

# Oklahoma Charter Schools Act

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## 70 O.S. § 3-130 - Oklahoma Charter Schools Act.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Oklahoma Charter Schools Act".

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## 70 O.S. § 3-131 - Purpose

- A. The purpose of the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act is to:
    - 1. Improve student learning;
    - 2. Increase learning opportunities for students;
    - 3. Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods;
    - 4. Provide additional academic choices for parents and students;
    - 5. Require the measurement of student learning and create different and innovative forms of measuring student learning;
    - 6. Establish new forms of accountability for schools; and
    - 7. Create new professional opportunities for teachers and administrators including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.
  - B. The purpose of the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act is not to provide a means by which to keep open a school that may otherwise be closed. Applicants applying for a charter for a school which is to be otherwise closed shall be required to prove that conversion to a charter school fulfills the purposes of the act independent of closing the school. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to preclude a school designated as a "high challenge school" from becoming a charter school.
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## 70 O.S. § 3-132 - Application of Oklahoma Charter Schools Act

- A. The Oklahoma Charter Schools Act shall apply only to charter schools formed and operated under the provisions of the act. Charter schools shall be sponsored only as follows:
  - 1. By a school district with an average daily membership of five thousand (5,000) or more and which all or part of the school district is located in a county having more than five hundred thousand (500,000) population according to the latest Federal Decennial Census;
  - 2. By a technology center school district only when the charter school is located in a school district served by the technology center school district and only if the local school district has an average daily membership of five thousand (5,000) or more and which all or part of the school district is located in a county having more than five hundred thousand (500,000) population according to the latest Federal Decennial Census; or
  - 3. By a comprehensive or regional institution that is a member of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education only when the charter school is located in a school district that has an average daily membership of five thousand (5,000) or more and which all or part of the school district is located in a county having more than five hundred thousand (500,000) population according to the latest Federal Decennial Census. In addition, the institution shall have a teacher education program accredited by the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation and have a branch campus or constituent agency physically located within the school district in which the charter school is located.
- B. Charter schools formed pursuant to the act shall serve as a pilot program to demonstrate the potential of expanding charter schools to other parts of the state. Any charter or enterprise school operating in the state pursuant to an agreement with the board of education of a school district on July 1, 1999, may continue to operate pursuant to that agreement or may contract with the board of education of the school district pursuant to the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act. Nothing in the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act shall prohibit a school district from applying for exemptions from certain education-related statutory requirements as provided for in the Educational Deregulation Act.
- C. Beginning January 1, 2008, not more than three new charter schools shall be established each fiscal year in each county in the state having more than five hundred thousand (500,000) population according to the

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latest Federal Decennial Census. For purposes of this subsection, a "new charter school" shall mean a charter school proposed by an applicant that has never had a contract with a sponsor.

- D. For purposes of the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act, "charter school" means a public school established by contract with a board of education of a school district, an area vocational-technical school district, or a higher education institution pursuant to the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act to provide learning that will improve student achievement and as defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. 8065.
- E. A charter school may consist of a new school site, new school sites or all or any portion of an existing school site. An entire school district may not become a charter school site.

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## 70 O.S. § 3-134 - Sponsor Proposal

- A. For written applications filed after January 1, 2008, prior to submission of the application to a proposed sponsor seeking to establish a charter school, the applicant shall be required to complete training which shall not exceed ten (10) hours provided by the State Department of Education on the process and requirements for establishing a charter school. The Department shall develop and implement the training by January 1, 2008. The Department may provide the training in any format and manner that the Department determines to be efficient and effective including, but not limited to, web-based training.
- B. Except as otherwise provided for in Section 3-137 of this title, an applicant seeking to establish a charter school shall submit a written application to the proposed sponsor as prescribed in subsection E of this section. The application shall include:
  - 1. A mission statement for the charter school;
  - 2. A description of the organizational structure and the governing body of the charter school;
  - 3. A financial plan for the first three (3) years of operation of the charter school and a description of the treasurer or other officers or persons who shall have primary responsibility for the finances of the charter school. Such person shall have demonstrated experience in school finance or the equivalent thereof;
  - 4. A description of the hiring policy of the charter school;
  - 5. The name of the applicant or applicants and requested sponsor;
  - 6. A description of the facility and location of the charter school;
  - 7. A description of the grades being served;
  - 8. An outline of criteria designed to measure the effectiveness of the charter school;
  - 9. A demonstration of support for the charter school from residents of the school district which may include but is not limited to a survey of the school district residents or a petition signed by residents of the school district; and
  - 10. Documentation that the applicants completed charter school training as set forth in subsection A of this section.
- C. A board of education of a public school district, public body, public or private college or university, private person, or private organization may contract with a sponsor to establish a charter school. A private school shall not be eligible to contract for a charter school under the provisions of the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act.
- D. The sponsor of a charter school is the board of education of a school district, the board of education of a technology center school district, or a higher education institution which meets the criteria established in Section 3-132 of this title. Any board of education of a school district in the state may sponsor one or more charter schools. The physical location of a charter school sponsored by a board of education of a school district or a technology center school district shall be within the boundaries of the sponsoring school district.
- E. An applicant for a charter school may submit an application to a proposed sponsor which shall either accept or reject sponsorship of the charter school within ninety (90) days of receipt of the application. If the proposed sponsor rejects the application, it shall notify the applicant in writing of the reasons for the rejection. The applicant may submit a revised application for reconsideration to the proposed sponsor within

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thirty (30) days after receiving notification of the rejection. The proposed sponsor shall accept or reject the revised application within thirty (30) days of its receipt.

- F. A sponsor of a charter school shall notify the State Board of Education when it accepts sponsorship of a charter school. The notification shall include a copy of the charter of the charter school. The Board shall determine if the new charter school will exceed the limit established in subsection C of Section 3-132 of this title. If the new charter school does exceed the limit, the Board shall not allocate funding for the charter school as provided for in Section 3-142 of this title.
- G. If a proposed sponsor rejects the revised application for a charter school, the applicant may proceed to mediation or binding arbitration or both mediation and binding arbitration as provided in the Dispute Resolution Act and the rules promulgated pursuant thereto. The applicant shall contact the early settlement program for the county in which the charter school would be located. If the parties proceed to binding arbitration, a panel of three arbitrators shall be appointed by the director of the early settlement program handling the dispute. The proposed sponsor shall pay the cost for any mediation or arbitration requested pursuant to this section.
- H. If a board of education of a technology center school district or a higher education institution accepts sponsorship of a charter school, the administrative, fiscal and oversight responsibilities of the technology center school district or the higher education institution shall be listed in the contract. No responsibilities shall be delegated to a local school district unless the local school district agrees to assume the responsibilities.

While binding arbitration is provided for in the Charter Schools Act, it is legally impossible for it to take place in the absence of rules and regulations governing the procedure provided by the Dispute Resolution Act. The Dispute Resolution Act contains no provisions for binding arbitration. *Pentagon Academy v. ISD No. 1 of Tulsa County*, 2003 OK 98, 82 P.3d 587.

The Oklahoma Charter Schools Act does not violate the doctrine that the Legislature may not delegate its powers to private organizations or persons, as the Legislature retains its authority to provide for a free public education as required by Okla. Const. art. XIII, § 1, and as the Act contains specific statutory standards for charter schools. *August 22, 2007 (AG Op. No. 07-23)*

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## 70 O.S. § 3-135 - Sponsor Contract Guidelines

- A. The sponsor of a charter school shall enter into a written contract with the governing body of the charter school. The contract shall incorporate the provisions of the charter of the charter school and contain, but shall not be limited to, the following provisions:
  - 1. A description of the program to be offered by the school which complies with the purposes outlined in Section 11 of this act;
  - 2. Admission policies and procedures;
  - 3. Management and administration of the charter school;
  - 4. Requirements and procedures for program and financial audits;
  - 5. A description of how the charter school will comply with the charter requirements set forth in the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act;
  - 6. Assumption of liability by the charter school; and
  - 7. The term of the contract.
- B. A charter school shall not enter into an employment contract with any teacher or other personnel until the charter school has a contract with a sponsoring school district. The employment contract shall set forth the personnel policies of the charter school, including, but not limited to, policies related to certification, professional development evaluation, suspension, dismissal and nonreemployment, sick leave, personal business leave, emergency leave, and family and medical leave. The contract shall also specifically set forth the salary, hours, fringe benefits, and work conditions. The contract may provide for employer-employee bargaining, but the charter school shall not be required to comply with the provisions of Sections [509.1](#) through [509.10 of Title 70](#) of the Oklahoma Statutes. The contract shall conform to all applicable provisions set forth in Section 11 of this act.

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Upon contracting with any teacher or other personnel, the governing body of the charter school shall, in writing, disclose employment rights of the employees in the event the charter school closes or the charter is not renewed.

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## 70 O.S. § 3-136 - Charter School Compliance

- A. A charter school shall adopt a charter which will ensure compliance with the following:
1. A charter school shall comply with all federal regulations and state and local rules and statutes relating to health, safety, civil rights and insurance. By January 1, 2000, the State Department of Education shall prepare a list of relevant rules and statutes which a charter school must comply with as required by this paragraph and shall annually provide an update to the list;
  2. A charter school shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations. A sponsor may not authorize a charter school or program that is affiliated with a nonpublic sectarian school or religious institution;
  3. The charter school may provide a comprehensive program of instruction for a prekindergarten program, a kindergarten program or any grade between grades one and twelve. Instruction may be provided to all persons between the ages of four (4) and twenty-one (21) years. A charter school may offer a curriculum which emphasizes a specific learning philosophy or style or certain subject areas such as mathematics, science, fine arts, performance arts, or foreign language. The charter of a charter school which offers grades nine through twelve shall specifically address whether the charter school will comply with the graduation requirements established in Section 11-103.6 of this title. No charter school shall be chartered for the purpose of offering a curriculum for deaf or blind students that is the same or similar to the curriculum being provided by or for educating deaf or blind students that are being served by the Oklahoma School for the Blind or the Oklahoma School for the Deaf;
  4. A charter school shall participate in the testing as required by the Oklahoma School Testing Program Act and the reporting of test results as is required of a school district. A charter school shall also provide any necessary data to the Office of Accountability;
  5. Except as provided for in the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act and its charter, a charter school shall be exempt from all statutes and rules relating to schools, boards of education, and school districts;
  6. A charter school, to the extent possible, shall be subject to the same reporting requirements, financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as a school district. The State Department of Education or State Auditor and Inspector may conduct financial, program, or compliance audits. A charter school shall use the Oklahoma Cost Accounting System to report financial transactions to the sponsoring school district;
  7. A charter school shall comply with all federal and state laws relating to the education of children with disabilities in the same manner as a school district;
  8. A charter school shall provide for a governing body for the school which shall be responsible for the policies and operational decisions of the charter school;
  9. A charter school shall not be used as a method of generating revenue for students who are being home schooled and are not being educated at an organized charter school site;
  10. A charter school may not charge tuition or fees;
  11. A charter school shall provide instruction each year for at least the number of days required in Section 1-109 of this title;
  12. A charter school shall comply with the student suspension requirements provided for in Section 24-101.3 of this title;
  13. A charter school shall be considered a school district for purposes of tort liability under The Governmental Tort Claims Act;
  14. Employees of a charter school may participate as members of the Teachers' Retirement System of Oklahoma in accordance with applicable statutes and rules if otherwise allowed pursuant to law;

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15. A charter school may participate in all health and related insurance programs available to the employees of the sponsor of the charter school;
  16. A charter school shall comply with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act and the Oklahoma Open Records Act; and
  17. The governing body of a charter school shall be subject to the same conflict of interest requirements as a member of a local school board.
- B. The charter of a charter school shall include a description of the personnel policies, personnel qualifications, and method of school governance, and the specific role and duties of the sponsor of the charter school.
  - C. The charter of a charter school may be amended at the request of the governing body of the charter school and upon the approval of the sponsor.
  - D. A charter school may enter into contracts and sue and be sued.
  - E. The governing body of a charter school may not levy taxes or issue bonds.
  - F. The charter of a charter school shall include a provision specifying the method or methods to be employed for disposing of real and personal property acquired by the charter school upon expiration or termination of the charter or failure of the charter school to continue operations. Except as otherwise provided, any real or personal property purchased with state or local funds shall be retained by the sponsoring school district. If a charter school that was previously sponsored by the board of education of a school district continues operation within the school district under a new charter sponsored by an entity authorized pursuant to Section 3-132 of this title, the charter school may retain any personal property purchased with state or local funds for use in the operation of the charter school until termination of the new charter or failure of the charter school to continue operations.

Charter schools are not required to offer alternative education programs. *February 15, 2000 (AG Op. No. 00-12).*

Charter schools are exempt from mandated core curriculum requirements. *September 27, 1999 (AG Op. No. 99-64).*

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## 70 O.S. § 3-137 - Length of Contract - Termination of Contract

- A. An approved contract for a charter school shall be effective for not longer than five (5) years from the first day of operation. Prior to the beginning of the fifth year of operation, the charter school may apply for renewal of the contract with the sponsor. The sponsor may deny the request for renewal if it determines the charter school has failed to complete the obligations of the contract or comply with the provisions of the Oklahoma Charter Schools Act. A sponsor shall give written notice of its intent to deny the request for renewal at least eight (8) months prior to expiration of the contract.
  - B. If a sponsor denies a request for renewal, the governing board may proceed to mediation or binding arbitration or both as provided for in subsection G of Section 3-134 of this title.
  - C. A sponsor may terminate a contract during the term of the contract for failure to meet the requirements for student performance contained in the contract, failure to meet the standards of fiscal management, violations of the law, or other good cause. The sponsor shall give at least ninety (90) days' written notice to the governing board prior to terminating the contract. The governing board may request, in writing, an informal hearing before the sponsor within fourteen (14) days of receiving notice. The sponsor shall conduct an informal hearing before taking action. If a sponsor decides to terminate a contract, the governing board may proceed to mediation or binding arbitration or both as provided for in subsection G of Section 3-134 of this title.
  - D. If a contract is not renewed, the governing board of the charter school may submit an application to a proposed new sponsor as provided for in Section 3-134 of this title.
  - E. If a contract is not renewed or is terminated according to this section, a student who attended the charter school may enroll in the resident school district of the student or may apply for a transfer in accordance with Section 8-103 of this title.
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## 70 O.S. § 3-138 - Unlawful Reprisal Actions Prohibited

A board of education of a school district or an employee of the district who has control over personnel actions shall not take unlawful reprisal action against an employee of the school district for the reason that the employee is directly or indirectly involved in an application to establish a charter school. As used in this section, "unlawful reprisal" means an action that is taken by a board of education or a school district employee as a direct result of a lawful application to establish a charter school and that is adverse to an employee or an education program.

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## 70 O.S. § 3-139 - Teacher Status Upon Returning from Charter School.

- A. A sponsoring school district shall determine whether a teacher who is employed by or teaching at a charter school and who was previously employed as a teacher at the sponsoring public school district shall not lose any right of salary status or any other benefit provided by law due to teaching at a charter school upon returning to the sponsoring public school district to teach.
- B. A teacher who is employed by or teaching at a charter school and who submits an employment application to the school district where the teacher was employed immediately before employment by or at a charter school shall be given employment preference by the school district if:
  - 1. The teacher submits an employment application to the school district no later than three (3) years after ceasing employment with the school district; and
  - 2. A suitable position is available at the school district.

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## 70 O.S. § 3-140 - Eligible Students - Discrimination

- A. A charter school shall enroll those students whose legal residence is within the boundaries of the school district in which the charter school is located and who submit a timely application, or those students who transfer to the district in which the charter school is located in accordance with [Section 8-103 of Title 70](#) of the Oklahoma Statutes, unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building. If capacity is insufficient to enroll all eligible students, the charter school shall select students through a lottery selection process. A charter school shall give enrollment preference to eligible students who reside within the boundaries of the school district in which the charter school is located. A charter school may limit admission to students within a given age group or grade level.
- B. A charter school shall admit students who reside in the attendance area of a school or in a school district that is under a court order of desegregation or that is a party to an agreement with the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights directed towards mediating alleged or proven racial discrimination unless notice is received from the resident school district that admission of the student would violate the court order or agreement.
- C. A charter school may designate a specific geographic area within the school district in which the charter school is located as an academic enterprise zone and may limit admissions to students who reside within that area. An academic enterprise zone shall be a geographic area in which sixty percent (60%) or more of the children who reside in the area qualify for the free or reduced school lunch program.
- D. Except as provided in subsections B and C of this section, a charter school shall not limit admission based on ethnicity, national origin, gender, income level, disabling condition, proficiency in the English language, measures of achievement, aptitude, or athletic ability.

\*Note: This way in text of law.

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## 70 O.S. § 3-141 - Transportation

- A. Transportation shall be provided by the charter school in accordance with Sections [9-101](#) through [9-118 of Title 70](#) of the Oklahoma Statutes and only within the transportation boundaries of the school district in which the charter school is located.
- B. A charter school shall provide the parent or guardian information regarding transportation at the time the student enrolls in the charter school.

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## 70 O.S. § 3-142 - State-Appropriated Funding - Funding From Non-State Sources

- A. For purposes of funding, a charter school sponsored by a board of education of a school district shall be considered a site within the school district in which the charter school is located. The student membership of the charter school shall be considered separate from the student membership of the district in which the charter school is located for the purpose of calculating weighted average daily membership pursuant to Section 18-201.1 of this title and state aid pursuant to Section 18-200.1 of this title. For charter schools sponsored by a board of education of a school district, the sum of the separate calculations for the charter school and the school district shall be used to determine the total State Aid allocation for the district in which the charter school is located. A charter school shall receive from the sponsoring school district, the State Aid revenue generated by its students for the applicable year, less up to five percent (5%) of the total, which may be retained by the school district as a fee for administrative services rendered. For charter schools sponsored by the board of education of a technology center school district or a higher education institution, the State Aid allocation for the charter school shall be distributed by the State Board of Education. Not more than five percent (5%) of the total allocation may be charged by the sponsor as a fee for administrative services rendered. The State Board of Education shall determine the policy and procedure for making payments to a charter school.
- B. The weighted average daily membership for the first year of operation of a charter school shall be determined initially by multiplying the actual enrollment of students as of August 1 by 1.333. The charter school shall receive revenue equal to that which would be generated by the estimated weighted average daily membership calculated pursuant to this subsection. At midyear, the allocation for the charter school shall be adjusted using the first quarter weighted average daily membership for the charter school calculated pursuant to subsection A of this section.
- C. A charter school shall be eligible to receive any other aid, grants or revenues allowed to other schools. A charter school sponsored by the board of education of a technology center school district or a higher education institution shall be considered a local education agency for purposes of funding.
- D. A charter school, in addition to the money received from the state, may receive money from any other source. Any unexpended nonstate funds, excluding local revenue, may be reserved and used for future purposes.

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## 70 O.S. § 3-143 - Annual Report

The State Board of Education shall issue an annual report to the Legislature and the Governor outlining the status of charter schools in the state. Each charter school shall annually file a report with the Office of Accountability. The report shall include such information as requested by the Office of Accountability, including but not limited to information on enrollment, testing, curriculum, finances and employees.