



## The History of Missouri's Charter Schools Douglas P. Thaman, Ed.D

The following is a history of significant development points for Missouri's charter schools between 1998 and 2014. The report begins with an introduction and overview of Missouri's charter schools. This overview is followed with information regarding key points in the important components of the charter school model:

- Charter School Authorization and Sponsorship;
- The Charter School Application Process;
- The Charter School Renewal Process;
- The Closure of Charter Schools.

The report concludes with an overview of [MCPSA's Quality Standards for Missouri's Charter Schools](#) and a listing of key legislative and statewide advocacy accomplishments of the Association.

Since its inception in 2007 the Missouri Charter Public School Association (MCPSA) has actively worked strengthening the charter school landscape in Missouri. MCPSA strives daily to raise the awareness of citizens and policymakers helping them to understand and in turn openly acknowledge the value of a thriving charter public school environment.

Each day MCPSA's efforts are helping to re-shape public education, providing Missouri's students and families with more high quality public education options than ever before. In this report key points of Association involvement are noted as [MCPSA](#).

## Introduction

In the early 1990s, a small group of educators and policymakers came together to develop an innovative school model designed to help improve our nation's public school system and offer parents another public school option to better meet their child's specific needs. This model became known as the charter school model. The charter school model was rooted in the belief that public schools should be held accountable for student learning. In exchange for this accountability founders believed school leaders should be given the freedom to do 'whatever it takes' to help students achieve sharing what works with the broader public school system benefitting all students.

Utilizing the charter school model, Minnesota's legislature passed the first charter law in 1991. The Nation's first charter school opened in 1992. In 1996 a desegregation agreement provided two million dollars to the Kansas City Metropolitan School District and a similar amount to the St. Louis Public School District. The funding intent was to improve student achievement desegregate the school population. The results were not satisfactory to legislators and in 1998 charter school legislation in Missouri passed with the motivation to address the failure of urban school districts. When legislation passed in 1998, Missouri became the 34th state to authorize the creation of charter schools. Since that time, through an exchange of tough accountability for increased autonomy, thousands of high-performing charter schools across the United States, including 50 charter schools in Missouri, have offered outstanding educational opportunities to more than one million students.

In 2014 the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, in the study *A Growing Movement: America's Largest Charter School Communities*, noted "charter schools are the fastest-growing school choice option in the U.S. public education system. Over the past five years, student enrollment in public charter schools has grown by 70 percent. In 42 states and the District of Columbia, approximately 2.7 million students now attend public charter schools - more than five percent of the total number enrolled in public schools. In 12 school districts, more than 30 percent of students attend charter schools. In nearly 150 districts, at least 10 percent of students attend charter schools. Eleven school districts saw increases in charter school enrollment ranging from nearly 20 to almost 40 percent in a single year". In the 16 years charter schools have existed in Missouri, the number of schools has expanded from the original 15, operating within the Kansas City Metropolitan School District boundaries, to 50 charter schools with 24 in Kansas City and 26 in St. Louis. Combined, Missouri's charter schools serve over 19,000 students equating to 2% of Missouri's school age children.

Due to a successful track record of meeting students' specific needs, parental demand for public charter schools is at an all-time high and charter school enrollment continues to increase.

### Charter Schools in Missouri

The 1998 legislation included a geographic ‘cap’ indicating charter schools could only open in a metropolitan school district or in an urban school district containing a city with a population greater than 350,000 inhabitants. The cap restricted charter schools within the boundaries of the Kansas City Metropolitan School District or the City of St. Louis.

In 2005 legislation passed allowing charter schools to become their own Local Education Agencies (LEAs) as opposed to operating under the local school district’s LEA. This allowed the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to distribute their State and local funding directly to the charter school rather than through the local school district. In 2014 there are 20 LEAs in Kansas City and 17 LEAs in St. Louis.

In 2012 **MCPSA** championed legislation removing the geographic ‘cap’ and allowing charter schools to open and operate throughout the State of Missouri based on the status of each of the 520 school districts (the State’s political subdivisions).

Today, a charter school may open:

1. Under an approved Sponsor in any unaccredited school district;
2. Under an approved Sponsor in any district provisionally accredited by the State for three consecutive years;
3. In an accredited school district with Sponsorship held by the district’s board of education.

The current charter school LEAs and schools are identified by location (Kansas City and St. Louis). It should be noted:

- The LEA is in bold. If the LEA has more than one attendance center (building) they are noted beneath the LEA.
- Noted next to each LEA is the year the LEA was established and grade levels served through their attendance center(s).
- If the LEA/School was a participant in MCPSA’s CharterStart program (**MCPSA**) is noted after the LEA/School name.

## Kansas City

- **Academie' Lafayette (1999, K-8)**
  - Academie' Lafayette Elementary School
  - Academie' Lafayette Middle School
- **Academy for Integrated Arts (2012, K-3) (MCPSA)**
- **Allen Village Charter School (1999, K-8)**
- **Alta Vista Charter Schools (1999, 6-12)**
  - Alta Vista Charter Middle School
  - Alta Vista Charter High School
- **Benjamin Banneker Charter Academy of Technology (1999, K-8)**
- **Brookside Charter School (2002, K-8)**
- **Crossroads Academy of Kansas City (2012, K-7) (MCPSA)**
- **DeLaSalle Education Center (2009, 9-12)**
- **Della Lamb Elementary (1999, K-8)**
- **Ewing Marion Kauffman School (2011, 5-8)**
- **Frontier Schools (2006, K-12)**
  - Frontier School of Excellence
  - Frontier School of Innovation
  - Frontier STEM High School
- **Genesis School (1999, K-8)**
- **Gordon Parks Elementary (1998, K-5)**
- **Hogan Preparatory Academies (1999, K-12)**
  - Hogan Preparatory Academy Elementary School;
  - Hogan Preparatory Academy Middle School;
  - Hogan Preparatory Academy High School;
- **Hope Leadership Academy (2011, K-4) (MCPSA)**
- **KIPP: Endeavor Academy (2007, 5-8)**
- **Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy (1999, K-8)**
- **Pathway Academy (2009, K-6) (MCPSA)**
- **Scuola Vita Nuova Charter School (1999, K-8)**
- **University Academy (2000, K-12)**

## St. Louis

- **Better Learning Communities Academy (2011, K-4) (MCPA)**
- **Carondelet Leadership Academy (2010, K-8) (MCPA)**
- **City Garden Montessori (2008, K-8) (MCPA)**
- **Confluence Academies (2003, K-12)**
  - Confluence Academy Old North;
  - Confluence Preparatory Academy;
  - Confluence Academy South City;
  - Confluence Academy Walnut Park;
- **Construction Careers Center High School (2001, 9-12)**
- **EAGLE Endeavor College Prep (2013, K-3) (MCPA)**
- **Gateway Science Academies (2010, K-12) (MCPA)**
  - Gateway Science Academy
  - Gateway Science Academy High School
  - Gateway Science Academy South
- **Grand Center Arts Academy (2010, 6-12) (MCPA)**
- **Jamaa Charter School (2011, K-6) (MCPA)**
- **KIPP: St. Louis (2009, K-1, 5-8) (MCPA)**
  - KIPP: Inspire Academy
  - KIPP: Victory Academy
- **Lafayette Preparatory Academy (2013, K-3) (MCPA)**
- **Lift for Life Academy (2000, 6-12)**
- **North Side Community School (2009, K-5) (MCPA)**
- **Preclarus Mastery Academy (2011, 5-8) (MCPA)**
- **Premier Charter School (2000, K-8)**
- **South City Preparatory Academy (2011, 5-8) (MCPA)**
- **St. Louis Language Immersion Schools (2009, K-6) (MCPA)**
  - Chinese School
  - International School
  - French School
  - Spanish School

Since **MCPSA** began in December 2006 there have been 20 new charter school LEAs established with a total of 26 schools. Over the course of 16 years the growth of Missouri charter schools has fluctuated from 15 in 1999 to 25 in 2004 to 52 in 2014. Due to the poor performance resulting in closures, the number of charter schools did decline to 22 in 2006 increased to 49 by 2012.

In 2014 there are 52 charter schools with 26 in Kansas City and 26 in St. Louis serving close to 20,000 students. No charter schools yet exist outside of Kansas City or St. Louis.

### **Missouri's Charter Schools By The Numbers - 2014**

#### **Missouri Data**

37 LEA's  
52 Attendance Centers (Schools)  
19,965 Students

#### **Kansas City Data**

20 LEA's  
26 Attendance Centers (Schools)  
10,200 Students  
42.0% Student Market Share  
83.5% Free And Reduced Lunch

#### **St. Louis Data**

17 LEA's  
26 Attendance Centers (Schools)  
9,765 Students  
29.0% Student Market Share  
77.6% Free And Reduced Lunch

To date, **MCPSA has played an instrumental role, through the Association's New School Development Program (CharterStart), in 84% of these new charter schools.**

### **City of St. Louis Mayor's Committee**

In 2007 the City of St. Louis Mayor, Francis G. Slay, began extending an invitation to educators, parents, and entrepreneurs to create quality charter schools to serve the needs of St. Louis families. In addition, Mayor Slay established a Charter School Evaluation Committee. Since the inception, **MCPSA** has held a seat on the Committee and served as a resource to Committee members.



The intent of the Committee is to provide recommendation to the Mayor regarding charter school applicants he should endorse. Upon receiving the Mayor's endorsement the City of St. Louis Mayor's Office assists the applicant with identifying a potential Sponsor, technical issues, and gaining approval from the Missouri State Board of Education. Thirteen of the fourteen LEA's (reflecting 18 of 19 charter schools) have been evaluated by and received the endorsement of Mayor Slay.

## Academic Performance

In the State of Missouri the Annual Performance Report (APR) is the accountability report card for school districts based on a district's performance utilizing metrics from the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP). MSIP5 outlines the expectations for student achievement. The MSIP accountability system was established in 1990 and has evolved over time. Standards are divided into three categories, Resource Standards, Process Standards, and Performance Standards. Resource and Process Standards are designed to promote continuous improvement and innovation within each district. The Process Standards are often qualitative in nature. The Performance Standards are designed to recognize the achievement and continuous growth of students. In addition to metrics agreed upon between the Sponsor and charter school's governing board placed in their legally binding performance contract, charter schools are held to the MSIP5 Performance Standards.

Each year the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education prepares an APR for each charter school reporting the school's performance. Performance Standards focus on student achievement on the State's assessment, student achievement on the State's End of Course exams, student growth, subgroup achievement, college and career readiness, graduation rate, and attendance. A charter school receives points in each applicable area based on their grade level configuration. Charter schools do not receive a classification of accredited, provisionally accredited, unaccredited by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education rather the APR is for informational purposes only.

In 2014 Missouri's charter schools demonstrated, collectively, tremendous growth in the area of academic performance. The combined APR average for Missouri's charter schools increased from 68.6% in 2013 to 73.34% in 2014.

The following data points speak to the school's 2014 academic performance:

In Kansas City,

- 14 out of 18 LEAs (representing 17 of the 24 individual schools) scored over 70% on their APR
- 4 charter schools improved in their percentage of proficient and advanced in English Language Arts
- 7 charter schools improved in their percentage of proficient and advanced in Math
- 15 charter schools exceeded the local school district average in English Language Arts
- 15 charter schools exceeded the local school district average in Math
- 3 charter schools exceeded the Missouri state average in English Language Arts
- 4 charter schools exceeded the Missouri state average in Math



- The charter public school average for English Language Arts is 34.21% exceeding the local school district average
- The charter public school average for Math is 35.58% exceeding the local school district average

In St. Louis,

- In St. Louis 10 of 14 LEAs (representing 15 of the 25 individual schools) scored over 70% on their APR
- 5 charter schools improved in their percentage of proficient and advanced in English Language Arts
- 2 charter schools improved in their percentage of proficient and advanced in Math
- 14 charter schools exceeded the local school district average in English Language Arts
- 11 charter schools exceeded the local school district average in Math
- 3 charter public schools exceeded the Missouri state average in English Language Arts
- 3 charter public schools exceeded the Missouri state average in Math
- The charter public school average for English Language Arts is 33.60% exceeding the local school district average
- The charter public school average for Math is 30.77% exceeding the local school district average

Statewide,

- The combined average for charter schools in Math slightly decreased from 38.71% in 2013 to 34.64% in 2014
- The combined average for charter schools in English Language Arts increased from 34.54% in 2013 to 35.20% in 2014

## Charter School Authorization and Sponsorship

### **Authority to Authorize and Sponsor**

In 1998 it was the determination of Missouri's General Assembly that the Missouri State Board of Education would serve as the State's Authorizer of charter schools. As the Authorizer, the Missouri State Board of Education holds the legal authority to approve and provide oversight to Sponsors who, in turn, hold the authority to open, monitor, and evaluate charter schools. Initially, through this legislation, allowable Sponsors were the Kansas City Metropolitan School District Board and St. Louis Public Schools Board; a public four-year college or university with an approved teacher education program meeting regional or national standards of accreditation; or a community college located in Kansas City or St. Louis. Over time legislation, including legislation **MCPSA** championed in 2012, passed into law allowing additional Sponsors.

In 2014 the following institutional types are, or may apply to the Missouri State Board of Education, as Sponsors:

1. The school board of an accredited school district;
2. The special administrative board of a metropolitan school district during any time in which powers granted to the district's board of education are vested in a special administrative board;
3. A public four-year college or university with an approved teacher education program that meets regional or national standards of accreditation;
4. A community college, the service area of which encompasses some portion of the district;
5. Any private four-year college or university with an enrollment of at least one thousand students, with its primary campus in Missouri, and with an approved teacher preparation program;
6. Any two-year private vocational or technical school designated as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, which is a member of the North Central Association and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, with its primary campus in Missouri; or,
7. The Missouri Charter Public School Commission.

Per the Missouri Statutes, a charter school Sponsor receives 1.5% of the amount of state and local funding allocated to each charter school in their portfolio not to exceed \$125,000. In order to retain funding a Sponsor must:

1. Expend no less than ninety percent of its charter school Sponsorship funds in support of its charter school Sponsorship program, or as a direct investment in the Sponsored schools;
2. Maintain a comprehensive application process that follows fair procedures and rigorous criteria and grants charters only to those developers who demonstrate strong capacity for establishing and operating a quality charter school;
3. Negotiate contracts with charter schools that clearly articulate the rights and responsibilities of each party regarding school autonomy, expected outcomes, measures for evaluating success or failure, performance consequences, and other material terms;
4. Conduct contract oversight that evaluates performance, monitors compliance, informs intervention and renewal decisions, and ensures autonomy provided under applicable law; and
5. Design and implements a transparent and rigorous process that uses comprehensive data to make merit-based renewal decisions.

In addition, Sponsors receiving funds are required to submit annual reports to the Missouri General Assembly's Joint Committee on Education.

### **Authorizer Responsibility**

As the State's Authorizer, it is the responsibility of the Missouri State Board of Education (via the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) to provide oversight of Sponsors. This is clarified in Statute stating,

- The department shall provide guidance to Sponsors in developing such policies and procedures;
- A Sponsor shall provide timely submission to the state board of education of all data necessary to demonstrate that the Sponsor is in material compliance with all requirements of sections 160.400 to 160.425 and section 167.349;
- The state board of education shall ensure each Sponsor is in compliance with all requirements under sections 160.400 to 160.425 and 167.349 for each charter school Sponsored by any Sponsor;
- The state board shall notify each Sponsor of the standards for Sponsorship of charter schools, delineating both what is mandated by statute and what best practices dictate;
- The state board shall evaluate Sponsors to determine compliance with these standards every three years. The evaluation shall include a Sponsor's policies and procedures in the areas of charter application approval; required charter agreement terms and content; Sponsor performance evaluation and compliance monitoring; and charter

renewal, intervention, and revocation decisions. Nothing shall preclude the department from undertaking an evaluation at any time for cause;

- If the department determines that a Sponsor is in material noncompliance with its Sponsorship duties, the Sponsor shall be notified and given reasonable time for remediation. If remediation does not address the compliance issues identified by the department, the commissioner of education shall conduct a public hearing and thereafter provide notice to the charter Sponsor of corrective action that will be recommended to the state board of education. Corrective action by the department may include withholding the Sponsor's funding and suspending the Sponsor's authority to Sponsor a school that it currently Sponsors or to Sponsor any additional school until the Sponsor is reauthorized by the state board of education under section 160.403;
- The charter Sponsor may, within thirty days of receipt of the notice of the commissioner's recommendation, provide a written statement and other documentation to show cause as to why that action should not be taken. Final determination of corrective action shall be determined by the state board of education based upon a review of the documentation submitted to the department and the charter Sponsor;
- If the state board removes the authority to Sponsor a currently operating charter school under any provision of law, the Missouri charter public school commission shall become the Sponsor of the school.

#### **Charter School Sponsors 2014**

Currently the following institutions Sponsor charter schools with the number of schools based on attendance centers (buildings):

- Lindenwood University (3 schools)
- Saint Louis Public Schools (1 school)
- Saint Louis University (2 schools)
- Southeast Missouri State University (1 school)
- The University of Central Missouri (11 schools)
- The University of Missouri, Columbia (10 schools, 1 to open in 2015)
- The University of Missouri, Kansas City (8 schools)
- The University of Missouri, St. Louis (9 schools, 1 to open in 2015)
- Washington University in St. Louis (2 schools, 1 to open in 2015)

From 2006 to 2011 Missouri Baptist University served as a Sponsor of charter schools. In 2011, as part of an agreement with the Missouri State Board of Education to close the five Imagine Schools in their portfolio for poor academic performance, Missouri Baptist University agreed to release their authority to serve as a charter school Sponsor. The one remaining school in their portfolio, Carondelet Leadership Academy, was transferred to the University of Missouri, Columbia portfolio.

In 2013 the Missouri School of Science and Technology elected to terminate their authority to Sponsor charter schools transferring the four Confluence Academy schools in their portfolio to the University of Missouri, Columbia.

### **Sponsor Responsibility, Accountability, and Standards**

As changes in Statute were made to allow more institutions the ability to serve as Sponsors there was a 'call' to increase Sponsor accountability ensuring the oversight of charter schools was rigorous. In 2012 **MCPA** responded to the 'call' championing legislation improving the accountability requirements of charter schools and Sponsors including:

1. Requiring performance contracts between Sponsors and schools in their charter school portfolio;
2. Changing the appeal of a Sponsor decision process from a judicial review to the Missouri State Board of Education;
3. Increasing public reporting requirements on student achievement, financial health and operational procedures;
4. Requiring parent grievance process, closure procedures and plans for special education in the charter application;
5. Requiring the pre- approval of any new Sponsors by the Missouri State Board of Education;
6. Instituting a required evaluation of Sponsors every three years by the Missouri State Board of Education based on standards of Sponsorship.

In 1998 the initial charter school statutes indicated that the Missouri State Board of Education was to identify Standards of Sponsorship. From 1998 to 2012 these Standards were not developed. In 2012, the Missouri State Board of Education established in Rule the following Standards of Sponsorship:

#### **Standard 1 – Sponsor Commitment and Capacity**

The Sponsor recognizes that chartering is a means to foster excellent schools that meet identified needs, creates organizational structures to facilitate meeting these needs, and commits human and financial resources necessary to conduct its Sponsoring duties effectively and efficiently. The Sponsor shall implement steps to closely monitor the following:

- Provides capacity to serve as a Sponsor by employing, contracting for services, or seeking expertise in other ways to ensure capacity to carry out all Sponsoring activities essential to charter school oversight (including, but not limited to education leadership, curriculum, instruction, assessment, special education, federal programs, performance accountability, law, finance, and nonprofit governance);

- Maintains capacity for intervention purposes when charter Sponsors have two (2) or more persistently low achieving charter schools, as verified by their Annual Performance Report (APR), before expanding their charter portfolio.

### **Standard 2 – Application Process and Decision Making**

A quality Sponsor implements a thorough application process that includes clear application and guidance; follows fair, transparent procedures and rigorous criteria; and grants only those charter applications that demonstrate a strong capacity to establish and operate a quality charter school.

The Sponsor shall implement the following:

- Produces a thorough charter application process as outlined in section 160.400.11(2), RSMo, including the items as stated in section 160.405.1(1) – (17), RSMo;
- Maintains consistent criteria for accepting, approving, and denying charter applications and does so in accordance with a clearly established timeline;
- Requires the charter applicant to provide evidence of accountability regarding stable fiscal and organizational performance included in the charter application process, including:
  - Budget assumptions with balanced budgets; and
  - Positive cash flow reserve funds;
- Includes additional contractual provisions that verify rigorous, independent contract oversight by the charter governing board and the school's financial independence from the external provider (for any school contracting with a third-party provider for education design and operation or management);

### **Standard 3 – Board Support**

The Sponsor shall implement steps to offer ongoing support, including but not limited to: training, organization, ethical conduct, knowledge, commitment, compliance, leadership oversight, contract management, accountability, transparency, and the interpretation of the Missouri public charter school statutes/rules for charter school board(s). The Sponsor shall:

- Ensure charter board members have adequate training to fulfill their position;
- Place charter schools on probation, and/or revoke or non-renew a school's charter for poor governance if the charter school board does not follow statutory requirements, correct violations of statutory requirements, or continue to repeat the same violations, including, but not limited to the following:
  - The charter board retains status as a Missouri non-profit corporation as outlined in section 160.400.7, RSMo;
  - Charter board members submit ethics commission paperwork annually as outlined in sections 105.483 and 105.492, RSMo;

- Charter boards have policies in place to prevent conflict of interests with the charter school as outlined in section 160.400.15, RSMo; and
- All charter board members have criminal background and FCSR checks as outlined in section 160.400.14, RSMo;
- Demonstrate oversight of charter boards in a variety of ways, including but not limited to reviewing board minutes, attending board meetings, and verifying reporting processes; and
- Monitor whether charter school board and committee business is conducted as outlined in the Missouri Sunshine Laws, sections 610.010-610.030, RSMo.

#### **Standard 4 – Academic Performance**

The Sponsor shall take steps to closely monitor state performance standards defined by the department are included in the Sponsor/charter contract. The Sponsor:

- Ensures that performance contracts are aligned to the pupil academic standards adopted by the State Board of Education as outlined in section 160.405.4(6)(a), RSMo;
- Establishes clear procedures and consequences for failure to meet requirements and outcomes set in the Sponsor/charter contract; and,
- Does not approve additional sites or expansion of grade levels for a charter school identified as persistently low achieving, as verified by its APR.

#### **Standard 5 – Fiscal Management**

The Sponsor shall implement steps to closely monitor the charter school performance management and financial actions that support a solvent fiscal status, including:

- A charter school identified as financially stressed develops a budget and education plan as outlined in section 160.417.3, RSMo. The department may withhold any payment of financial aid due to the charter school until such time as the charter school and Sponsor have fully complied as outlined in section 160.417.5, RSMo;
- Ensures that adequate financial controls are in place to assure that revenue received for operation of the charter school are expended for expenses related to the operation of the charter school:
  - A requirement that a monthly check register is reviewed and approved by the local board prior to issuing payment for amounts in excess of \$1,000; and
  - The bank account where state funds are deposited must be established and under the control of the charter board. If a management company is contracted, personnel associated with the company shall not have direct access;
- Closely monitors that charter schools show fiscal management of federal grant programs in accordance with terms outlined in *Fiscal Guidance for Federal Grant*

*Programs;*

- Closely monitors that charter schools have a procurement process in place as required by the *Code of Federal Regulations* 34 CFR 80.36;
- Closely monitors that the Annual Secretary of the Board Report (ASBR) and the annual audit are submitted to the department in the time frame outlined by Missouri statutes and these documents are not compiled by the same auditing service. The department may withhold any payment of financial aid due to the charter school until such time as the charter school and Sponsor have fully complied as outlined in section 160.415.5, RSMo;
- Closely monitors that the annual audit summary is published as outlined in section 165.121.5, RSMo; and
- Closely monitors that charter schools utilize the coding procedures prescribed in the *Missouri Financial Accounting Manual* as outlined in section 160.405.1 (10), RSMo.

**Standard 6 – Reporting**

The Sponsor shall implement steps to closely monitor all reports/data required by Missouri and federal law are completed and submitted in a timely manner for the department and/or legislature. The Sponsor shall closely monitor the following:

**Standard 7 – Oversight and Evaluation**

The Sponsor conducts oversight and evaluates performance for both federal and state compliance. The Sponsor shall implement steps to closely monitor the following:

- Non-discrimination as required by federal and state laws;
- The compliance with all state and federal statutes and guidelines, including but not limited to: special education; all title programs; vocational/career education; food service; and services for foster, homeless, migrant, and English language learner students;

**Standard 8 – Intervention, Renewal, Revocation, and Closure Decision Making**

The Sponsor shall implement steps to closely monitor transparent and rigorous processes that use comprehensive academic, financial, and operational management data to make decisions about intervention, renewal, revocation, and closure. The Sponsor shall implement the following:

- Develops and maintains policies that have been adopted for the following areas:
- Bases the renewal process and renewal decisions on thorough analyses of a comprehensive body of objective evidence defined by the performance framework in the charter contract. Sponsors grant renewal only to schools that have achieved the standards and targets stated in the charter contract, are organizationally and fiscally viable, and have been diligent to the terms of the contract and applicable law.



### **A New Sponsor – The Missouri Charter Public School Commission**

In 2012 **MCP SA** championed legislation for the Missouri General Assembly establishing the Missouri Charter Public School Commission “with the authority to Sponsor high quality charter schools throughout the state of Missouri (160.525.1)”. Additional Statutory language was included defining the process for Commissioner appointments, logistics, and funding:

- The Commission shall consist of nine members appointed by the governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.
- No more than five of the members shall be of the same political party.
- No more than two members shall be from the same congressional district.
- The term of office of each member shall be four years, except those of the members first appointed, of which three shall be appointed for a term of one year, two for a term of two years, two for a term of three years, and two for a term of four years.
- At the expiration of the term of each member, the governor, by and with the advice and consent of the senate, shall appoint a successor.
- The appointees to the Commission shall be selected as follows:
  - One member selected by the governor from a slate of three recommended by the Commissioner of Education;
  - One member selected by the Governor from a slate of three recommended by the Commissioner of Higher Education;
  - One member selected by the Governor from a slate of three recommended by the President Pro Tempore of the Missouri Senate;
  - One member selected by the Governor from a slate of three recommended by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
  - Five additional members appointed by the Governor, one of whom should be selected from a slate of three nominees recommended by the Missouri School Boards Association.
- The Commission shall annually elect a chairperson and vice chairperson, who shall act as chairperson in his or her absence. The Commission shall meet at the call of the chairperson. The chairperson may call meetings at such time as he or she deems advisable and shall call a meeting when requested to do so by three or more members of the commission.
- Members of the Commission are not eligible to receive compensation.
- The Commission is to exercise Sponsorship over charters approved by the Commission under sections 160.400 to 160.425, including receipt of 1.5% Sponsorship funding.
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall provide start-up funding for the Commission to operate. The Commission shall reimburse the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s costs from any funds it receives as a Sponsor.

- The Commission is authorized to receive and expend gifts, grants, and donations of any kind from any public or private entity.

In 2013 **MCPSA** championed legislation for the Missouri General Assembly including a line item in the State's annual budget of \$300,000 for Commission funding and in October 2014 Missouri Governor Jay Nixon appointed the first six Commissioners. Each Commissioner requires Missouri Senate ratification before their appointment becomes official. The seven initial Commission appointments in 2014 were:

- **Susan Cole** – Former Sponsor Liaison for Southeast Missouri State University
- **Dr. Deborah Curtis** – University of Central Missouri Provost-Chief Learning Officer
- **Kent Farnsworth** - President Emeritus of Crowder College
- **Alicia Herald** - President of myEDmatch
- **Senator Delbert Scott** - Former Missouri State Representative and Senator
- **Peggy Lea Taylor** - Past President of the Missouri School Boards Association
- **Dr. John A. Wright Sr.** – Past Interim Superintendent of St. Louis Public Schools and the Normandy School District

### The Charter School Application Process

The initial charter school statutes in 1998 identified the requirements a charter school applicant must include in their charter school application. In Missouri, when a person, group or organization is seeking to establish a charter school they must prepare and submit a proposed charter application to a potential Sponsor. If the Sponsor is not a local school district board, the applicant must also provide a copy of its application to the school board of the district in which the charter school is to be located as well as the Missouri State Board of Education.

In 2011 a model charter application was designed in partnership with **MCPSA**, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, the City of St. Louis Mayor's Office, and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Subsequently the model application was adopted by the Missouri State Board of Education and placed on the Department's website as a resource.

By Statute a charter application must include:

1. A mission and vision statement for the charter school;
2. A description of the charter school's organizational structure and bylaws of the governing body;
3. A financial plan for the first three years of operation of the charter school including provisions for annual audits;
4. A description of the charter school's policy for securing personnel services, its personnel policies, personnel qualifications, and professional development plan;
5. A description of the grades or ages of students being served;
6. The school's calendar of operation, which shall include at least the equivalent of a full school term as defined in Statute;
7. A description of the charter school's pupil performance standards and academic program performance standards;
8. A description of the charter school's educational program and curriculum;
9. The term of the charter, which shall be five years and shall be renewable;
10. Financial management procedures, consistent with the Missouri Financial Accounting Manual;
11. Preopening requirements for applications that require that charter schools meet all health, safety, and other legal requirements prior to opening;
12. A description of the charter school's policies on student discipline and student admission;
13. A description of the charter school's grievance procedure for parents or guardians;
14. A description of the agreement between the charter school and the Sponsor;
15. Procedures to be implemented if the charter school should close;

16. A description of the special education and related services that shall be available to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

In 2012 **MCPSA** championed legislation clarifying the charter school application process. When a Sponsor receives a charter application they have 90 days to evaluate the application and determine whether to approve or deny. If a Sponsor denies the application they must notify the applicant in writing as to the reasons for its denial and have five days to forward a copy to the State Board. The applicant may submit their application to the Missouri State Board of Education, along with the Sponsor's written reasons for its denial. If the State Board determines that the applicant meets the requirements of this section, that the applicant is sufficiently qualified to operate the charter school, and that granting a charter to the applicant would be likely to provide educational benefit to the children of the district, the State Board may grant a charter and act as Sponsor of the charter school.

When a charter is approved by a Sponsor as a school they intend to include in their portfolio the Sponsor must submit the application to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for a review of the application's State and Federal compliance. The Department has 60 days to complete this evaluation. The Department then must bring the application before the Missouri State Board of Education, along with a statement of finding, and a recommendation for approval or disapproval.

### The Charter School Renewal Process

In the State of Missouri charter schools initially had the ability to receive a charter term up to ten years however in 2012 the Statutes were revised and charter terms became limited to five years. In 2011 a charter school renewal guide was designed through the partnership of **MCPSA**, the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, the City of St. Louis Mayor's Office, and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. It is the responsibility of a charter school's Sponsor to have renewal policies and procedures established.

Per the Missouri State Statutes, a Sponsor's renewal process must be based on a thorough analysis of a comprehensive body of objective evidence and consider if:

- The charter school has maintained results on its annual performance report that meet or exceed the district in which the charter school is located based on the performance standards that are applicable to the grade-level configuration of both the charter school and the district in which the charter school is located in three of the last four school years;
- The charter school is organizationally and fiscally viable determining at a minimum that the school does not have:
  - A negative balance in its operating funds;
  - A combined balance of less than three percent of the amount expended for such funds during the previous fiscal year; or
  - Expenditures that exceed receipts for the most recently completed fiscal year;
- The charter is in compliance with its legally binding performance contract.

26 charter school renewals have occurred thus far in the State. Over the next five years the following number of charter schools will be seeking renewal each year:

- 2015 – 7 charter schools
- 2016 – 9 charter schools
- 2017 – 4 charter schools
- 2018 – 8 charter schools
- 2019 – 6 charter schools

### The Closure of Charter Schools

Closure is a foundational piece of the charter school autonomy for accountability model. When, over time, a charter school consistently fails to demonstrate sufficient academic performance and/or demonstrates ongoing inappropriate fiscal management, operational practice, or governance then they should be closed, their students given the opportunity to move to high performing schools, and space in the educational landscape opened for new charter school opportunities.

Per the Missouri State Statutes, when a charter school consistently demonstrates poor performance it the responsibility of the school's Sponsor to require intervention providing "clear, adequate, evidence-based, and timely notice of contract violations or performance deficiencies as well as mandate intervention based upon findings of the state board of education of the following". The Missouri Statutes indicate these specific times when Sponsor intervention is mandated:

- The charter school provides a high school program which fails to maintain a graduation rate of at least seventy percent in three of the last four school years unless the school has dropout recovery as its mission;
- The charter school's annual performance report results are below the district's annual performance report results based on the performance standards that are applicable to the grade level configuration of both the charter school and the district in which the charter school is located in three of the last four school years; and
- The charter school is identified as a persistently lowest achieving school by the department of elementary and secondary education.

When a Sponsor is determining whether to mandate intervention or revoke a charter the option exists to place the charter school on probation one time during their term for a period of twelve months. Missouri's Sponsors are also required to maintain a charter school revocation policy directing revocation of a charter during its' term if there is, "clear evidence of underperformance as demonstrated in the charter school's annual performance report in three of the last four school years; or a violation of the law or the public trust that imperils students or public funds.

In Missouri, since 2001, 16 charter schools have closed with the majority being due to poor governance and management of finances. The closed schools are as follows:

- Kansas City Career Academy, 2001
- Thurgood Marshall Academy, 2005
- Westport Edison High School, 2005
- Youthbuild St. Louis Charter School, 2005
- Southwest Charter High School, 2006
- The Can! Academies of St. Louis, 2008
- Academy of Kansas City, 2009
- Ethel Hedgeman Lyle Academy, 2010
- Paideia Academy, 2010
- Imagine Academy of Academic Success, 2012
- Imagine Academy of Careers, 2012
- Imagine Academy of Environmental Science, 2012
- Renaissance Academy, 2012
- Urban Community Leadership Academy, 2012
- Shearwater Charter School, 2013
- Hope Academy, 2014

### **An Unusually Large Closure**

In 2012 the State of Missouri took a bold step with the closing of the Imagine Schools in St. Louis. Imagine Schools, Inc., a for-profit; Virginia based national management company of charter schools, opened the charter schools in St. Louis in 2007. With the necessity of finding new schools for over 3,800 students, the Imagine closures received national recognition as the largest charter school closure of its kind nationwide.

The impetus behind the Imagine Schools closures was the growing concern with academic performance. In 2011 the City of St. Louis Mayor, Frances G. Slay, Missouri Commissioner of Education, Chris Nicastro, and **MCPSA**, publically called for the closure of these schools. As a result, the Sponsor of the Imagine Schools in St. Louis, Missouri Baptist University, began a full review of all six charter schools concluding they would close two of the six schools and place the other four on probation. In March of 2012, the Missouri State Board of Education voted to hold a hearing in April on the performance of Missouri Baptist University's right to Sponsor charter schools. As a result, Missouri Baptist University resigned their charter school Sponsorship rights. With this action, Sponsorship of the Imagine Schools transferred to the State Board who, in turn, voted in April of 2012 to close all six Imagine Schools at the end of the 2011 – 2012 school year.



With the announcement of closure, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, with assistance from **MCPSA** and St. Louis Public Schools, instituted a transition team ensuring the closures were responsibly managed and assisting families with finding a new school.



## Quality Standards for Missouri's Charter Schools

In 2012 **MCPSA** released Quality Standards for Missouri's Charter Schools. The Quality Standards were released as a resource to continue strengthening the charter school sector including new charter schools in development. Built on research and stakeholder input, the Quality Standards presents five principles with associated standards:

### **Principle 1: Substantive Academic Performance**

- Standard: Sets and meets clear, meaningful, and measurable academic goals and student learning objectives as stated in the charter through a performance contract with its Sponsor
- Standard: Demonstrates high expectations for student achievement
- Standard: Provides a challenging, coherent curriculum for all students
- Standard: Supports students in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment that promotes achievement, character, responsibility, and inclusion

### **Principle 2: Quality Leadership**

- Standard: Employs a clear strategic approach to meeting the goal of improving student academic achievement
- Standard: Implements the educational model, all associated programs, and procedural operations outlined in its charter
- Standard: Develops, employs, and sustains a school culture conducive to student learning and staff professional development
- Standard: Understands and complies with the laws, policies, and state and federal requirements that govern charter schools

### **Principle 3: Responsible Governance**

- Standard: Defines the mission and purpose of the charter school that serves as a guide to all school operations
- Standard: Identifies, supports, and evaluates the school leader
- Standard: Ensures that policies are implemented in a fair and consistent manner
- Standard: Recruits and maintains a governing board with diverse backgrounds and skill sets
- Standard: Enacts policies that respect diversity and implements practices that are consistent with the school's charter, mission, vision, and federal and state regulations
- Standard: Monitors the school's education program, operational procedures, and fiscal health in cooperation with the Sponsor

**Principle 4: Organizational Financing and Sustainability**

- Standard: Creates and monitors immediate and long-range financial plans to effectively implement the school's educational program and ensure financial stability as required by state and federal agencies
- Standard: Conducts an annual independent audit which is made public
- Standard: Establishes clear fiscal policies that use public funds appropriately
- Standard: Ensures financial resources are directly related to the school's purpose: student achievement and learning

**Principle 5: Engaged Parents and Community**

- Standard: Engages parents and community stakeholders in the vision and mission of the school
- Standard: Seeks input from relevant, critical, impacted stakeholders

## MCPSA Advocacy Accomplishments From 2011 - 2014

The following is a compilation of key advocacy accomplishments from 2011 through 2014:

### **Missouri Legislative Advocacy**

#### **2012 Missouri General Assembly**

Legislative changes to the Missouri Charter School Statutes:

- Improving the accountability requirements of charter schools
  - Requiring performance contracts between sponsors and schools
  - Changing appeals process from costly judicial review to the Missouri State Board of Education
  - Increasing public reporting requirements on student achievement, financial health and operational procedures
  - Requiring parent grievance process, closure procedures and plans for special education in the charter
- Improving the accountability requirements of charter school sponsors:
  - Pre- approval of new sponsors by the State Board of Education
  - Required evaluation of sponsors by the State Board based on standards of sponsorship every three years
  - Removing disincentive for State Board to revoke sponsorship rights by having schools in a revoked sponsor's portfolio move to the Missouri Charter Public School Commission for sponsorship rather than the State Board
- Expanding opportunities for charter school establishment:
  - Removing the geographic restriction on charter schools allowing schools to open in new markets across the state
- Expanding opportunities for charter school sponsorship:
  - The creation of the Missouri Charter Public School Commission
  - Expanding private university sponsorship to Kansas City
  - Expanding sponsorship to two- year vocational or technical schools

#### **2013 Missouri General Assembly**

Legislative change to the Missouri State Budget:

- Securing the inclusion of a line item in the State's budget for the Missouri Independent Sponsor Commission

#### **2014 Missouri General Assembly\***

\*Truly Agreed and Passed by the Missouri General Assembly; vetoed by Governor Jay Nixon in August 2014:

- Securing and better defining the purpose of a line item in the State's budget for the Missouri Independent Sponsor Commission

- Improving the accountability requirements of the Missouri State Board of Education and charter school sponsors:
  - Establishes a revised timeline on the State Board of Education's approval of Charters
  - Indemnifies the State and prevents Sponsors from being held responsible for a closing school's debt
  - Prohibits district school boards sponsoring charter schools from double counting kids in their reporting
- Improving the accountability requirements of charter schools:
  - Preserves the determination of a charter school's performance is based on their legal sponsor's performance contract
  - Defines a high performing charter provision at 90 percent
  - Removes charter schools from being identified and labeled as financially distressed until after 3 years

### **Governmental Advocacy**

- Improving the closure of poor performing charter schools:
  - Supporting and assisting in the responsible closure of 6 charter public schools in St. Louis
  - Amending of Missouri State Board of Education Rule regarding charter school sponsors' responsibilities with school closures
  - University of Central Missouri support preserving the right of the charter school sponsor to determine the renewal or closure of a poor performing charter school
- Supporting the legal rights of charter schools:
  - Protecting \$5,000,000 in Federal Charter School Program Grant dollars earmarked for Missouri at risk of being returned to the Federal Government
    - Three charter schools provided an opportunity to apply and receive a CSP award
    - Department of Education requested and received an extension of the CSP Grant Program through July 2015
  - Department of Education decision reversal allowing charter schools to establish a kindergarten enrollment age requirement between August 1 and October 1
  - Department of Education decision reversal allowing the definition of Highly Qualified Teachers for charter public schools to follow the Federal guidelines and Missouri Charter School Statutes
- Supporting the legal rights of charter school sponsors:
  - University of Missouri, Columbia support and assistance with the closure of Renaissance Academy
  - University of Central Missouri support and assistance with the closure of Urban Community Leadership Academy
  - University of Missouri, Kansas City support of Hope Academy State Audit



- Missouri Department of Education and University of Missouri, Kansas City support of Genesis School summer school reporting audit