



# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

## Recognized Best Practices

### Regulatory Framework

Charter public schools are required to state within their contract with an authorizer their educational goals and the curricula to be offered as well as methods of pupil assessment ([MCL 380.502](#)). The educational goals shall include demonstrated improved pupil academic achievement for all groups of pupils. This aligns with the sections of law within the Revised School Code for all public schools to adopt a model core curriculum and provide student assessments as found in sections [1278](#), [1278a](#), [1278b](#), [1278c](#), [1278d](#), and [1279g](#).

### MCCSA Guiding Principles and Standards

MCCSA has adopted Principles and Standards (Standards) that guide authorizers as they develop strong authorizing practices. To balance charter school autonomy and student academic outcomes, the first principle of MCCSA's guiding principles is for authorizers to focus on Performance & Accountability. Since the educational program and curriculum are part of the charter contract, the authorizer must develop a monitoring process.

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) Principles and Standards also outline the importance of the authorizer's monitoring of the educational program and curriculum. NACSA recognizes the importance of oversight at the new school application level, ongoing oversight, and renewal.

### Educational Program

All charter public schools must submit an application to their authorizer to receive a charter contract that includes a description of the educational program. The educational program should be included in the charter agreement and describes the educational philosophy and approach to enhance student achievement. The model of the school should be fully described in the educational program and any unique aspects of the school should be highlighted. The educational program should describe the teaching philosophy and methods that will reach every student including high-quality services for special populations, such as English language

learners and students with disabilities. The educational program is a narrative description of what will happen in the school and classrooms to ensure that the vision and mission are met.

The educational program should outline the following:

- Mission, vision, guiding principles
- Educational model description
- Research based methodologies
- Support of students with special needs
- Alignment with state standards and curriculum requirements
- State and local assessments and how they will be utilized
- Evaluation methods for evaluating effectiveness of educational program

The authorizer has the responsibility to ensure that the charter public school is implementing the educational program as described in the application and charter contract. Authorizers may choose to evaluate the school's implementation through quantitative and qualitative methods.

In addition to quantitative evaluation, the authorizer may evaluate the educational program through document review and site visits. Site visits can be valuable to ensure that the school is implementing the educational program and to identify potential support needed, and feedback the school can use for continuous improvement. It is common for authorizers to conduct an on-site educational program review during the first two years of operations and at the time of renewal. Authorizers may choose to evaluate the implementation of the educational program more frequently, especially for schools that may not be meeting standards or have a significant change in the educational program.

## Curriculum

Michigan law (MCL 380.1278) requires all charter public school boards to adopt a model core curriculum. This can include instructional approaches, explanation of materials, and how students will be assessed on their learning.

The authorizer should ensure that the curriculum that is in the charter application and becomes part of the charter contract not only aligns with state requirements, but was evaluated and chosen using a comprehensive tool and/or framework that demonstrates it is effective and research based. The authorizer should also ensure that the instructional components are relevant to the school's population. The curriculum should be thoroughly descriptive, including resources for teachers and the methods of adaptation that will be used for the student population and ensure that all students can meet state academic standards.

The authorizer should have a clear understanding of how the school will utilize assessments to inform not only effectiveness of the curriculum, but also how the school will use state and local assessments to inform instructional practice, student supports needed, and continuous professional development for teachers.

## Why is monitoring the educational program and curriculum important?

Monitoring of the educational program and curriculum by an authorizer on an ongoing and annual basis is necessary to determine if the school is on track to meet the academic expectations outlined in the charter contract. The primary objective of academic monitoring is to ensure that students are receiving a quality education and to assure families and community members that public dollars are supporting student learning.

State and local assessments provide insight as to the effectiveness of the educational program, but additional qualitative reviews will provide a holistic view of implementation and feedback. By monitoring academic goals, conducting school site visits where teachers are observed (as opposed to a document review) and engagement with families, staff, and students regarding learning and social-emotional development, a holistic approach can provide insight into the fidelity of implementation and ensuring that the school is delivering on their promises to students and families.

### Reflective Questions:

How does your academic monitoring process review a school's educational program and curriculum?

How are you using site visits to understand whether the educational program and curriculum are implemented with fidelity?

What supports might you want to consider providing regarding educational program and curriculum?

### Resources:

[NACSA Standards](#)

[Curriculum Review](#)

[Educational Program Review](#)

[School Quality Reviews in California](#)