, to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, pupils, and community members to *establish and maintain public schools that operate independently* from the existing structure of local school districts as a method to accomplish the following:

- (1) Improve student **learning**
- (2) Increase learning **opportunities** for all students, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are identified as low-achieving
- (3) Encourage the use of different and **innovative** teaching methods
- (4) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be **responsible** for the learning program at the school site
- (5) Provide parents and pupils with **expanded choices** in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system
- (6) Hold the schools established under this chapter **accountable** for meeting measurable student achievement standards



Essential Question

How would you define a high-quality charter school?

Three Areas of Concentration

Applications (New, Renewals)

Monitoring

Support

Clarity and efficiency within each of these areas is essential to ensure that Charter School policies are representative and accessible to all areas of the State and fulfill legislative intent



Next Step - Review Draft Application

Before our next meeting review both the existing charter application and the draft application.

Begin drafting your thoughts and ideas around the following question:

Does the new application provide the Charter Authorizing Panel with enough information to determine academic, financial and organizational performance with clear, measurable standards and targets.



Next Step - Review Draft Application

As you review, below are some guiding questions to consider:

- As you review both applications, what do you like or dislike about each?
- Does either application allow the Charter Authorizing Panel to determine the likelihood of academic success, financial sustainability, functional and sustainable organizational processes?
- Does either application ask applicants to present:
 - a clear and compelling mission
 - a quality educational program
 - a solid business plan
 - effective governance and management structures and systems
 - evidence of community and/or family demand and need
 - a diverse founding member team with the necessary capabilities to lead the organization
 - clear evidence of the applicant's capacity to execute its plan successfully

