

Charter Schools - Implementation of HB 344 (2013)

Report for FY13



Prepared by the

Utah State Office of Education
Charter School Section

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Progress of Implementation:

On July 1, 2013, the State Charter School Board posted on its website the proposal requirements for applicants seeking to establish a charter school that employs new and creative methods to meet the unique learning styles and needs of students (UCA 53A-1a-501.9). In addition, the Utah State Office of Education and Charter School Section notified the public via press release of this opportunity. The proposal required applicants to submit (1) basic information about the school (e.g., grades served, location(s), contact information, etc.); (2) an executive summary of the proposal; (3) description of how the proposal met the terms of the law and qualified as a new and creative school; (4) the rationale for the school; (5) details about the target student population; (6) a market analysis of the proposed location(s); (7) general financial plan; and (8) details about the governing board members and organizational structure.

On July 15, 2013, the Charter School Section offered pre-applicant training for these applicants to assist them with understanding the requirements of the proposal.

Six proposals were submitted on September 3, 2013 for consideration at the September 12, 2013 State Charter School Board meeting. The State Charter School Board reviewed the proposals, heard presentations from the applicant groups, and invited all six groups to submit a complete application.

Final applications are due December 31, 2013.

Following the submission of final applications, the State Charter School Board will consider for authorization complete applications from these six groups at its February 12-13, 2014, meeting. Consistent with state law, the State Board of Education will approve the authorization of these schools at a subsequent meeting, anticipated to be April 4, 2014. Authorized schools will open in the fall of 2014.

Questions/Concerns That Have Surfaced:

UCA 53A-1a-501.9 requires the State Board of Education submit a request to the Legislature to appropriate funds for, or authorize, the enrollment of students in charter schools tentatively approved under this section. Initial request for additional charter school enrollments for 2014-2015 was addressed in H.B. 2 (2013 General Session) and will be updated by information provided by the Common Data Committee during the 2014 General Session. However, the timeframe for approval of these schools is not until February 2014. Allowing schools to open the same year they are authorized (2014) creates challenges with projecting accurate enrollments and public education funding prior to the beginning of the legislative session.

In addition, with schools receiving final authorization in April and trying to open in August, there is no opportunity for the school to have adequate planning time to secure an appropriate facility, submit for or receive a planning year grant or charter school revolving loan, or market for potential students.

In future years, the State Charter School Board can adjust the application timeline to fit within the needs of the Common Data Committee, and can provide the legislature with accurate enrollment and financial needs in advance of the session.