

**In-District Charter School**

**Application**

**[INSERT SCHOOL LOGO]**

**[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]**

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**Note to Applicants**: The application questions are included in this template for your reference. Before submitting your final application, remove all questions, footnotes, and examples, and leave only the question headings (e.g., “1. Executive Summary”) and your answers. Please leave one space before and after each paragraph. Remember your total page limit (including appendices) cannot exceed 50 pages. In this template, the questions alone add about 7 pages to the count, so please factor that into your page calculation as you write. Except for the Academic Model section, your responses to each question typically should be between 1 to 3 pages.

# Executive Summary

Complete the Executive Summary that is provided in the application template. In the School Overview section, write a one paragraph summary of the school and the proposed focus of your school design plan. Include a high-level description of the school’s data, challenges, and proposed academic model or other strategies that address your data and challenges. The overview should answer the question: “Why is this school applying to become an in-district charter?” **Do not complete the Executive Summary until after you’ve written most of your application.** The Executive Summary must not exceed one page.

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| **School Information** |
| **School name** |  |
| **School address** |  |
| **Principal** |  |
| **Type of in-district charter** | [Campus Initiated or District Initiated] |
| **Grade levels at full enrollment** |  |

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|  **School Overview** |
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| **Application Timeline (*completed by Office of Innovation*)** |
| **Submitted to District Office** |  |
| **Reviewed by Evaluation Committee** |  |
| **[Approved / Denied] by SAISD Board of Trustees** |  |
| **First School Year of Operation as an In-District Charter** |  |

# Applicant Leadership Team

Identify your applicant leadership team. For existing schools, the applicant team must be three to five people, including the principal and two full-time teachers. For new schools, the team must be three to five people, including the principal and at least two other people who will be working at the campus full-time.

For each applicant team member, briefly explain why you chose that person.

* What skills and expertise does the person have that are important to leading this process and helping the school achieve its goals?
* Briefly discuss the person’s track record of success in work that is like the work they will do at your proposed school. Include more than just years of experience and positions held (e.g., student outcomes, school improvement initiatives, professional accolades, etc.)

If the district is exploring a Senate Bill 1882 partnership with a mission-aligned nonprofit organization to support this school, please provide the following information:

* Name of organization;
* Name of people employed by the organization who will be working full-time on this partnership; and
* Briefly describe their relevant background and expertise.

# Stakeholder Map

This section requires you to reflect on the various stakeholders at your campus, assess their individual needs, and then articulate where your school is succeeding and falling short relative to those needs. Please complete the tables below. New schools: Please write about the stakeholders you expect to serve and how well their needs are being met by existing schools.

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| **Students** |
| *Specific stakeholder groups to consider:* student clubs and leadership groups, different age groups (early childhood vs. late elementary or freshmen vs. seniors), special populations, etc.[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| **Recent Engagement with this group[[2]](#footnote-2)** | *EXAMPLE:* Student survey on 9/1/2020. Focus group with 10 fifth grade students on 9/15/2020.  |
| **Stakeholder’s Top 3 Needs(as described by the group)** | **How school is currently meeting the needs** | **Areas for growth in meeting the needs** |
| *EXAMPLE*Fun field trips and other activities outside of school | *EXAMPLE*School has 3 field trips per year to the Botanical Gardens, Witte, and Doseum. | *EXAMPLE*Students would like more field trips and to go to different places. |
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| **Campus Staff** |
| *Specific stakeholder groups to consider: Teachers, office staff, custodians, counselors, librarians, etc.* |
| **Recent Engagement with this group**  |  |
| **Stakeholder’s Top 3 Needs (as described by the group)** | **How school is currently meeting the needs** | **Areas for growth in meeting the needs** |
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| **Families** |
| *Specific stakeholder groups to consider: families new to the school, families with special needs, non-English speaking families, parent-teacher associations, etc.* |
| **Recent Engagement with this group**  |  |
| **Stakeholder’s Top 3 Needs (as described by the group)** | **How school is currently meeting the needs** | **Areas for growth in meeting the needs** |
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# Data Reflection

Using this [Data Template](https://bit.ly/2UqEffX),submit three-year trends of data for your school. *When submitting your final application, copy and paste an image of the data template onto page 1 of the Appendix. Do not create a new table in your application document.*

Existing Schools: In addition to completing the template, applicants must also answer the following:

* Which aspects of your school’s data show areas of strength, and what strategies have led to those successes? Focus on 2-3 data points only.
* Which aspects of your school’s data show areas for growth, and why do you believe the school is struggling in those areas? Focus on 2-3 data points only.
* In your response to this question, only write about previous efforts. Do not describe future plans or intended strategies. Those will be included in the rest of the application.

New Schools: Complete the data template utilizing district-level or nearby school results for the grades you seek to serve (e.g. 6-8). For your narrative response, reflect on the challenges facing similar schools in SAISD generally; for example, an applicant proposing to launch a new middle school might reflect on what is holding back the success of middle school students in SAISD rather than at any specific school.

# Challenges for Your School

Using the chart below, describe the three most significant challenges or obstacles confronting your school. In identifying each of these obstacles, a quality response should:

* briefly identify the three challenges;
* clearly articulate one root cause for each challenge;
* explain how you identified these root causes; and
* explain how you engaged stakeholders to identify and verify these causes.

The root causes must be under the control of the group doing the analysis, be aimed at the systems level, and address the underlying reason for student performance. The root causes should be causes that would be resolved, if addressed by the school. The causes should not blame individuals, including students and staff, or refer to factors that are external to your school, like a family’s socio-economic status.

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| **Top 3 Challenges** | **Root Cause** |
| *EXAMPLE*54% of 9th graders and 87% of 10th graders passed Texas Success Initiative (TSI) in 2018-2019. In order to complete the college’s associate degree program, students must pass TSI by the end of 10th grade. | *EXAMPLE*Teachers assigned to our TSI preperation course do not have access to age-appropriate and research-based materials and instructional strategies to overcome the learning gaps of incoming high school students.  |
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| **How Root Causes were Identified (including who was involved)** | *EXAMPLE*At a faculty meeting on 9/1/2020, campus staff analyzed the following data: STAAR, attendance, discipline, Insight Survey, SPF family survey, and SEAD student survey. Staff determined 3 challenges and conducted a root cause analysis using the “5 Why’s” protocol.  |

# Mission

What is your mission?

* A mission statement should communicate your fundamental beliefs about student learning.
* The mission statement should be clear, concise, and memorable.
* It must also reflect high expectations for students and align with the broader mission of SAISD, which may be viewed [here](https://www.saisd.net/page/dis-vision).

Existing schools are encouraged to use this process as an opportunity to engage their school community to revise or update the school’s mission statement in a way that aligns with the school’s new vision.

# Goals

What are your school goals? Please submit your goals using the chart below.

* Goals must be written in a SMART format - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
* Goals must address the root causes of each of your stated challenges.
* Goals may be one, two, or three-year goals.

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| **Goal #** | **Goal in SMART Format** | **Baseline Metric and Year** | **Data Used to Measure Progress towards Goal** |
|  | *EXAMPLE*On 2021 STAAR Reading for 3-5th grade, 65% of students will score Approaches, 37% Meets, and 20% Masters | *EXAMPLE*2019 STAAR Reading for 3-5 grade: 50% Approaches, 22% Meets, and 5% Masters  | *EXAMPLE*STAAR benchmarks, campus-based assessments |
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| **Which goal will be the hardest to achieve and why?** | **s Goal** |

# Academic Model

An academic model may be a clearly defined program or framework, such as Montessori or STEM, or it may be a collection of programs and strategies that are strategically aligned to drive student outcomes.

What is your school’s academic model? In your response, please address the following:

* How do your academic model and strategies align with the school mission and goals and respond to the root causes of your challenges?
* If you are proposing a change from your existing academic model, describe the existing academic model and the basis for the change.
* Which academic strategies, tools, resources, and programs will you incorporate at your school? Strategies should be research-based and proven to increase student achievement. Do not limit your discussion to teaching and learning for core content (e.g. ELA).
* How will you incorporate social and emotional learning into the key elements of your academic program, including assessment and curriculum? Describe the specific SEL curriculum you will use and why you chose it.
* How does your model meet the needs of all special populations? Explain how you will assess whether your model is meeting their needs, and what you will do if future results reflect that your academic model does not work for one or more special populations (e.g. students with disabilities).
* What are the specific downsides of your academic approach, and how will you mitigate those downsides?

# Data and Continuous Improvement

How will your school track and review data on an ongoing basis? Your response should include:

* regular cycles for data collection, review, analysis, and reflection;
* an explanation of how you will use both formative and summative assessments;
* systems for analyzing both academic and non-academic data; and
* a description of how your school will adjust its practices when your data appears to fall short of your school’s goals.

# Proposed Autonomies

In accordance with Board Policy EL(LOCAL), the SAISD Board will grant autonomies to in-district charter schools to the fullest extent of the law. Using the table below, please articulate no more than ten specific autonomies that are the highest priority for your school.

Your response to this question will not be an exhaustive list of all autonomies that will be granted to your school. Rather, this question is meant to assess your understanding of school autonomy and demonstrate which autonomies are the most critical to your school’s success. Approved in-district charters will be empowered with all autonomies permitted by board policy and state law.

Please see the [School Autonomy Guidance](https://innovatesaisd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/School-Autonomy-Guidance-revised-5.6.2020.pdf) for examples and explanations of potentially available autonomies.

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| **Autonomy**[[3]](#footnote-3) | **District Requirement** | **Proposed Campus Strategy**  | **Rationale for Campus Strategy** |
| *EXAMPLE*Select a schedule or calendar that may differ from the district | *EXAMPLE*[District Instructional Calendar](https://www.saisd.net/page/dis-calendar)  | *EXAMPLE*Increase school day on Monday through Thursday by 30 minutes in order to release students early twice a month for staff professional development. | *EXAMPLE*The root cause of our challenge of low MAP reading scores was a lack of time for professional development in research-based reading strategies. This schedule would allow for a significant increase in staff professional development. |
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# Human Capital

How will you recruit, develop, and retain teachers and staff? In your response, address the following:

* Why would someone choose to work at your school?
* In describing your staff development opportunities, include more than just formal professional development (e.g., coaching, mentoring, leadership opportunities, etc.).
* How do you systematically identify and retain your highest performing employees?
* Briefly reflect on the Human Capital data included in your data template. Why did you highlight those data points, and what do they illuminate about your school?

New Schools**:**  Explain your timeline for recruiting and hiring your founding staff and a detailed explanation of how you will recruit and attract people to join your new school.

# Climate & Culture

Describe the climate and culture of your proposed school.

* What will the school look and feel like for students, staff and families?
* Describe systems or programs that will sustain your culture, including any opportunities for social-emotional support.
* Explain how the physical environment (school entrance, hallways, classrooms, outdoor space, etc.) reinforces your school culture.

What are your proposed student behavior strategies and procedures? How do they contribute to the school’s culture and promote restorative practices rather than a punitive disciplinary approach?

* Review and reflect on the discipline data provided in the data template. Discuss what has gone well and what has gone poorly in your school’s (or the district’s) current discipline practices.

# Family and Community Engagement

Describe your plan to engage with your families and the broader school community (residents, neighborhood associations, nonprofits, businesses, etc.)

* What does success look like for your schools’ relationship with its parents and community members? In your response, focus on the outcome of the engagement as well as the inputs.
* How will you ensure timely, responsive, and adequate communication with families and the community?
* Describe the partnerships, programs and strategies that your school will utilize to strengthen support for student learning and encourage parent and community involvement in the life of the school. (Do not just list programs or strategies; explain what they are and how they benefit your community and align with your school goals.)

# Student Recruitment and Retention

What is your plan for student recruitment and retention?

* Describe how you will attract new students and retain existing students, identifying key strategies, systems, and staff responsibilities.
* Include your school’s 30 second “elevator speech” to prospective families.

New Schools:

* Include a chart with your projected student enrollment, by grade level and school year, until the school reaches capacity.
* Provide evidence that your academic model will attract enough students to meet your projected enrollment.
* Explain how you will ensure that prospective students and their families have a clear understanding of the academic model prior to making an enrollment decision.

# Campus Leadership Team

Texas state law requires school districts to ensure that effective “site-based” decision-making occurs at each school to support the improvement of student performance. At SAISD, schools comply with this requirement by maintaining a Campus Leadership Team (“CLT”), which develops the Campus Improvement Plan, approves professional development, reviews student data, and advises the school on organizational matters like budgeting and staffing.

Approved in-district charter schools are not subject to state law or board policy on CLTs. However, empowering a group of school stakeholders to oversee and support the school is a best practice for all schools, and in particular schools with a greater degree of autonomy. The purpose of this question is to encourage applicants to re-imagine the CLT in a way that addresses your school’s unique challenges, aligns with your academic model, and meets the needs of your community.

1. **Purpose and Focus.** What will be the purpose of your CLT? What specific focus areas will it have? The focus areas are up to the school, but they should take into consideration the school’s data, challenges, and academic model. One focus of the CLT could be charter implementation, but the purpose should be broader than just the charter.
2. **Meeting Structure.** How often will this group meet, and how will it establish meeting agendas?
3. **Membership.** Reflect on your data and challenges to determine the type of committee members you may need for this reimagined CLT. Using the chart below, list your proposed committee members. Schools are encouraged to utlize school staff and external stakeholders, such as parents and community partners, for additional expertise. The number of committee members is up to you, but we recommend between 7 and 11, based on board governance best practices.

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| **Committee Member Name** | **Affiliation or Role** | **Relevant Expertise** |
| *EXAMPLES*Maria Rodriguez | *EXAMPLES*Store Manager, H.E.B. | *EXAMPLES*Business, leadership, fundraising |
| John Smith | Retired Military, Parent | Engineering, neighborhood resident |
| Jennifer Davis | 3rd Grade Teacher | Education, social-emotional support |
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# Implementation Plan

Using the chart below, outline your plan for implementing at least three key initiatives or projects discussed in this application that will be critical to the success of this charter. The action steps should begin no earlier than board approval of your charter (February 2021). If these initiatives are new and would impact students, staff or families, include any steps you would take to ensure that your stakeholders are aware of and prepared for these initiatives.

*EXAMPLE*

|  |  |
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| **Initiative 1 Goal** | Implement new Social-Emotional Learning curriculum by start of SY 2021-22. |
| **Action Steps** | **Deadline** | **Responsible Party** |
| Order curriculum and materials  | May 7, 2021 | Assistant Principal |
| Plan summer professional development  | May 28, 2021  | Principal |
| Conduct summer professional development | June 1, 2021 - August 6, 2021  | All staff |
| Develop plan and create resources to communicate SEL to students and parents | August 1, 2021  | Principal and teachers |
| 100% of teachers implement SEL curriculum during student advisory period | August 22, 2021 | Principal monitors, Teachers implement |

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| **Initiative 1 Goal** |  |
| **Action Steps** | **Deadline** | **Responsible Party** |
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| **Initiative 2 Goal** |  |
| **Action Steps** | **Deadline** | **Responsible Party** |
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| **Initiative 3 Goal** |  |
| **Action Steps** | **Deadline** | **Responsible Party** |
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# Budget Exercise

*This question is only for schools that are eligible for a federal charter school startup grant. All new charter schools that have not previously received a startup grant are eligible and must answer this question.*

Startup grant opportunities are available for new in-district charter applicants. These competitive federal grants have awarded schools up to $800,000 over two years to support planning and start-up expenses related to the schools’ redesign. Using the chart below, create a proposed budget for $800,000, with a description of each item, along with estimated costs and a detailed rationale for each item. The budget should be based on actual costs for items that align to your mission and goals and address your stated challenges. The Sustainability Plan should address any recurring costs in future years after the grant funds are spent (e.g., maintenance, license fees, follow-up training, etc.).

Please remember that this is a highly competitive grant, so additional funding for your charter is not guaranteed. Additional guidance on allowable and unallowable expenses will be provided.

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| **Item Description** | **Estimated Cost** | **Rationale** | **Sustainability Plan** |
| *EXAMPLE*Reading Reconsidered training for 5 teachers per year for 2 years | *EXAMPLE*$8,500 per year X 2 years = $17,000 | *EXAMPLE*This professional development will increase the breadth, depth, and quality of students’ reading. | *EXAMPLE*Minimal ongoing expense. If school decides to send teachers in future years, will use local funds. |
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# Network Development Plan

*This question is only for principals who are selected to participate in SAISD’s Network Principal Initiative.*

Through this initiative, high-capacity school leaders with a track record of success will join together to form a network of schools. A network principal will either transition to a supervisory role at two schools or continue to lead one school and form a network with one or more other principals. In both cases, the network principals will seek to form a Senate Bill 1882 partnership with a mission-aligned nonprofit or university.

1. **Systems.** How will you modify and/or create systems and structures to support your role as a network principal with a non-profit partner? Detail multiple specific examples of how you intend to create and/or modify systems to ensure communication and alignment with your non-profit partner and the other schools in your network.
2. **Mitigating Risks.** How will you ensure that becoming a network principal with a non-profit partner does not jeopardize the success of your current school? Articulate key risks and detail one or more mitigation strategies that are proportionate and appropriately responsive to each corresponding risk.

# Partner Governing Board

*This question is only for schools at which the district is proposing a Senate Bill 1882 partnership.*

State law requires all Senate Bill 1882 partnership organizations to have a governing board to oversee the partnership and manage the partnership schools. This board must meet a minimum of three times per year and fulfil the obligations described in the partnership agreement, including approving the school budget, supporting the school in meeting its performance goals, and conducting an annual financial audit of the nonprofit organization. The nonprofit partner should complete this question with assistance from the school staff.

1. **Membership.** Using the chart below, list the proposed members of the board, along with their current role and relevant expertise. You are not obligated to have more than three identified board members at this time, but you must complete the “relevant expertise” for all 7 board member positions to demonstrate the expertise you believe you will need. Reflect on your data and challenges to determine the types of board members you may need.

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| **Board Member Name****(First and Last)** | **Affiliation or Role** | **Relevant Expertise** |
| *EXAMPLES*Maria Rodriguez | *EXAMPLES*Store Manager, H.E.B. | *EXAMPLES*Business, leadership, fundraising |
| John Smith | Retired Military, Parent | Engineering, neighborhood resident |
| Jorge Gonzalez | Former City Councilman, District 3 | Government, community organizing |
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1. **Sustainability.** How will you recruit and retain board members?
2. **Accountability.** How will the board hold the principal and other school staff accountable to achieve the school’s goals and implement the school’s charter with fidelity?

# Appendix A – Data Template

After you complete your [Data Template](https://bit.ly/2UqEffX), copy and paste an image of the completed chart into this document in Appendix A. Do not attempt to re-create the chart in Word or Google Docs.

# Appendix B – [Insert Name]

# Appendix C – [Insert Name]

1. Specific stakeholder groups are listed to encourage applicants to think broadly about each stakeholder. In completing the mapping exercise, you can respond as to the stakeholder generally or focus on specific sub-groups, as you deem relevant. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Schools are expected to engage with stakeholders through informal conversations, surveys, events, or other means to learn the stakeholders’ needs directly. “Recent” engagement means engagement that occurred within one year of the submission of this application. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “Autonomy” is the brief and general description of the autonomy. “District Requirement” is the specific requirement related to the autonomy from which the school is requesting an exemption. “Proposed Strategy” describes exactly how the school plan to utilize this autonomy within the first three years of the charter. “Rationale” is the reason why this strategy is important to the school. The rationale should align to some aspect of your application (e.g., challenges, mission, academic model, etc.) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)