



WI RESOURCE CENTER
FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

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WRCCS.ORG

Wisconsin Charter School Summit 2026



Taking on the Year of Design

WRCCS Summit 2026



Welcome

Agenda

- Introductions - Who's in the room - 10 min
- Walk through 12 months before opening - 30 min
- Questions/Plan/Team Time - 20 min

1. EVERYONE IS DOING THEIR ABSOLUTE BEST with what they have been given.
2. NO JUDGEMENT today or in the future about what you have done and/or what you are planning on doing to best serve your community.
3. IMPROVEMENT WILL BE NEEDED as we continue to roll out strategies and systems.
4. TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER as we share ideas and support.
5. CONTROL WHAT WE CAN CONTROL knowing our daily actions will influence positive outcomes.

Charter School Essential Practices

Authorizer:

Charter School Performance Monitoring
Charter School Application Review
Process
Purpose, Mission and Vision Development
Meeting Community Needs
Legal Responsibilities

Governance Board:

School Leader Evaluation
Governance Practices
Organizational Structures and Procedures
Policy and By-law Development
Self-Assessment

Charter Leadership:

School Culture
Human Resource Management
School Leadership Teams
Staff Evaluation
School Finance

Charter Teacher:

Virtual and Blended Learning Systems
Personalized Learning
School Culture
Designing Learning Targets
Academic Program

[Link to
document
with full list](#)

A little about me



- Milwaukee, WI
- Advisor at Escuela Verde
 - Student-Led PBL
 - High School
 - Restorative justice discipline model
 - Ecopedagogy practice
- Teacher-Powered school structure
- Consultant for WRCCS - 6 years
- CSRC member
- Goal this summer - bike to Chicago


Who is at your table?

Your name, role, organization and/or school, region (CESA)?

What is an asset that you bring to your school community?

An emoji that represents you today.





12 months
before doors
opening, what
do I do?

12 months until opening

- **Authorizer**

- Create/present a framework for measuring charter school(s) success
- Align performance framework with charter school's performance measures

- **Governance Board**

- **A Charter School governance board needs to be formed** with official Formation meeting
 - Articles of [Incorporation and EIN](#)
 - Officers elected
 - [Bylaws](#) drafted and approved
 - 501c3 considered
 - Open a bank account if/when appropriate
- Planning year budget drafted and presented to the Governance Board - 5 year budget
- Draft school performance measures and present to governance board for approval
- Make sure [School Modification Form](#) is completed in order to access funds
- Send out Request for Proposal/postings for human resource services and financial services
- SET-UP: [Register to receive aids payments](#) on the DPI website.

- **Classroom**

- Draft Planning Year Plan
 - [Planning Document Template](#) (make a copy)
 - [Strategic Planning Design Document](#) (ISN)

11 months until opening

● Governance Board

- Hire or appoint a charter school Planning Coordinator
- Create a 12-month board development plan to ensure board effectiveness
- Finalize Mission and vision statement for school
- Approve planning year School Performance Measures
- Make final decision on the contracting/hiring of HR services and financial services
- Ensure [Charter School Finance Procedures](#)

● Leadership

- Begin Public Awareness Campaign - Hold community and parent focus groups to ensure public awareness and community-based design practices.
 - Conduct needs assessment
 - [Engaging Community in Design](#)
 - [Community Meeting Protocol](#)
 - Launch an accessible school website
 - Disseminate and review Parent/community surveys to better understand need
 - [Community Survey Questions](#)
- Finalize Plan for Human Resources
- Revise proposed school budget for the first 3 years of operation with at least one contingency plan
- Created a Wisconsin Access Management System (WAMS) Account. (This is required for access to the DPI's secure applications.

10 months until opening

- **Authorizer**

- Ensure goals/measures for planning year for all charter schools in planning
- Begin to discuss and plan for the Assurances of Readiness checklist review

- **Governance Board**

- Assessment Current State of the Board
 - [Founding Board Diagnostic Tool](#)
- Begin to draft/revise/adopt Charter School and Board Policies

- **Leadership**

- Continue Public Awareness Campaign
- Draft Application and Enrollment Process and Policy
- Visit schools with similar models and innovations
- Create “Typical” Daily Schedule
- Build ideal staffing/teaching matrix
- Design staff/teacher Professional Development Plan
- Draft Curriculum Map (Targets at grade level or competencies for graduation)

9 months until opening

- **Authorizer**

- (District- only) Discuss plan with Special Education Director to ensure FAPE

- **Governance Board**

- (ICS only) Discuss plan for special education services logistics to ensure FAPE
- Begin drafting Charter Contract
- Hire staff/consultants to do budget, enrollment, marketing, contract, facility, etc.
- *CSP Grant*
- Draft Roles and responsibilities for Governance Board

- **Leadership**

- Continue Public Awareness Campaign
- Begin to draft proposed budget for next first full school year of operation (July-June)
- Ensure appropriate financial systems are in place and operational.

- **Classroom**

- Visit facilities and buildings for school location and work to understand occupancy expectations
- Create ideal staffing model

8 months until opening

- **Authorizer**

- Provide Template for contract (if applicable)
- Hold Midway Check-in Presentation from Governance Board and leadership about the planning progress
- Virtual Charter, a [Virtual Charter School Information Form](#) must be completed no later than the prior January 31st

- **Governance Board**

- Bring rough draft of charter contract to full governance board and authorizer for review and feedback
- Determine enrollment capacity (grade level and overall)
- Midway Authorizer Presentation about the planning progress (see December Authorizer Midway Check-in Presentation)
- Ensure understanding of receive training for financial oversight

- **Leadership**

- Research Student Information System (SIS) and Student Learning Management System (LMS)
- Continue Public Awareness Campaign
- Midway Authorizer Presentation about the planning progress

- **Classroom**

- Create a needs list for technology and or other supplies essential for school program operation

7 months until opening

- **Authorizer**

- ICSs, the authorizer must notify the state superintendent of their intention to establish a charter school by FEBRUARY 1 (letter)
- Virtual Charter, a [Virtual Charter School Information Form](#) must be completed no later than the prior January 31st

- **Governance Board**

- Make recommendations for new board members
- Continue drafting charter contract based on stakeholder feedback
- Assess effectiveness of governance board meetings
- Adopt a Governance Board meeting schedule for the school year.

- **Leadership**

- Open the student application window and begin collecting applications
- Create Request for Proposal for school insurance (liability) coverage
- Build recommended School Academic Calendar (include assessment calendar and breaks)
- Create Teacher and staff job descriptions

- **Classroom**

- Create an ideal staffing model.

6 months until opening

- **Authorizer**

- Provide feedback on Contract

- **Governance Board**

- Begin to draft [ESSA LEA Plan](#) due June (ICS Only)
- Begin drafting a Governance Board Handbook
- Monitor Application Process
- Align Charter Contract to [DPI/WRCCS Benchmarks](#) and send to DPI for review
- Vote to adopt School Academic Calendar (include assessment calendar and breaks)
- Vote to approve school insurance (liability) plan
- Consider creating Governance Board subcommittees

- **Leadership**

- Post staff position openings on WECAN, WRCCS, and other outlets
- *For schools opting to submit a charter grant, [DPI Charter School Grant RFP Closes](#)*
- Create Community and Parent Involvement Plan
- Present school insurance coverage plan to board
- Finalize contract for SIS/LMS

- **Classroom**

- Create Special Education model and staffing matrix
- Create plan for EELs
- Begin ordering materials and furniture

5 months until opening

- **Authorizer**

- Provide feedback on contract
- Governance board and authorizer board vote to approve charter school contract and authorizer will sign
- District authorized schools: Ensure that FAPE will be met based on staff planning

- **Governance Board**

- ICSs: Ensure that FAPE will be met based on staff planning
- Present school budget draft for the following academic year.
- Governance board and authorizer board vote to approve charter school contract and authorizer will sign
- In order for a school to be issued a school code (and open in fall), a charter contract needs to be approved and received by DPI no later than JUNE 30

- **Leadership**

- Get school code from DPI based on the completion of [School Modification Form](#)
- Reach out to the DPI to ensure charter school will meet all requirements and law

- **Classroom**

- Special Education referral/due process/child find practices in place.
- Build a plan for extracurricular activities/clubs/sports

4 months until opening

- **Authorizer**

- Check in with charter school on student enrollment numbers

- **Governance Board**

- Finalize [ESSA LEA Plan](#) due June (ICS Only)
- Design/adopt/revise Disciplinary Policies
- Review school budget draft for the following academic year.
- Adopt school policies
- Hold an enrollment lottery and send out an initial round of letters of acceptance. Create a waitlist.

- **Leadership**

- Receive School Code from DPI
- Present school disciplinary procedures to inform policy
- Create a Staff Handbook
- Launch Student Management System
- Begin sending out enrollment paperwork

- **Classroom**

- Create Food Service Plan (charter schools are not required by law to provide school lunch)
- Post Teacher and staff job descriptions for upcoming school year for any positions not yet filled
- Draft student schedules to understand if/whent students may be participating in learning off campus
- School Culture Plan that aligns to mission/vision of school

3 months until opening

• Authorizer

- Hold a readiness meeting with Leadership and Governance Board to ensure school can open in fall
- Complete Authorizer Assurances of Readiness Document

• Governance Board

- Have a readiness meeting with Authorizer
- Approve School Budget for following academic year
- *Charter Contract should be complete, however, In order for a school to be issued a school code (and open in fall of 2021), a charter contract needs to be approved and received by DPI no later than JUNE 30th each year*
- Ensure a Governance Board recruitment plan

• Leadership

- Send out Request for Proposals for pupil transportation (charter schools are not required by law to provide pupil transportation)
- Begin to work on [Final Checklist for Opening](#)
- Hire teachers and staff for upcoming school year
- Incorporate [Educator Effectiveness](#) plan with the school staff professional development plan State Statute [115.415](#) (**may need to contract out for this service**)
- Create Leadership Duty Matrix

• Classroom

- Design Parent Involvement Plan
- Design Student Assessment Plan and Calendar/Schedule
- Confirm Student Information System (SIS) able to transfer student information to the DPI.
- Finalize grading and/or a system for reporting of student learning

2 months until opening

- **Authorizer**

- Holds a readiness meeting to ensure school can open in fall

- **Governance Board**

- Hold Governance Board retreat to set goals and a plan for the upcoming year
- Parent Involvement Plan Approved

- **Leadership**

- Ensure [Final Checklist for Opening](#) is complete
- Create a school security and safety plan
- [Educator Effectiveness](#) plan and staff professional development State Statute [115.415](#)
- Request enrollment paperwork for all transferring students (health forms, credits, permissions, IEPs, files, etc.)

- **Classroom**

- Hold parent meetings and open house
- Staff Professional Development
- Onboard the Student Information System (SIS)
- Send out initial parent communications and articulate plan for ongoing parent communication

1 months until opening

- **Authorizer**

- Inform school if there is any unmet item in the Readiness checklist they need to address prior to opening

- **Governance Board**

- Approve Parent/Student Handbook
- Approve school security and safety plan (site safety team, phone tree, crisis plan).
- Draft Governance Board Handbook

- **Leadership**

- Hold parent meetings and open house
- Ensure Special Education Meetings happen prior to start of the school year

- **Classroom**

- Food service procedures are in place or food service vendor contracts have been signed
- Ensure all applicable health, facility, and safety inspections have been completed by the appropriate authorities.
- Ensure technology plan is working (SIS, LMS, apps, firewalls, security, etc.)
- Build Student Schedules
- Create Field Study (Outside of School) Learning Plan
- Plan the timeline and launch of student/staff behavior expectation system complete with tools or rubrics for surveying, assessing and measuring the school culture

The LAUNCH

- **Authorizer**

- Final Walk-through visit
- Sign the assurances document (and submit to DPI if the school is a subgrantee)

- **Governance Board**

- Final Walk-through
- Hold Open House for families

- **Leadership**

- Review [Final Checklist for Opening](#)
- Ensure all enrollment paperwork is transferred or filled in

- **Classroom**

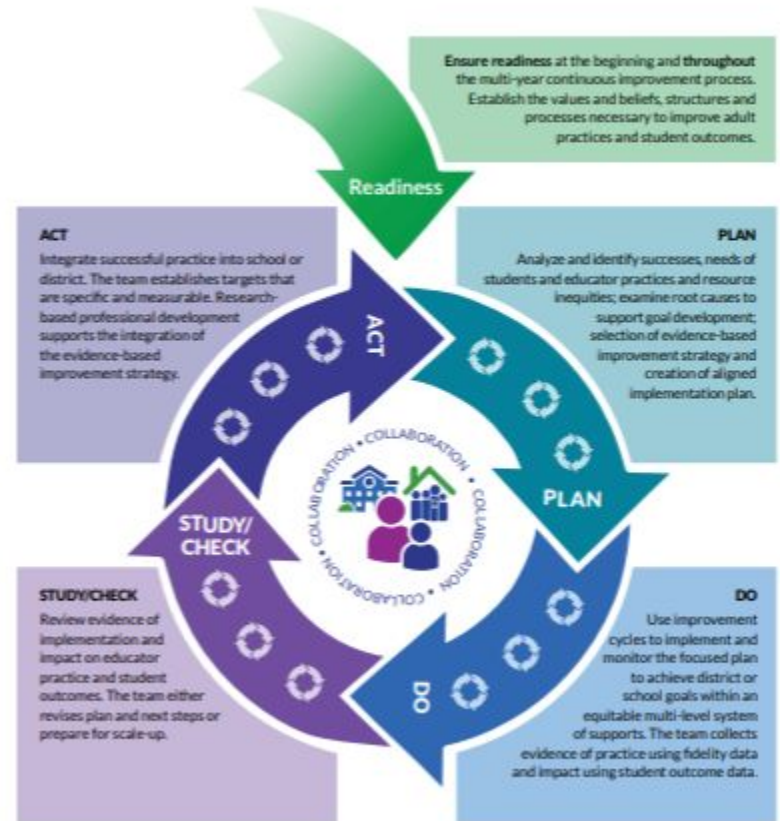
- Hold parent meetings and back to school night
- Confirm transportation arrangements,
- Plan for who unlocks/locks school doors in (AM and PM). Keys are distributed.
- Develop a first-two-week plan (assembly, communication, student/staff on-boarding, pre-requisite skills training, etc.) designed proactively to set the stage for a positive school year.
- Create Student IDs
- Staff Professional Development
- Hold all IEP meetings prior to start of school

Commitment to listening and learning

- The launch/opening is **NOT** the final goal. One of many
- Celebrate it → learn → improve

Continuous Improvement

Continuous Improvement Process





Now What?

Let's start...

Actionable Insights

Challenged Mindset

New Nugget of Learning



Thank you all for the work you do
every day to help all students learn



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