# PRE-OPENING CHECKLIST
## *for State Charter Schools*

## Contents

# INSTRUCTIONS

Pursuant to its charter contract, a state charter school must demonstrate its preparation for operations by making significant progress in completing the SCSC Pre-Opening Checklist. The SCSC Pre-Opening Checklist is comprised of Priority Milestones as well as Supporting Milestones. **A state charter school must evidence the completion of all Priority Milestones prior to its opening.** A state charter school must demonstrate the completion of Priority Milestones by submitting written evidence of their completion via email to Sarah Beck at sarah.beck@scsc.georgia.gov. If a state charter school fails to demonstrate that it has met **all** Priority Milestones by their respective timelines, the SCSC may suspend the opening of the charter school until a time after the charter school demonstrates its ability to meet its obligations under its charter contract.

All deadlines for Priority Milestones occur after the charter school executes its charter contract and prior to the school serving students. The deadlines for Priority Milestones reflect the latest date that the school may accomplish the associated task to remain on schedule for a successful school opening; however, schools are encouraged to complete all Priority Milestones as early as practicable. Upon completing a Priority Milestone, the school must submit the requested evidence of its completion within one calendar week. Failure to complete Priority Milestones and/or failure to submit required evidence of completion will impact the ability of the school to open for the 2017-2018 school year. The SCSC may suspend the opening of a state charter school if Priority Milestones remain outstanding on July 15, 2017.

Supporting milestones are actions the state charter school should take to ensure a successful school opening, however the noted timeline is suggestive and not mandatory. Priority milestones are highlighted in blue and supportive milestones are in light blue.

# GOVERNANCE

| Priority Milestones – MANDATORY | Additional Information | Deadline | Required Submission |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ratify By-laws | | November 1 | By-laws; Minutes of the meeting at which they were approved |
| Formally approve board policies | Board policies must include (at a minimum):<br>• Conflicts of Interest Policies<br>• Grievance Policies<br>• Criminal Background Checks of Board Members | November 1 | Policies; Minutes of the meeting(s) at which they were approved |
| Provide current board member listing and contact information | Pursuant to SCSC Rule 691-2-.03, the governing board membership and procedure for contacting the school's governing board must be easily accessible on the school's website. | November 1 | Board Member Roster |
| **Supporting Milestones** | **Additional Information** | **Timeline** | |
| Maintain evidence of regular board meetings and minutes | • All meetings after the execution of the charter contract must adhere to the Georgia Open Meetings Act (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et. seq.).<br>• This includes, but is not limited to, proper notice of regular and called meetings, record of meeting minutes, and access for the public. | Immediately Upon Approval | |

| | • Pursuant to SCSC Rule 691-2-.03, the governing board meeting calendar, meeting agendas for upcoming meetings, and meeting minutes for past meetings must be easily accessible on the school's website. | | |
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## FACILITIES

| Priority Milestones – MANDATORY | Additional Information | Deadline | Required Submission |
|---|---|---|---|
| Execute your lease or obtain proof of ownership | SCSC Rule 691-2-.06 requires state charter schools to:<br>• Submit a final draft lease to the SCSC Executive Director prior to execution of the lease;<br>• Submit a copy of the note or bond to the SCSC Executive Director within 30 days of closing on a facility's purchase when using proceeds of a loan or bond to purchase a facility;<br>• Notify the SCSC Executive Director prior to changing any facility. | November 1 | Lease or Deed |
| Obtain a School Code once the facility is approved by GaDOE | • GaDOE issues school codes upon final approval of a school's facility.<br>• A school code is required to access systems administered by GaDOE and GaPSC, including, but not limited to, the MyGaDOE Portal, PC Genesis, and TeachGeorgia. | May 1 | School Code |
| Prepare a Safety and Emergency plan | The Safety and Emergency plan must be submitted to the school's local emergency management agency pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1185. | May 1 | Safety and Emergency Plan and evidence of submission to emergency management agency |
| **Supporting Milestones** | | **Timeline** | |
| Finalize facility location | | Required to Obtain School Code | |
| Obtain site approval and architectural review | | Required to Obtain School Code | |
| Obtain a Certificate of Occupancy | | Required to Obtain School Code | |
| Obtain evidence of all necessary inspections | | Required to Obtain School Code | |
| Evidence of insurance as stipulated in the charter agreement | | Required to Obtain School Code | |
| Create a plan and procedures to control access to the building | | Ongoing | |
| Ensure adequate signage; ensure that the building is numbered for emergency response | | Ongoing | |
| Provide office furniture, supplies, and technology to support school administration | | Ongoing | |

# STUDENTS & PARENTS

| Priority Milestones – MANDATORY | Additional Information | Deadline | Required Submission |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adopt policies related to enrollment and student lotteries | • Enrollment policies must be consistent with open enrollment requirements of law and State Board of Education Rule.<br>• Admissions application must be available and easily accessible on the school's website pursuant to SCSC Rule 691-2-.03.<br>• Lottery policies should detail how the school will conduct lotteries in the event enrollment exceeds capacity. These should include, procedures for informing the public of enrollment opportunities; the use of enrollment priorities; maintaining a waitlist; and accepting enrollment offers. | December 1 | Policies; Minutes of the meeting(s) at which they were approved |
| Adopt a Student Handbook and related policies | Student policies must include (at a minimum):<br>• Discipline policies and due process procedures;<br>• Attendance policies;<br>• Grievance procedure required under federal laws;<br>• Policies required under FERPA and PPRA; and<br>• Technology and Acceptable Use policies; | May 1 | Student Handbook and Policies; Minutes of the meeting(s) at which they were approved |
| Adopt policies and procedures for serving special populations | Special population policies must include (at a minimum):<br>• Intake process for serving students with disabilities that have existing IEPs<br>• Identification and Eligibility procedures for students with disabilities<br>• Home language survey and assessment process for English learners<br>• Monitoring and service procedures for English learners<br>• Notification and service procedures for homeless students | May 1 | Policies; Minutes of the meeting(s) at which they were approved |
| Establish policies and procedures for nursing programs, required health services, and screenings, evaluating immunization records | Health policies must include (at a minimum):<br>• School nursing policy;<br>• Vision, Hearing, Dental, and Nutrition Screening;<br>• Diabetes Medical Management; and<br>• Immunization Records | May 1 | Policies; Minutes of the meeting(s) at which they were approved |
| **Supporting Milestones** | | **Timeline** | |
| Market your opening to students and parents to ensure adequate student enrollment | | As Soon as Practicable | |
| Develop a plan to involve parents and the community in key aspects of the school | | Ongoing | |

# FINANCES

| Priority Milestones – MANDATORY | Additional Information | Deadline | Required Submission |
|---|---|---|---|
| Verify Expected Enrollment | • To be verify a student for enrollment, the school must obtain the following:<br>    ◦ GTID for a student that has previously been enrolled in a Georgia public school.<br>    ◦ Name, address, and birthdate for a student who has not been previously enrolled in a Georgia public school.<br>• A school's verified enrollment count must be at least 65% of the enrollment target for year one as outlined in its charter petition. | May 1 | Student Roster |
| Establish fiscal and internal control policies that ensure board oversight over financial management | Financial policies must include (at a minimum):<br>    ◦ Budget Adoption/Amendment policies* (must be adopted prior to adopting a budget)<br>    ◦ Procurement/Purchasing policies<br>    ◦ Expenditure policies<br>    ◦ Inventory/Asset Management policies<br><br>• All policies must include internal controls and segregation of duties.<br>• Policies must reflect appropriate governing board oversight and should not overly rely on or allow undue access for a contracted vendor. | June 1 | Policies; Minutes of the meeting(s) at which they were approved |
| Finalize a budget based on expected enrollment | • Must be approved by the governing board.<br>• Budgets must be adjusted as necessary to reflect changing enrollment.<br>• A budget that is adopted but not followed will not meet the requirements of this milestone.<br>• Prior to adopting or amending an operational budget, a state charter school must provide at least two opportunities for public input pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1.<br>• The state charter school must also make a summary of its annual operating budget proposed and adopted by the governing board on a publically available area of the school's website pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167.1. | June 1 | Budget(s); Minutes of the meeting(s) at which they were approved |
| **Supporting Milestones** | **Additional Information** | **Timeline** | |
| Finalize any potential grant program application(s) | Check the SCSC website for grant opportunities | Varies Depending on Grant | |

## OPERATIONS

| Priority Milestones – MANDATORY | Additional Information | Deadline | Required Submission |
|---|---|---|---|
| Provide written notification to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) of the charter school's opening | • Pursuant to 34 C.F.R. § 76.788, if the school provides this notification at least 120 days prior to the school's opening and responds to reasonably requests for information, the SEA must provide federal funding to the school within 5 months of its opening date.<br>• This notice should be sent to the Superintendent with copies to the individuals at responsible for federal programs | April 1 | A copy of the letter sent to GaDOE |
| Establish an official school email system | • This is required to access systems administered by GaDOE and the GaPSC, including the MyGaDOE Portal, and PC Genesis.<br>• The system must be compatible with GaDOE portal requirements and cannot be generic web-based email solutions (e.g. gmail or yahoo). | April 1 | Receipt for purchase of email solution |

| Supporting Milestones | Additional Information | Timeline | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Determine if and how transportation will be provided. | If transportation will be provided, contact GaDOE's Pupil Transportation Division for appropriate processes and approvals. | June 1 | |
| Determine if and how food service will be provided. | If food service will be provided, contact GaDOE's School Nutrition Division for appropriate processes and approvals. | Coordinate with School Nutrition Division of GaDOE | |
| Identify legal counsel | | As Soon as Practicable | |
| Become familiar with the SCSC guidance, including reporting timelines and monthly newsletters | | Ongoing | |

## SCHOOL PERSONNEL

| Priority Milestones – MANDATORY | Additional Information | Deadline | Required Submission |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adopt a Personnel Handbook and related policies | Personnel policies must include (at a minimum):<br>• Job descriptions for personnel<br>• Discipline, due process, and termination procedures<br>• Grievance procedures<br>• Attendance and Leave policies<br>• Acceptable Use policies | April 1 | Personnel Handbook and Policies; Minutes of the meeting(s) at which they were approved |
| Hire a qualified school leader that meets the requirements of the charter contract | Schools are strongly encouraged to engage a school leader prior to opening student enrollment. | June 1 | Resume of School Leader; Minutes of the meeting at which the school leader was hired. |

| Establish necessary accounts with the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia | The initial TRS contact for new state charter schools is Sonja Smith, the Manager of Employer Services. Sonja's email address is Sonja.Smith@trsga.com | June 1 | Evidence of enrollment in TRS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Recruit and hire adequate number of teachers and support personnel to match assignments and staffing plan | • All personnel must have criminal background checks and fingerprinting as required by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211.1.<br>• Rules of the State Board of Education and Georgia Professional Standards Commission requires all charter school educators to obtain a clearance certificate issued by GaPSC.<br>• If a state charter school has not ensured that all staff have received clearance certificates prior to serving students, the SCSC will require the state charter school to complete additional corrective action.<br>• Ensure at least two board members are credentialed in the Leader Keys Evaluation System (LKES).<br>• Ensure that the school leader and another school administrator are credentialed in the Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES).<br>• If appropriate board members and staff are not credentialed in TKES/LKES prior to serving students, the SCSC will require the state charter school to complete additional corrective action. | July 1 | Organizational Chart; Staffing Plan; Employee Roster; Procedure for obtaining criminal record checks; Credentialing Certificates |
| **Supporting Milestones** | **Additional Information** | **Timeline** | |
| Contact the Department of Community Health to establish health insurance availability | • This is applicable only if electing to participate in the State Health Benefit Plan.<br>• Charter schools have only one opportunity to elect to participate in the State Health Benefit Plan and must do so within six months of the effective date of their charter. | March 1 | |
| Ensure the school leader receives access to the MyGaDOE data portal and can provide necessary data provisioning rights to school personnel in a manner consistent with the school's student data policy | • Failure to gain access to the MyGaDOE portal in a timely manner will affect the availability of funding for the school, inhibit the ability of the school to adhere to important data reporting deadlines that will affect the school's performance on the SCSC's Comprehensive Performance Framework, and prevent the school from receiving critical communications from GaDOE.<br>• As noted in the Facilities section, a school must have finalized its facility approval and received a school code to access the MyGaDOE Portal. | July 1 | |
| Finalize teacher contracts (if applicable) | | Prior to Hiring Staff | |
| Identify individuals that will serve key roles and ensure each has appropriate access and data provisioning rights in the MyGaDOE portal | Roles Include but are not limited to:<br>• Testing Coordinator<br>• Title I Director<br>• Special Education Director | August 1 | |

| | • Charter School Administrator | |
|---|---|---|
| Ensure that personnel records are adequately safeguarded | | Ongoing |
| Ensure all staff is appropriately trained | In addition to professional development training designated by the school, staff should also be trained areas such as:<br>• Identifying and appropriately serving students with disabilities<br>• Identifying cases and reporting procedures for suspected instances of child abuse and neglect<br>• Suicide prevention strategies<br>• Emergency and severe weather response<br>• Specific laws require the training of all staff on an annual basis on certain topics (such as child abuse and suicide prevention) while others require schools to have a certain number of trained individuals (such as diabetes management).<br>• Be sure to consult legal counsel as well as the SCSC's Legal Obligations of a State Charter School for more information and specific requirements. | Ongoing |

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM

| Priority Milestones – MANDATORY | Additional Information | Deadline | Required Submission |
|---|---|---|---|
| Develop a strategic plan and timeline for implementation of the curriculum and instructional methods | The Appendix includes the requirements and guidelines for the requested submission | June 1 | Educational Program Update |
| Obtain a Student Information System | • Contact GaDOE to ensure the SIS you choose is compatible with the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS)<br>• Operational state charter schools frequently site establishing an SIS as one of the most critical steps in preparing for operations and doing so as early as possible increases efficiency and alleviates duplicated efforts as the school begins serving students. | July 1 | Receipt for purchase of SIS |
| Adopt a school calendar | • The school calendar must include the instructional equivalent of 180 school days.<br>• An established school calendar is an essential tool for student recruitment and enrollment.<br>• Schools should be aware that starting later than surrounding districts will hinder student enrollment in the charter school and provide the school less instructional time prior to state assessments. | December 1 | School Calendar; Minutes of the meeting(s) at which it was approved |

| Supporting Milestones | Additional Information | Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| Choose/draft/adopt necessary student learning objectives (SLO), norm-referenced assessments and/or benchmark assessments to implement TKES/LKES | | Coordinate compliance with TKES/LKES with GaDOE |
| Begin drafting your Comprehensive LEA Improvement Plan (CLIP) for Title I | • Parental involvement is required to create your draft plan<br>• The due date for the final plan will be set by GaDOE's Federal Program office. | Coordinate compliance with Federal Programs with GaDOE |

## TRAINING

| Priority Milestones – MANDATORY | Additional Information | Deadline | Required Submission |
|---|---|---|---|
| Attend the SCSC's New School Orientation | | Training held in January | N/A |

| Supporting Milestones | Additional Information | Timeline | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ensure that the school leader and data management personnel attend the GaDOE Data Collections Conference | Attendance at the GaDOE Data Collections Conference is required as part of the school's charter contract. | Conference held in August | |
| Ensure appropriate special education personnel attend the IDEAS Conference sponsored by GaDOE and Georgia CEC | Contact GaDOE for details | Conference held in June | |
| Ensure appropriate federal program personnel attend the Statewide Title Programs Conference | Contact GaDOE for details | Conference held in June | |
| Ensure all governing board members receive appropriate governance training. | Governing board members and school administrators are eligible for and encouraged to attend SCSC governance training at no cost | Training held in November and February | |
| Attend SCSC offered trainings | The SCSC trainings calendar is available here: http://scsc.georgia.gov/training-opportunities | Ongoing | |

# APPENDIX

## Educational Program Update

To ensure state charter schools are prepared to operate high quality academic programs in year one of the charter contract term, the SCSC requires newly approved state charter schools to submit an educational program update illustrating the school has made the necessary plans to achieve SCSC expectations.

Please submit a copy of the school's implementation timeline as outlined below and respond to the questions that follow.

### Implementation Timeline

The implementation timeline is meant to illustrate the school has accomplished or is on track to accomplish the necessary tasks required to ensure a successful implementation of the educational program. There is no specified format for this document, however, the timeline should include: the "owner" of the task (i.e. the individual responsible for the task's completion) and the date in which it was/will be accomplished.  At a minimum, the timeline should track the school's completion of the following key tasks:

- select and procure curriculum
- develop/acquire benchmark assessments
- develop/acquire lesson plans
- define the grading structure
- create a professional development schedule
- develop a system and process to analyze assessment data and other educational outcomes (refer to the SCSC CPF for academic goals)

## Questions

In addition to submitting the above documents, please respond to the questions below in 300 words or less.

1. Have any changes in the educational program occurred since the execution of your charter? (i.e. changes in curriculum, instructional methods, innovative features)
    - If changes have been made to the curriculum, please describe the steps you took to ensure that it is aligned to state standards and aligned with the school's overall mission.
    - If changes have been made to the instructional methods or innovative features, please describe the steps you took to ensure the staff are prepared to utilize the new methods/features and how the they align the school's overall mission.
2. The SCSC recognizes that it may be difficult to execute all components of certain educational programs in the school's first year of operations. For example, STEM programs may require the procurement of equipment that is not budgeted for until year two of the charter. Please describe any delays the school foresees in rolling out the educational program and the rationale for the timing of implementation.