



**SUMMIT**  

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**Charter School**

*July 3, 2020*

**SUMMIT CHARTER SCHOOL**  
**Re-Application**

**Presented by the Founding Coalition of the Summit Charter School**

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## PREAMBLE

June 30, 2020

Pocono Mountain School District

Attn: Dr. Elizabeth Robison, Superintendent; Members of the Pocono Mountain School Board  
PO Box 200  
Swiftwater, PA 18370

Dear Dr. Robison and School Board Members:

Since the stay-at-home orders issued by Governor Wolf and the subsequent closure of schools by Secretary of Education Pedro Riveria, the Founding Coalition of the Summit Charter School is providing you with this Re-Application via Google Drive. The use of the Google Drive for access has a two-fold purpose - it creates ease of access for administrators to review via computer since the District has been subject to the school closure orders of Secretary Rivera as well as work at home orders such that the delivery of 15 hard copies creates an impossibility; and it is far more environmentally sound to review via electronic means than to provide 15 copies of the document in hard-copy.

On November 14, 2019, the Summit Charter School applied to open a charter school modeled after the successful private school, the Summit School of the Poconos, proposing a grade K-12 continuum. The applicant targeted a start date of the 2020-21 school year.

The Board of School Directors of the Pocono Mountain School District denied the initial application and the applicant submits this re-application, which revises and supplements its initial application, in accordance with 24 P.S. 17-1717-A. The applicant specifically incorporates by reference all of the original application, attachments, appendices, supplemental submissions, transcripts, and other relevant documents submitted in conjunctions with its original application on November 14, 2019 and subsequent dates.

This revised application adopts by reference the following:

1. Application including all submitted attachments submitted to the Pocono Mountain School District on or around November 14, 2019.
2. Supplemental materials submitted by the Applicant at the first hearing;
3. Administrative Review and Report issued by the Pocono Mountain School District;
4. Public comment materials received by the School District at hearings conducted by the Pocono Mountain School District;
5. The Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law submitted by the Applicant on February 14, 2020;
6. Transcripts from the December 2019 and February 5, 2020 hearings.
7. The Pocono Mountain School District's Adjudication dated February 19, 2020.

In addition to the above exhibits/documents/materials, the applicant also attaches the Pocono Mountain School District's Responses to the "Frequently Asked Questions" about charter schools as [Appendix U](#), which was posted on the PMSD public website at <https://www.pmsd.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=2250>

Additionally, the Applicant adopts by reference the Pocono Mountain School District's "Charter School Hurdle" document - to which the Applicant responded to in its initial application but was not referenced in any way by the Pocono Mountain School District in its Administrative Review and Report nor was it referenced in its Adjudication.

Finally, the Applicant attaches Affidavits procured from employees of ESSA Bank and Trust as [Appendix V](#). As the School District recalls, it received a letter of intent to file a charter application with the PMSD on Friday, November 8, 2020 (prior to the submission of the application). On November 13th that letter was shared with all Superintendents of school districts from which the proposed charter school could reasonably expect to draw students. On November 12, one business day following the receipt of applicant's letter of intent (November 11th being a bank holiday), the Pocono Mountain School District moved more than \$20 million dollars from its accounts at ESSA Bank & Trust wherein one of the proposed charter school's Founders' spouses, Gary Olson, is employed as President and Chief Executive Officer. As alleged by ESSA Bank employees' via affidavits, the PMSD Board President, Rusty Johnson, allegedly directed that PMSD funds be moved from ESSA Bank & Trust due to the fact that Gary Olson's wife, Jennifer Olson, was a part of the founding team for the proposed charter school. A review of the meeting minutes of the Pocono Mountain School District for the 2019-20 School Year do not reveal that such activity was subject to public disclosure.

The Affidavits, coupled with certain deliberate mis-statements about charter schools generally and the applicant specifically, demonstrate that the Pocono Mountain School District did not engage in a good faith review of the initial Application, engaged in retaliatory behavior towards the family of one of the applicant's founding members, and engaged in a deliberate public dissemination of mis-information so as to directly and negatively influence public support - all in an effort to tarnish and impede the Applicant's attempts to open a charter school.

The Applicant, in its first round of Application, attempted - by tone and by action - to focus its attempts at opening a charter school as providing choice in the educational continuum within the Pocono Mountain School District as well as a model of innovation rather than focusing on deficits of the District or engaging in criticism of its professionals. The Applicant has no quarrel with the hard-working teachers and school administrators of the PMSD. Unfortunately, the Applicant was not afforded such courtesy.

To that end, the Applicant has reviewed and responded to certain criticisms of its application and has improved aspects of its application in this re-submission to the Pocono Mountain School District.

**Proposed Charter School Name:** Summit Charter School (otherwise referred to herein as Summit Charter School or SCS)

**Proposed Charter School Location**

Address: 205 Old Mill Road

City/Town: Tannersville, PA

Zip Code: 18372

County: Monroe

Intermediate Unit: Colonial Intermediate Unit 20

Proposed Start Date: September 2020

Federal Employer Identification Number: 81-1744434 (currently for Summit School of the Poconos)

**Contact Person:**

First: Jennifer

Middle: Renee

Last: Olson

Organization: Summit School of the Poconos and Summit Charter School, Founder and Board President

Street: 135 Burson Street (Current Summit School of the Poconos address)

City: East Stroudsburg

State: PA

Zip Code: 18301

Telephone: 570-656-1084 (mobile)

Fax Number: N/A

E-mail: [jennifero@summitschoolpoconos.org](mailto:jennifero@summitschoolpoconos.org)

**Founding Coalition**

Group	Number of Representatives
Parents	Please see attached appendix items for a list of founding coalition members, supporters, and collaborative initiatives the school has already participated in. We have been a licenced private school operating in Monroe County PA since 2016.
Teachers	
Business Partners	
Community Based Organizations	
Museums	

Higher Education	
Other Group - Identify:	

**Grades and Age Ranges**

Group	Grade/Age Range
Elementary	K-8
Secondary	9-12
Age of Kindergarten	Five years old (By September 1st)
Age of Beginners	Same as above
Grades Educated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> K <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 8 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 10 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 11 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 12
Kindergarten	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full Day <input type="checkbox"/> Half Day

**Projected Student Enrollment Year 1-5**

Year	Enrollment
1st Year	360
2nd Year	460
3rd Year	600
4th Year	700
5th Year	860
Total Number of Teachers	Teacher to student ratio of 20:1 in all grades levels except kindergarten. Additional teachers will be hired as the school grows. Please see projected enrollment table and budget for detailed projected enrollment growth and staff growth.

Does the charter applicant have an existing retirement system?

**Without a charter, the applicant would be unable to establish a retirement system. The**

applicant intends, in accordance with the Charter School Law, to use a 403(b) retirement structure. This decision was made, in part, in reviewing the PMSD's statements in its "Negotiations" Section of its website wherein it states:

*Meeting Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) employer retirement contribution payments continues to be a fiscal challenge for the District with no end in sight as the state continues to increase the District's contribution percentage required to sustain employee PSERS benefits. PSERS increases have a significant impact on the District's annual budget and financial health as the District has had to utilize its fund balance for six (6) consecutive years to balance its annual budget.*

<https://www.pmsd.org/Page/2246>

Does the applicant group presently have access to a facility suitable for the charter school?

Yes

**School Focus:**

Please see Mission and Vision Statements.

I. School Design

**1. Mission Statement**

- A. Briefly describe the core philosophy or underlying purpose of the proposed school.
- B. What is your overarching vision of the school?

**Introduction:**

As partners with local school districts, the Founders of the Summit Charter School propose a charter school which implements different educational practices - all within one location and implemented uniformly as an entire school system within as opposed to piecemeal throughout a variety of locations - designed ultimately to make Monroe County a destination for parents with school-aged children based on educational options available. The Summit Charter School wishes to serve those children in the area that do not thrive in traditional school settings. We understand that we live in an area with a high percentage of low income households (according to the Pocono Mountain School District's last state [School Performance Profile](#), 60.9 of students are Economically Disadvantaged), which are often the most impacted by the lack of available options for choice. Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) has reviewed charter school outcomes in studies released in 2013 and 2015 which looked at academic impact on students that are economically disadvantaged in both charter and

district counterparts and found positive effects for economically disadvantaged students particularly those students who were Black and Hispanic.

As educators, we are all keenly aware that students who are not thriving at school are profoundly and negatively impacted in their ability to experience success later in life, avoid poverty as adults, and face increased chances of incarceration. While the Applicant appreciates that the District has maintained that it offers just enough choice since it offers the “successful Pocono Mountain Academy alternative education program” and the “Pocono Mountain Cyber Program” for students K-12 (which is run to “Keep your hard-earned tax dollars local by enrolling in the PMSD Cyber Program and not in a charter or cyber-charter program.”) Given that the Pocono Mountain Cyber Program is not listed as a separate ‘school’ within the School Performance Profile, its scores related to such program are not reported separately nor are the number of PMSD students who attend such a program reported. The Applicant also is not intending to operate a cyber charter school. <https://www.pmsd.org/Page/1107>.

Additionally, the Applicant does not intend to operate an alternative education school. Details regarding the Pocono Mountain Academy were hard to come by as the site for such a program was down at the time of the submission of the application: <https://www.pmsd.org/Page/1104>. It appears from a review of various news reports that the Pocono Mountain Academy is an approved alternative school by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and students are referred to the school from both PMSD high schools for disruptive behavior.

Applicant was able to secure a copy of the Pocono Mountain Academy Handbook for 2017-18: <https://www.pmsd.org/cms/lib/PA01916596/Centricity/Domain/447/Pocono%20Mountain%20Academy%20Handbook.pdf>. A review of this document reveals that this program is not, as the District had described in its review of the application, a choice for all families in the district to attend. It certainly does not appear to be offered to students below the grade of 6 (indeed, if it is an AEDY program, such placement below 6th grade would be against PDE Regulations). Also, while the handbook demonstrates contemplation of special education students’ needs, it does not seem to address those students who are designated as English Learners, an issue that - amongst other reasons - prompted the United States Department of Justice, in conjunction with the Office of Civil Rights, to investigate Pennsylvania’s AEDY system, eventually entering into a Settlement Agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Education on the implementation and oversight of Pennsylvania’s AEDY system. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/case-document/pennsylvania-department-education-alternative-education-disruptive-youth-aedy>

Finally, a review of the courses offered do not include foreign language, computer technology, etc., and formal instruction appears to end at 12:45 for grades 7 through 12 with the afternoon



schedule saying “BLOCK” - which time is allotted for “remediation, character education, Restorative Practices, participation in the Mountain Bike Program, and online educational opportunities.”

<https://www.pmsd.org/cms/lib/PA01916596/Centricity/Domain/447/Pocono%20Mountain%20Academy%20Handbook.pdf>.

The Applicant does note, with interest, the Academy’s use of “The Zone.” The PMSD spent a great deal of time on the Applicant’s allowance of a student for “walk breaks” which were designed for students to utilize while in the SCS’ classrooms in order to stem feelings of being overwhelmed or anxious:

*Student walk breaks where students are "free to take walk breaks at any time during the school day," with a planned enrollment of 360 students and higher can create serious classroom management and safety issues with students leaving the classroom unsupervised at any time of the day or as frequently as they want. The Applicant failed to provide a plan that demonstrates how the planned staff would supervise 360 students in grades K-11 in year 1, who take randomly selected walk breaks at any time throughout the school day.*

Indeed, as demonstrated below, what the SCS is a student-centered ‘release valve’ that is designed to prevent classroom struggle. The Zone is an entirely different place, indeed:

The Zone is a safety zone in the building where the student can seek out assistance with issues that may arise during the school day.

Students may request to go to the Zone, or teachers can direct students to the Zone.

Students should avoid leaving class to go to the Zone.

Students not able to handle classroom adversity may not earn class points and/or face consequences.

However, staff understands there are situations for safety concerns where it would be better for a student to leave the classroom area immediately.

The classroom teacher makes the determination if the need for removal is immediate.

Students are to follow staff directions regarding the Zone, or face possible disciplinary consequences.

The Zone WILL NOT be used to make up work missed due to absence from class. LEAVING THE ZONE Students will remain in the Zone until a staff member dismisses them. Failure to follow directions of staff members may result in disciplinary consequences.

Finally, it appears that students are placed in the Academy for a temporary period of time - particularly given the reference to the AEDY regulations - which mandate that such placements are temporary and also limited to disruptive students. 24 P.S. 19-1901-C (5)). As such, AEDY students at the Pocono Mountain Academy should be placed with presumptive exit dates within 45 days of a student's placement in the AEDY Program, - or sooner based on the student's individual needs.

**Thus, PMSD's inclusion of these models as providing the choice for those students that SCS wishes to serve - those who do not thrive in the traditional learning environment - is from a significantly flawed premise. The Founders of SCS wish for our students to be enrolled at our school for their academic careers and it is dismaying that the PMSD views those students who do not learn traditionally only through the lens of their own disciplinary placement. In other words, an alternative to the existing traditional public school district does not equate to alternative education.**

We understand that charter schools were initially created to act as innovative incubators for public education. Our size and structure allows us to be nimble in the implementation of programs and to quickly determine results and outcomes. Our hope is that we can work in harmony with our local public school districts in order to accomplish raising the bar of all education opportunities available in Monroe County.

**Summit Charter School Mission Statement:**

Summit Charter School will provide a movement-rich, project-based environment, grounded in shared governance, where students demonstrate an active voice and ownership in their education.

**Summit Charter School Vision Statement:**

Summit Charter School will be an innovative education hub for Northeast Pennsylvania, sharing its practice with positive change makers in local and national education. Here, educators are empowered to create responsive curricula and meaningful learning experiences in a student-centered environment. Through a unique approach built upon shared governance, students are encouraged to responsibly contribute to their school community and assume

ownership in their education and learning experiences. By applying these combined practices, we will graduate motivated, civically-engaged citizens who uniquely contribute to our world and future.

## 2. Measurable Goals and Objectives

A. What are the school's measurable academic goals and objectives to promote student learning?

The development of the Goals and Objectives section is to be charter school specific in the Application and does not require - as the PMSD has postulated - that the goals include those which are applicable to all operating public schools in the Commonwealth - namely, academic goals of accountability areas in Pennsylvania's Consolidated State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Future Ready Index (subgroup achievement performance, academic growth, chronic absenteeism, graduation rate, English Language growth and proficiency, and college and career readiness measures). As PMSD has included its reliance on Charter School Appeal Board decisions as the basis of its denial, its denial point on this measure misses the Charter School Appeal Board's discussion of using its review of the goals as a denial point in *In Re Spartansburg Community Charter School*:

*The CSL requires only that the application contain information about the mission and education goals; a school district cannot require more than what the General Assembly set forth in the CSL. Founding Coalition of the Infinity Charter School supra, 847 A.2d at 203. In this case, the District found the mission and education goals to be insufficient because the Second Revised Application and proposed curriculum do not support or implement the mission and goals. District Board's Brief at 33. While that conclusion goes to the adequacy of the curriculum, which has already been discussed above, the District's dissatisfaction with the sufficiency of the mission and goals is not a basis, under the CSL, for determining that Spartansburg failed to consider the information requested in section 1719-A. In fact, by virtue of the presence of the stated mission and goals in the Second Revised Application, Spartansburg has demonstrated the extent to which it has considered the mission and goals of the proposed charter school, as required by section 1717-A(e)(2)(iii) of the CSL.*

*In Re Spartansburg Community Charter School, CAB Docket No. 2016-02, 43.*

**Goal #1:** Develop a sustainable system of student democratic practice that aligns with PA Standards for Civics and Government and which advances our school mission of graduating students who actively participate in democratic practices throughout their lives. (Refer to Appendix A for Standards-aligned Curriculum)

**Objectives for Goal #1:**

- 1) Students will participate in School Meeting and engage in the process of exercising their voice, perspective, and opinion regarding the quality of their school experience.
- 2) Students will seek officer nominations, conduct speeches, and participate in debates. The student electorate will successfully elect School Meeting officers in a school-wide annual election.
- 3) Students will introduce proposed school meeting rules and regulations, which will be debated and voted upon, and in some cases passed on as recommendations to the Principal and Board of Trustees for school wide implementation, if appropriate.
- 4) Student officers will conduct all School Meetings using Robert's Rules of Order as a guideline. Accurate meeting minutes and a rule book will be used as evidence.
- 5) As a reflection of the American Criminal Justice System, members of the student body will be randomly chosen for mandatory service on Justice Committee in any one academic year.
- 6) Students who have experienced nonviolent interpersonal conflict can utilize the Justice Committee (JC) as a means of conflict resolution. All JC cases are documented.
- 7) Students will participate in classroom democratic practices designed to improve relations within the community, positively affecting academic collaboration, problem-solving, and delegation of tasks. Such practices include but are not limited to, Restorative Circle, hearing one another out in conversations, participating in debates and discussions with representatives of opposing viewpoints.

**Goal #2:** Summit Charter School educators will use PA State Standards and Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts and Math, as well as PA State Standards for Social Studies and Science, and NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) for Science to develop and implement curricula that teaches students the content, skills, and thinking processes necessary in each discipline and as demonstrated on grade level assessments. Educators may accelerate or decelerate sequencing of standards in response to developmental proficiencies of students.

**Objectives for Goal #2:**

- 1) Summit Charter School teachers will design and implement a standards-aligned, project-based curriculum during their yearlong course plan.

- 2) Summit Charter School teachers will create and utilize standards-aligned assessment tools, including but not limited to rubrics, quizzes, and portfolios to track student growth over time.
- 3) Summit Charter School teachers will utilize student project presentations and reflections for a portion of their assessment system.
- 4) Summit Charter School teachers will create space for student-driven, interest-based projects and pursuits.

**Goal #3:** Summit Charter School will engage students in rigorous standards-aligned academic programs designed to immerse them in authentic learning and prepare them for statewide testing. Our standardized test scores will demonstrate a growth trend toward meeting school and student group performance academic goals and targets required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) over a five year period, including focus on the achievement gap.

- **PSSA: English Language Arts** Summit Charter School will demonstrate growth toward meeting mandated proficiency targets for both proficiency and participation each school year, beginning in our second year of operation as a Charter School.
- **PSSA: Math** Summit Charter School will demonstrate growth toward meeting mandated AYP targets for both proficiency and participation each school year, beginning in our second year of operation as a Charter School.
- **PSSA: Science** Summit Charter School aims to demonstrate growth toward mandated AYP targets for both proficiency and participation each school year for grades 4 and 8, beginning in our second year of operation as a Charter School.

**Objectives for Goal #3:**

- 1) The majority of all Summit Charter School students in testing grade levels will participate in each component of the state Assessment and Accountability program for which the school is held accountable, beginning in the second year of operation as a Charter School.
- 2) Summit Charter School will monitor student growth on standardized state test scores as they progress from grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 and through secondary grades.

**Goal #4:** Design and develop a sustainable, student-directed systems to select and integrate into our curriculum projects and partnerships that connect our students with the larger community and allow them to engage in innovative pursuits through collaborations and technologies within and beyond the school.

## Objectives for Goal #4:

- 1) At least 50% of Elementary, 60% of Middle, and 90% of Secondary students will participate in at least one project or partnership per year that connects our students with the larger community and which aligns with PA and national academic standards as well as our democratic values of building community connections and providing benefits beyond ourselves, beginning in our second year of operation as a Charter School.
- 2) The majority of Summit Charter School students will participate in our annual Exhibition, demonstrating their self-direction, collaboration, project design skills, reflective process, and ability to receive and respond to feedback from the community.

B. What are the school's measurable non-academic goals and objectives to promote student performance?

Historically noted<sup>1</sup> by scholars and activists, an educated citizenry is critical for stable democratic societies. Research suggests that students in democratically-enhanced educational programs are more likely to be civically engaged as adults.<sup>2 3</sup> Further, research has enlightened educators regarding the dangers of punitive disciplinary structures.<sup>4</sup> We now know that over-reliance on suspensions, expulsions, and police intervention leads to higher rates of school dropout and lower rates of school graduation. And this is particularly problematic for minority communities and students with disabilities that tend to be overly-represented among students experiencing these types of sanctions. Summit Charter School embeds democratic socialization not only within curriculum contexts but also within the social structure of our learning community with a goal of restoring (whenever possible) students to the learning community.

The multi-faceted components of the non-academic goals and objectives that promote student performance include:

1. A civics-centered culture that promotes a democratic school community

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<sup>1</sup> Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy in education*. In. Retrieved from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/852/852-h/852-h.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Pasek, J., Feldman, L., Romer, D., & Hall Jamieson, J. (2008). Schools as incubators of democratic participation: building long-term political efficacy with civic education. *Applied Developmental Science*, 12(1), 26-37. doi: 10.1080/10888690801910526

<sup>3</sup> Quintelier, E. & Hooghe, M. (2013). The relationship between political participation intentions of adolescents and a participatory democratic climate at school in 35 countries. *Oxford Review of Education*, 39(5), 567–589.

<sup>4</sup> American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008). Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations. *American Psychologist*, 63(9), 852–862 doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.63.9.852.

- and restorative justice practices
2. Student-centered classrooms with a strong focus on growth mindset
  3. Movement
  4. Happiness

## **Objective Goal #1**

### **1. A Civics-Centered Culture:**

Our students work to develop character skills that comprise the code of conduct that students, staff, and board members developed together during our school's first year of operation. These qualities make up the acronym which constitutes our student honor code: H.E.R.O.E.S.: Honesty, Empathy, Responsibility, Open-Minded, Encouraging, Scholarly.

The civic-centered focus of our school culture is always intentional and offers students the opportunity to take ownership in their academic studies and advancement, while also providing an environment that will more closely represent the larger world in which they will live and compete as an adult.<sup>5</sup> As business leaders and policymakers respond to the impacts of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on the economic, social, and political realities of communities, it is imperative that students view civic engagement as central to their development.<sup>6</sup> Our civic-centered culture encourages students to be comfortable in a diverse world, empathetic, self-motivated, responsive, and reflective. These skills are necessary for the new technological frontier, and are the hallmark of our organizational framework.

The two main components of our civic-minded culture represent our focus on our school as a democratic society/community and our restorative justice practices. Additionally, we are exploring the option of implementing the MicroSociety system, which is designed to turn a portion of the school day into “a student-run miniature society” that “sets a foundation for leadership, entrepreneurship, and creativity and provides a context to motivate students to improve their academics in order to succeed.”

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<sup>5</sup> Feu, J., Serra, C., Canimas, J., Làzaro, L., & Simó-Gil, N. (2017). Democracy and Education: A Theoretical Proposal for the Analysis of Democratic Practices in Schools. *Studies in Philosophy & Education*, 36(6), 647–661.

<sup>6</sup> Penprase B.E. (2018) The Fourth Industrial Revolution and Higher Education. In: Gleason N. (eds) Higher Education in the Era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore.

## **I. Democratic School Community:**

### **School Meeting:**

Students and staff gather for regularly scheduled School Meetings. The Board of Trustees are also invited and encouraged to attend. This is a space for students to discuss concerns in our school community and ideas that will enhance it. Students may introduce proposed school rules and regulations, which will be debated and voted upon, and in some cases passed on as recommendations to the Principal and Board of Trustees. A proposed rule ledger is kept and available to all Summit Charter School community members. Legal matters and educational requirements cannot be changed via the School Meeting.

Elected student council members work with an advisor throughout the year and officiate these meetings using Roberts Rules of Order as a guide. Thus, our elementary, middle, and secondary-aged students will be regularly exposed to, and invited to participate in an environment that closely mimics a business or government board meeting.

As we continue to explore MicroSociety (albeit not for our implementation of this model, only because Pennsylvania's Charter School Law allows no means of amending our charter, such that the Founders are compelled to include our consideration of MicroSociety in this application so that it will allow flexibility in the consideration of its use), we envision it, among other things, helping us expand our student council engagement beyond School Meeting to replicate social structures in many communities. For example, they can function as a 'Board of Trustees' for entities the students choose to include in their own MicroSociety design. If used, Micro Society would provide supplemental support of our model. It would not be used as a primary curriculum.

### **Measurable Outcomes:**

- a. School Meetings will be conducted as dictated by a published schedule.
- b. School Meeting minutes will demonstrate that elected student council members have conducted all School Meetings guided by Robert's Rules of Order.
- c. Students will have knowledge of and access to a suggestion box that will be used for students to include items (suggestions, complaints, proposed rules) on the upcoming School Meeting agenda.



- d. The student Rule Clerk will regularly update the rule book to reflect rules passed by School Meeting.
- e. The Summit Charter School Board of Trustees meeting minutes will reflect official votes taken on any recommendations made by the School Meeting student body.

## **II. Restorative Justice Practices**

The Restorative Justice practices at Summit Charter School acknowledge that breaking rules or acting in a manner contrary to our H.E.R.O.E.S. code of conduct causes harm to people, relationships, and the community at large.<sup>7</sup> An appropriate and effective response<sup>8</sup> must address those harms as well as the wrongdoing.

There are four critical components to a successful Restorative Justice program:

1. Inclusion of all parties
2. Encountering the other side
3. Making amends for the harm
4. Restored sense of community<sup>9</sup>

These components are included in the intentional civic-minded culture at Summit Charter School in the following ways:

### **A. Restorative Circles:**

Restorative Circles are held regularly in classrooms. This provides a space for students to practice the art of listening and to understand others, as well as speaking to clearly articulate one's own experience. Initially, these Circles serve as a means for students and teachers to familiarize with one another and build community.

Eventually they become conduits for productive conversation<sup>10</sup> around issues and/or

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<sup>7</sup> Gregory, A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J. (2016). The Promise of Restorative Practices to Transform Teacher-Student Relationships and Achieve Equity in School Discipline. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*, 26(4), 325–353.

<sup>8</sup> Buckmaster, D. (2016). From the Eradication of Tolerance to the Restoration of School Community: Exploring Restorative Practices as a Reform Framework for Ethical School Discipline. *Values & Ethics in Educational Administration*, 12(3), 1–8.

<sup>9</sup> Hulvershorn, K., & Mulholland, S. (2018). Restorative practices and the integration of social emotional learning as a path to positive school climates. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching*, 11(1), 110–123.

<sup>10</sup> Kehoe, M., Bourke-Taylor, H., & Broderick, D. (2018). Developing student social

conflicts<sup>11</sup> that may arise during the course of the school year.

**Measurable Outcomes:**

- a. Staff and students will engage in restorative circles on a regular basis.
- b. Students will demonstrate an awareness of the restorative circle process.

**B. Justice Committee (JC):**

Justice Committee (JC) is comprised of a group of randomly selected students who will work with an advisor to maintain the culture and hold Summit Charter School community members accountable to the Rule Book and Student Handbook. Justice Committee excludes issues related to legal, educational, or safety regulations. Students who have a grievance with another student or staff member may file a formal complaint with the Justice Committee. Justice Committee members hear testimony from all sides of a grievance, ask for witness input, make conclusions, and determine appropriate consequences to remedy the grievance, ultimately ensuring that the community is once again whole and welcoming to all. An overarching goal of Justice Committee is to maintain a standing forum of redress, allowing students to take an active role in achieving a welcoming, thriving learning community. All Justice Committee cases and processes will be documented thoroughly.

The addition of MicroSociety would create further opportunities for students to apply civics-centered content and skills developed in our Justice Committee structure.

*In Re Spartansburg Community Charter School, CAB Docket No. 2016-02, page 43:*

Justice Committee structures have been discussed in educational literature<sup>12</sup> as a means of public schools to decrease school discipline and violence. Thus, given that students are not - nor would they ever be - empowered to suspend or expel, to discuss a student's academic performance, launch evaluations under Child Find, the Applicant does not feel that the PMSD's concern that a student Justice Committee

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skills using restorative practices: a new framework called H.E.A.R.T. *Social Psychology of Education*, 21(1), 189–207.

<sup>11</sup> Kline, D. M. S. (2016). Can Restorative Practices Help to Reduce Disparities in School Discipline Data? A Review of the Literature. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 18(2), 97–102.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. <https://www.edutopia.org/video/justice-committee-using-restorative-practices-resolve-conflicts>  
<https://www.fsusd.org/cms/lib/CA01001943/Centricity/Domain/1271/TPR20-1-Hantzopoulos%20.pdf>

violates Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

**Measurable Outcomes:**

- a. Students in grades 3 and above will demonstrate awareness of the Justice Committee process.
- b. Students in grades 3 and above will be aware of the location of Justice Committee complaint forms and will understand how to fill out a complaint.
- c. As a reflection of the American Criminal Justice system, students in grades 3 and above will be randomly selected to serve on the Justice Committee.
- d. Students will view Justice Committee as a viable avenue for grievances by the student body.
- e. Students who use Justice Committee accept that JC decisions are binding.

**Objective Goal #2**

**2. Student-centered classrooms with a strong focus on growth mindset:**

Our faculty prioritizes student-centered classrooms<sup>13</sup>, providing space for students to do the heavy cognitive lifting in all academic tasks<sup>14</sup>, rather than guiding them as a group, one step at a time, through a multi-step process with a pre-determined outcome. Students may work independently, in partnerships or in groups to grapple with content, discuss it, and arrive at conclusions and hypotheses that can then be tested and checked against peers' work and teacher feedback. In this way, students actively engage in the learning process at their own pace and within their own level of readiness. Teachers provide curricular resources, project structure, guidelines, and demonstrations in whole group, partial group, and individual lessons. We encourage students to learn according to their unique style, because we believe this empowers them to drive their own learning throughout their lives.

Our student-centric model allows students the choice to pursue interests and the space to move through the learning process in ways that connect content to

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<sup>13</sup> Cornelius-White, J. (2007). Learner-centered teacher-centered relationships are effective: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 113-143.

<sup>14</sup> Zmuda, A., & Kallick, B. (2017). Orchestrating the move to student-driven learning. *Educational Leadership*, 74(6), 53-57.

meaningful experiences. To demonstrate their learning and discoveries, students present their work to peers and teachers. We see the potential addition of MicroSociety as a means to extend student application of content and skills in ways that both mimic what we see in the world outside of school and show the changes our students would like to see in the world.

Teachers learn alongside students, demonstrating that we all have room for growth regardless of age, and that learning is a joyful and continuous endeavor. Mistakes are acknowledged and discussed to reveal the learning opportunity presented by them, and growth mindset is cultivated by students and staff alike as a critical part of the learning process and of life.

Student goal setting is a key feature of our educational program. Teachers model a SMART goal-setting method that students can assimilate throughout the learning process for each academic and self-directed project. Students are encouraged to adopt a growth mindset, which empowers them to embrace failed attempts and apply the lessons therein to their progress. Mostly, the growth mindset work enables students to understand that they are not expected to “know” something already, but instead to work at learning the concept or skill needed for a project. In Restorative Circles, students and teachers discuss the tenets of growth mindset, so students understand that this is not necessarily inherent, but something that can be developed over time and with practice.

At Summit Charter School, teachers and students focus on competency of content and skills as the main goal of all learning experiences. Students are encouraged to apply a variety of learning strategies until they figure out what works best for them and can independently demonstrate understanding of concepts and application of skills before moving on to higher-level tasks. To support their self-assessment and goal setting, Summit Charter School students (particularly at the middle and secondary levels) are empowered with the knowledge of the teacher’s plans and goals for their learning, as well as their own competency status at any given time. This allows them to practice self-direction, rather than being dependent on the teacher for signaling readiness to move on or linger when needed. Students who strive to understand or do what others have already learned may receive support from peers and teachers, and will be granted multiple opportunities to learn and demonstrate competency. In this way, the learning environment is simultaneously collaborative and highly personalized.

It is our expectation that, if implemented, MicroSociety would provide additional incentive for students to drive their own learning toward independent application. The student-run miniature society will enable them to connect classroom learning with community application.

### **Measurable Outcomes:**

- a. Teachers will utilize a gradual release model of instructional support such that students demonstrate a marked increase in self-direction from the beginning of the school year.
  - i. In each project, relevant supports will be used for initial student attempts at skills and understanding of content and these will decrease in number and frequency as the students develop proficiency with the skills and content.
- b. Students will demonstrate increased awareness of their own learning styles and preferences by requesting content in different formats (text, video, presentations, demonstrations, partial group, 1:1, etc.)
- c. Students will demonstrate increased self-advocacy to drive their learning forward by asking more questions and seeking support from peers, teachers, and others when needed.

### **Objective Goal #3**

#### **3. Movement**

We recognize that, in order to participate in intellectually rigorous learning experiences, children must move their bodies<sup>15</sup>. There is a great deal of research<sup>16,17,18</sup> showing a positive correlation between physical activity and cognitive acuity, so we've designed a movement-rich environment in which to teach and learn. Additionally, we know that movement energizes us and makes us feel good.

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<sup>15</sup> Ericsson, I. (2017). Effects of Physical Activity and Motor Skills Acquisition on Executive Functions and Scholastic Performance: A Review. *Journal of Education Research*, 11(1), 51–75.

<sup>16</sup> Ratey, John J., and Eric Hagerman. 2008. *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*. New York: Little, Brown.

<sup>17</sup> Suzuki, Wendy. 2011. "Exercise and the Brain." Filmed November 2011 at TEDxOrlando, Orland Fl. Video, 14:02.

<http://www.wendysuzuki.com/media-video-gallery/2016/1/30/tedxorlando-wendy-suzuki-exercise-and-the-brain>.

<sup>18</sup> Medina, John. 2011. *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School*. Seattle, WA: Pear Press.

Each day, our entire school takes a short mid-morning movement break. Weather-permitting, we may go outside where kids and adults can choose to walk, run, play, or stand and chat with a friend. We provide recess to all students, from Kindergarten through High School, in addition to our regular physical education class schedule.

Research<sup>1920</sup> also shows that having the flexibility to change body positions supports intellectual stamina as well as physical fitness, so we've also created classrooms in which students may sit in chairs, on bean-bags and other floor cushions, on high stools, or they may choose to stand and work on a higher surface, such as a standing desk or high table. Students are also free to take walk breaks at any time during the school day when they're feeling cognitive fatigue - defined as within the classroom and with supervision. Students learn to use these tools and strategies in a way that supports their independent focus needs without disrupting other students, and without undermining the structure of the whole class learning environment.

We already have experts on movement's influence on learning at our School. Katherine Hernandez, the current Summit School of the Poconos Education Director, and a staff member of Summit School since its inception in 2016, authored a book published in 2018 by Stenhouse Publishers, *Activate: Deeper Learning Through Movement, Talk, and Flexible Classrooms*. Katherine brings a deep understanding of the latest research behind the science of movement and how it affects learning, as well as years of personal experience in the classroom. In 2016, Board Member and founder, Nicole Elwood, delivered a TEDx talk entitled "*Movement and Mind*," a discussion of why physical movement is essential for optimal brain development. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLqsOs2tF0I>

Our carefully designed, movement-rich learning environment helps students build life-long self-management skills and wellness habits that serve their productivity, focus, and learning mind as effectively as it serves their personal well-being.

### **Measurable Outcomes:**

- a. Teachers will provide flexible seating and standing options for increased student focus throughout the day.

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<sup>19</sup> Bowman, Katy. 2014. *Move Your DNA: Restore Your Health Through Natural Movement*. Carlsborg, WA: Propriometrics Press.

<sup>20</sup> Levine, James A. 2014. *Get Up! Why Your Chair is Killing You and What You Can Do About It*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- b. Students will engage in brain break opportunities both provided by the school and supported by the schedule and environment as well as self-directed.
- c. Students will demonstrate increased awareness of their own focus and productivity.
- d. Students will demonstrate increased self-management of attention through their choices to change seating and work stations throughout the school day.

## **Objective Goal #4**

### **4. Happiness**

At Summit Charter School, the happiness<sup>21</sup> of students is an essential goal.<sup>22</sup> We believe education can be both rigorous<sup>23</sup> and enjoyable.<sup>24,25</sup> We aim for our students to be excited to come to school in the morning and to be energized and inspired<sup>26</sup> when they head home at the end of the day. By capturing the mood of our community members in regular surveys at least twice each year, we expect to learn that our students will report being happy about their overall school experiences. Our size and structure allows us to be responsive to feedback in a timely and creative fashion.

### **Measurable Outcomes:**

- a. The School will survey students twice each year and, based on survey results, faculty will implement strategic action that contributes to the overall positive mood of the learning community.
- b. Guidance counselors will keep aggregate data to allow faculty and staff to plot trends in the number of children reporting sadness, anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, and related feelings. Faculty (in coordination with Guidance) will use these trends to design and implement strategic action that contributes to

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<sup>21</sup> Howard A. Paul (2017) Promoting Student Happiness: Positive Psychology Interventions in Schools, by S. M. Suldo, *Child & Family Behavior Therapy*, 39:2, 171-177, DOI:

<sup>22</sup> Conklin, H. G. (2014). Toward More Joyful Learning: Integrating Play Into Frameworks of Middle Grades Teaching. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(6), 1227–1255. <https://doi-org.navigators-esu.passhe.edu/10.3102/0002831214549451>

<sup>23</sup> Eberly, Jody L., and Arti Joshi. 2018. "Kindergartners 'Worning' Their Way Through Integrated Curriculum." *Kappa Delta Pi Record* 54 (4): 148–51. doi:10.1080/00228958.2018.1515540.

<sup>24</sup> Walker, T. D. (2017). *Teach like Finland: 33 simple strategies for joyful classrooms*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company

<sup>25</sup> Lau, G. (2018). Ideology of Joyful Learning Through Play in Early Childhood Classroom in Hong Kong: Misconceptions or Paradoxes? *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 27(4), 359–378. <https://doi-org.navigators-esu.passhe.edu/10.1177/105678791802700403>

<sup>26</sup> Sahlberg, Pasi. (2015). *Finnish lessons 2.0 : what can the world learn from educational change in Finland?* New York :Teachers College Press,

improve the mood of the learning community.

### 3. Educational Program

A. Describe the educational program of the school, providing an overview of the curriculum and the content in all subject areas.

#### Curriculum Overview

Summit Charter School is dedicated to using pedagogical practice that is developmentally appropriate to prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (the Fourth Industrial Revolution) including PBL (project-based learning). Standards-aligned academic content will be taught in daily lessons in the areas of math, language arts, science, and social studies. Students will apply content knowledge in authentic projects that are collaboratively designed by teachers and students. For example, students studying algebra may create football game plays that use real numbers and algebraic expressions, then try out those plays in a real game. Please see our attached curricular plans, [Appendix A](#), for more examples of authentic project ideas that allow students to utilize their academic content in meaningful ways.

**Despite PMSD’s narrative that the combination of its schools district-wide and elements of its educational programs mirrors that of the proposed charter schools demonstrates a ‘salad bar’ approach to review of charter applications that the Charter School Appeal Board has rejected in the past. [See, for example, \*In Re Provident Charter for Children with Dyslexia\*](#):**

*The existence of similar programs in a school district is not fatal to a charter school’s application for a charter when there is evidence of uniqueness. [Montour School District v. Propel Charter School-Montour](#), 889 A.2d, 682, 688 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2006). Even if it were true that the District provided all of the educational choices proposed by Provident, the CSL does not require Provident to be more innovative or completely different from the District. “The purpose of the [CSL] is to encourage the use of innovative methods, not to exclude charter applications whose proposed methods may not be as innovative methods, not to exclude charter applicants whose proposed methods may not be as innovative or as different as the school district believes they should be.” [Sugar Valley Rural Charter School, CAB Docket No. 1999-4, p.15.](#)*

[See, \*In Re Provident Charter for Children with Dyslexia\*, CAB Docket No. 2014-06 \(Pittsburgh Public Schools\), 27-30, emphasis added.](#)

There are four main components to the educational curriculum:



1. Summit Charter School will use movement-rich, project-based processes that foster critical thinking, creativity, innovation, and meaningful collaboration for “big picture” learning.
2. Summit Charter School will use an innovative and responsive curriculum that includes STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) as a focal point of project-based work.
3. Students at Summit Charter School will engage in democratic procedures by discussing issues and voting on rules in School Meeting (led by elected Student Council members) and will enforce rules through our Justice Committee. Students will also participate in restorative justice programs and practices.
4. Learning at Summit Charter School is competency-based and student-centered. As a result, assessment is used for feedback to the student in order to reinforce or re-learn concepts in order to gain competencies needed to proceed. The academic and daily routines combined with the assessment system actualize the philosophy in a way that will be transparent to the student, parents and community.

## **Project-Based Curriculum**

Projects will embrace the major discipline in a given theme: literature, science, social studies, and math. Though there is substantial research<sup>27</sup> showing that project based learning (PBL) enhances retention and complex understanding of content<sup>28</sup>, it must be developmentally appropriate. Teachers will facilitate PBL based on the cognitive, social, and emotional readiness of the students.

- Key Knowledge, Understanding, and Success Skills - The project is focused on student learning goals, including standards-based content and skills such as critical thinking/problem solving, collaboration, and self- management.
- Challenging Problem or Question - The project is framed by a meaningful problem to solve or a question to answer, at the appropriate level of challenge.
- Sustained Inquiry - Students engage in a rigorous, extended process of asking questions, finding resources, and applying information.

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<sup>27</sup> Holm, M. (2011). This review of PBL covers peer-reviewed studies on the effectiveness of PBL on PK-12 students from 2000 to 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Condliffe, B., Quint, J., Visher, M.G., Bangser, M. R., Drohojowska, S., Saco, L., & Nelson, E. (2017). This review commissioned by Lucas Education Research (LER) of the George Lucas Education Foundation (GLEF) primarily includes studies published from 2015 to 2017 focused on PBL implementation and its effects on student outcomes.

- Authenticity - The project features real-world context, tasks and tools, quality standards, or impact – or speaks to students’ personal concerns, interests, and issues in their lives.
- Student Voice & Choice - Students make some decisions about the project, including how they work and what they create.
- Reflection - Students and teachers reflect on learning, the effectiveness of their inquiry and project activities, the quality of student work, obstacles and how to overcome them.
- Critique & Revision - Students give, receive, and use the feedback to improve their process and products.
- Public Product - Students make their project work public by explaining, displaying and/or presenting it to people beyond the classroom.

**Project-Based Learning is not - as the PSMD had intimated - projects that have been weaved into certain classes or certain programs. It is a school wide educational program that is student driven. <https://www.pblworks.org/doing-project-vs-project-based-learning>**

## **Assessment**

Our assessment system is guided by four beliefs:

1. What gets assessed gets done;
2. Students learn in different ways and at different times;
3. Learning processes are as important as the product; and,
4. Assessment and instruction needs to align.

Formative assessments will continually give feedback for student revision. Students will self-assess and receive feedback on their self-motivation, self-initiative, perseverance, collaboration, and problem-solving skills as well as their traditional academics. Students will be shown how to complete a skill or task, receive feedback, and proceed as appropriate for independent and/or collective progress.

Authentic feedback will be encouraged throughout all school years. Students may receive feedback on any aspect of their projects from other students as well as community experts when and where appropriate or feasible. In this way, there is assessment triangulation with student self-assessment, peer-assessment and expert assessment.

Standardized tests will be administered as required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

## English Language Arts Overview

English Language Arts is based on the premise that people need to improve and enhance reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills in order to communicate effectively. Communication takes form in both traditional paper and evolving digital contexts. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are different activities that are done with a purpose in mind. A person uses language arts communication to gain information, write to synthesize information to be shared, critique another's ideas, or to entertain an audience. Students must value all processes in order to enhance their own knowledge of language arts and to continually grow throughout their learning process.

Many of the reading skills at the younger levels will be modeled through reading circle (read aloud) and class discussion. Parents will be encouraged to read to their child because the learning process does not end in school. Based on the reading, students will participate in various learning opportunities, which will introduce and build foundational reading and writing skills. Students will practice written phonic exercises which includes word decoding, organization of writing, and the many different parts of a sentence. Students will be asked to share their thoughts, ideas and learning from the text as part of a whole group discussion or with partners. Questions will be posed to the students by the teacher to informally assess their understanding of the characters, settings, main events, plot, theme, message, and much more.

All students will be exposed to and be able to identify and explain the differences in various types of literature such as stories versus informational text, fantasy versus reality, poetry, plays, dystopian literature, etc. To demonstrate understanding, students may be asked to draw illustrations, create alternative endings, write plays or act out plays, create a digital book, add to a blog, write critiques to books online, create cultural narrative, write argumentatively and persuasively, etc. Language in such readings will be advanced enough for students to determine the meaning of unknown words from the context of the story thus increasing working vocabulary at all ages. When reading informational text, the teacher may read informational material on that topic, and students will be prompted to provide the answers and analyze what they have learned while listening to the material.

This modeling will start in kindergarten and progress as reading becomes more sophisticated. There are various techniques teachers and students could use to gain responses and demonstrate understanding. After multiple experiences with teacher modeling, students could independently find the support in the text on their own.

Writing will be encouraged to develop naturally as a way to communicate and share ideas with authentic audiences such as peers, parents, displays, and the world digital media through the use of the writing process. Purposes for writing include developing social networks, reasoning with others to improve society, supporting personal and social emotional growth, reflecting on experience, communicating professionally and academically, building relationships with others, including, but not limited to, friends, family, and like-minded individuals, and engaging in aesthetic experiences.

The different stages in the writing process includes determining a purpose or topic, brainstorming, drafting, gaining feedback through peer review re-writing, editing, and publishing. The attention to focus, content, organization, style, and conventions throughout will be emphasized for the sake of communication and encouraging the students' that their informed voices and creativity can inspire others and themselves.

## **Science Overview**

Science is not merely a body of facts to be memorized; science is a method of asking questions and evaluating solutions. Modern day charlatans are cleverly disguised behind credible looking websites and advertisements, so it is essential for children to develop scientific critical thinking skills at an early age. As an innovative, project-based school, the central focus around science is learning through a variety of projects.

Science must be a key concept that is central to all students in order to prepare them to be informed citizens in a democracy and to be knowledgeable consumers. Citizens now face problems from pandemics to energy shortages whose solutions require scientific and technological innovations. Americans are being increasingly forced to make decisions where literacy in science and mathematics is a real advantage.

The science curriculum develops thought processes that scientists and engineers use every day. The standards focus curriculum, instruction and assessments on the most important aspects of science. The number of these standards is limited to avoid shallow coverage of several topics in favor of deep exploration of key ideas. Woven throughout the standards are general concepts which have application across all domains of science, therefore linking the different branches of science. They include things like patterns, cause and effect, stability and change. All of this together relates the classroom with real life experiences, to generate more enthusiasm for science to inspire the next project.

Children are naturally curious about the world around them. The curriculum embraces this

curiosity, and builds upon children’s first experiences and ideas about the world. Connecting experience and curriculum is what keeps children interested in revising, expanding, and testing their ideas.

Through our education practices, we will create lifelong learners prepared for tomorrow’s workforce.

## **Social Studies Overview**

The foundation of a thriving democracy is an active, engaged, educated citizenry. The collective disciplines of psychology, sociology, civics, history, economics, and anthropology form the umbrella of the social studies curriculum, preparing students to take the reins of civic participation and leadership. A comprehensive social studies curriculum fosters cultural understanding and tolerance, encourages self-awareness and empathy, and provides students the tools to use historical lessons to improve community institutions locally and globally.

The cornerstone of early social studies exposure are the concepts of self-awareness and community. Children learn about place and relationships. How do they differ from children in other communities? How do communities interact with the environment? How do we use culture (food, toys, clothes, songs) to create community ties? As children enter the middle grades, these concepts expand to the understanding of process. How does culture influence our actions, thoughts, and beliefs? How do societies respond to historical events, and how are those accounts constructed? Children in the middle and upper grades begin to learn basic economic exchange, the social institution of governance, and the sociocultural impact of technology. Studying a second language beautifully complements each step toward learning about and appreciating our global community.

Project-based learning is uniquely situated to prepare students for civic competency, providing important connections to civics, culture, community, and environment. For elementary learners, personal family trees provide lessons in history, migration, and culture. For older children, community gardens explore the relationship between technology and the evolution of civilizations. Service learning provides key lessons in economic inequality, cultural stigmatization, interdependence, and compassion. School-based democratic bodies, such as school meetings and justice committees, provide all students hands-on experience in civic participation and social change. Through the social studies work, all grades will address civics, government, economics, geography, and history. Of these, the study of civics will be addressed on a daily basis through School Meetings, Justice Committee, and other

restorative practices. In order to facilitate reading, there is an outlined explanation below in the section called “Living Civics for a Democracy.”

### **Living Civics for a Democracy**

Summit Charter School will teach students about civics and the American form of government by engaging them in a democratic school society.

- School Meetings will be regularly scheduled and held according to a published schedule.
  - School meetings will closely represent boards and groups who are responsible for the management and oversight of companies and organizations. This structure will help our students actively and intentionally participate in the democracy of our larger school society.
- Students are eligible to run for student council positions within the Summit Charter School community.
  - Student Council positions are identified as the following: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Rule Book Clerk.
  - Elected Student Council members will facilitate School Meeting, using Robert’s Rules of Order as a guide.
  - Elections will take place annually.
  - When voting occurs:
    - Students, staff members, and board members will each have one vote.
    - Popular vote wins in each category.
  - Until positions for the new school year are filled:
    - Elected Student Council members from the prior school year will continue in their capacity should they still be enrolled.
    - Should there be a vacant position due to a non-returning student in a subsequent year, the acting officers from the prior school year shall nominate and vote on a student(s) to temporarily fill each role until elections are held for the current school year. Student Council members can alternatively decide to hold an open vote with all students, staff, and board members.
- School meetings will be conducted by following Robert’s Rules of Order as a guide.
- These meetings will serve as a forum for students to actively participate in the management of their educational community.
  - Routine topics of discussion at School Meeting include:
    - Matters addressed by the Justice Committee (JC) that week:
    - Each matter addressed at JC will be vetted.
    - School meeting shall have the responsibility for oversight of such matters and the power to overrule any decisions made by way of popular vote.

- Any member of the student body can bring an issue to the table in regards to any JC matter.
  - Summit Charter School Rule Book:
    - Summit Charter School will adopt a number of non-negotiable rules in regards to the safety and operation of Summit Charter School set in place by the founders of the school, Board of Trustees, and staff.
    - Other rules will be suggested and voted on by the school community.
    - Each student, staff member, and board member will have one vote.
    - Popular vote wins.
    - It is preferred that all students, staff, and board members are present to vote unless an issue is tabled and/or specifically designated for a future vote that qualifies for write in ballots. Alternatively, absentee voting can be voted on and approved during School Meeting session.
    - In most cases, behavior or actions not aligned with the Summit Charter School rulebook will be addressed by the JC.
- Justice Committee (JC) Council Meetings will be held, if there is a “case” to be heard. The purpose of our Justice Committee will serve to represent fairness within our school community, peaceful resolution of conflict, and a genuine respect for all students and staff. JC is comprised of a group of students who work with an advisor to provide a forum in which to address disputes that cannot be easily and quickly resolved between students and staff.
- Any student exhibiting behavior inconsistent with expectations set forth by the Summit Charter School rulebook (the respondent) can be reported to the Justice Committee by (the initiator) submitting a JC Evaluation Slip. Such slips will be collected in a locked box throughout the day and opened by the JC Council team at the start of each JC session.
- Information to be included on the JC evaluation slip:
  - Student name
  - Suggested conflict
  - Date and time of conflict
  - Potential witnesses to suggested conflict
  - Name of student writing evaluation (the initiator)
- The respondent party is innocent until proven guilty
  - JC Council will hear from the initiator, the respondent, and any witnesses. They will then carefully review all facts and testimony as a group and vote on an appropriate resolution.

Traditional school settings are often structured with a heavy top-down influence. Summit

Charter School is committed to giving students a voice (and thereby ownership) in their education and community. As a result, students will understand that a democratic society affords everyone ownership in both policy and solutions. This structure will serve as a natural progression for students to develop into engaged, adult citizens.

## **Mathematics Overview**

Mathematics is the beautiful, functional language of science. People invented mathematics to efficiently communicate their explorations. Isaac Newton famously invented calculus in response to a need to understand observed physical phenomena. We teach children mathematics so that they need not recreate Newton's path. Prior to our modern sophisticated math, the ideas that took the greatest minds of their time several pages to express in prose now can be easily written in a few lines of code by a middle schooler. An average citizen is no longer trapped in an unskilled career path. Mathematics education opens doors that were previously shut.

In contrast to an average school's approach to math, students are intentionally directed towards situations in which the development, understanding, and application of mathematical ideas will be of great help. Mathematics thus emerges as a natural language, and not as an externally imposed collection of impenetrable rules and symbols. Grades K-12 may also learn through hands-on experience using math manipulatives.

The program sequences exposure to manipulatives that ultimately lead to the understanding that they could extrapolate beyond just the number of blocks they see in front of them. The students' next logical step is to express the thought that by writing down the mathematical code. As the students get older, individualized lessons spanning the developmentally appropriate standards are woven into particular projects as that same natural extension of expression.

Math education will have two distinct parts:

1. Teachers will lead small group lessons for students of similar levels. During this time, students practice math skills.
2. Individualized lessons will be woven into particular projects as natural parts of those projects. It is important to have both an intuitive, conceptual sense of mathematics as well as a full complement of quantitative skills. Years of filling out seemingly irrelevant math worksheets are not nearly as engaging as math in a real life scenario. Project-based learning inspires the appreciation of mathematics as opposed to the aversion of it.



In this increasingly technological world, mathematical literacy is becoming more valued. Every career demands a certain amount of mathematical ability in the form of logic, pattern recognition, data interpretation, etc. Sadly, aversion to basic math courses can repel college students from their preferred majors, and mathematical skills can be the limiting factor throughout their careers.

From the beginning, students must view math as a natural way to express themselves. Successful math students develop complex problem-solving skills applicable anywhere in the real world.

They are able to analyze life's situations logically, and determine a solution based on the circumstances before them. Math is essential to all sciences and engineering.

## **Physical Education & Well Being Overview**

The primary goal of Summit Charter School is to prepare the whole child to thrive as an adult in tomorrow's modern world. The Mayo Clinic has 20 years of encouraging data on a movement friendly classroom. Combining physical activity with learning activities produced high rates of on-task behavior during lessons, with significantly higher math and reading scores than children in a traditional classroom environment. Children given a walking media station performed equally as those at a stationary workstation, but reported a more enjoyable experience. As a result, physical education is much more than simply forty minutes of exercise once a week.

At Summit Charter School, classrooms and outdoor spaces are designed to encourage movement all day, not stillness punctuated with intense bouts of exercise. Students need not sit in one place all day to complete their work. They can sit on the floor, at a desk, on a beanbag, or stand at a standing desk. At times, they may even enjoy a lesson outside. They can go for a walk and listen to a lesson through headphones. A math lesson on decimals could include going outside to measure long jumps in hundredths of meters, then sorting the distances by size.

Along with all day natural movement, students practice yoga and mindfulness/meditation for their social-emotional development. Developmentally sensitive efforts to help students learn, practice, and regularly use mindfulness tactics easily and readily in and beyond the classroom are important to help them manage future stresses. Several mindfulness programs and

techniques have been applied in schools, with positive benefits reported. Meditators were significantly less likely to develop suicidal ideation or thoughts of self-harm than control. Yoga shows promise of benefit for executive function in people of all ages. Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable people to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Children report significantly greater decreases in anger, depression, and fatigue from before to after participating in yoga and mindfulness. Once again, these contribute to a child's whole development into a healthy, engaged, citizen.

Over the past two centuries, Americans have consumed roughly the same number of calories while expending far fewer; the result contributing to the obesity crisis. Studies show the lean individuals compared to their obese counterpart burn the extra calories not by gym workouts, but by all day movement during their normal activities of daily living, sitting on average 2.5 hours longer. This simple idea is extremely powerful. Work environments, schools, and communities can be re-invented as walking and movement spaces, and people thereby offered more active, happier, healthier and more productive lives.

## **Arts Overview**

Human beings need to be creative; it is part of the human experience. We enjoy art and the performing arts for our own sake; however, it can be a powerful tool to engage students who are otherwise uninterested in a curricular topic. Research on the Arts and Humanities shows that supporting and incorporating art programs in schools results in higher academic scores and increased student engagement. The arts offer insight, a lens through which to view our individuality. Art fosters creativity and urges our imagination to take flight.

Researchers have found that play is important for productive thought. First we play as a child plays, then we play with thought. We become creative. We can be creative in every subject or discipline. We develop metaphors to link the unfamiliar with the familiar, ultimately understanding something new. For example, after listening to Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 and reflecting upon its beauty, we imagine what it would feel like to not be able to enjoy such a song if we were hearing impaired. How could we extend the experience beyond feeling the vibrations on the speaker or reading sheet music? How can we recruit additional senses to enjoy the experience? We decide to build a circuit that blinks lights to the rhythm.

Merely building a circuit from a predefined diagram in a textbook is a very different experience from designing a light show from a box of circuit components in service of others. The former is a dull recipe following without understanding why something needs to be created. The latter

requires creatively experimenting with circuit components, understanding each individually and how they work together to produce the desired outcome, all to enrich someone else's life. Descriptive verbiage in circuit design, is the same as in art. What constitutes a "beautiful" circuit? High efficiency, low cost, small size, few components, robustness, and reliability, are a few attributes most designers would agree upon.

This kind of creativity cannot be forced. We can only provide an environment that inspires it. Students need to feel the space and the freedom to experiment, create, make mistakes, revise and most importantly, find the experience joyful and fulfilling so they are inspired to do it again the next day. Students at Summit Charter School will participate in art and music classes. Movement will also be integrated through workshops such as dance and the arts will be integrated into the project-based curriculum.

Modern problem solvers in the workforce begin with those facts to brainstorm and creatively design solutions within the constraints of the problem (constraints such as the physical laws of nature or governmental statutes). Our students will grow into our future problem solvers, taking on climate change, poverty, pandemics, and become social entrepreneurs. The classes and workshops provided will give the students the ability to use their creativity and imagination in project-based work, bringing to fruition innovation desperately needed to compete in today's competitive evolving workplace.

The curriculum utilized by Summit meets and as curriculum continues to be reviewed and developed (as happens in every school system, including Pennsylvania's traditional public school districts) will meet the requirements of applicable federal and state laws and regulations, including Chapter 4 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code. Preparing the Summit curriculum began with consulting the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Standards Aligned System (SAS) websites. It was determined that the best approach was to use the Curriculum Framework for grades K-12 published on the SAS website. The next step was to integrate project based learning, STEAM, etc learning and assessment strategies.

B. Describe how your school will meet the educational needs of students with disabilities in accordance with Chapter 711. Describe your projections for special education instructional programs that will be **operated directly by the charter school or operated by others under** contract with your charter school. List any support staff and related service providers that might be **employed directly by the charter school or provided under contract**, who will provide required support for students with disabilities receiving special education.

## **English Learners**

Please refer to the folder “SCS Curricula, Assessment, and PD” for Summit Charter School’s Language Instruction Education Program. This includes information about how Summit Charter School will identify, service, assess, and monitor EL students, as well as communicate with parents. To service the anticipated EL population, Summit Charter School’s budget includes a full-time ESL teacher. This ESL teacher will hold a PA Instructional I or II certificate and an ESL program specialist certificate. As the school grows, Summit Charter School will review its caseload projections each spring, and add additional part-time or full-time ESL teachers depending on the size of the caseload. The ESL teacher will ensure timely data reporting to the state regarding students who are both actively receiving services, as well as students who have been reclassified for a period of 4 years.

Under the supervision of the principal, the ESL teacher will be responsible for implementing all components of the Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) and will make decisions around the program’s model based on what is appropriate for individual students. In line with state recommendations, program options include EL-specific and Mixed Classes that either incorporate the student’s native language or solely use English. The ESL teacher will also lead professional development for general education teachers of ELs and collaborate with these content teachers throughout the year to ensure that content is made accessible to ELs and to monitor the progress of ELs. The ESL teacher will use the Pennsylvania English Language Development Standards (PA ELDS) Framework in addition to the WIDA English Language Development Standards (ELDS) as the foundation for its ESL instruction.

## **OUTSIDE AGENCIES AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

- Summit Charter School addresses individual needs through its innovative project-based curriculum, which allows for interest driven learning.
- Students work at their own pace as well as on their own level of achievement.
- Summit Charter School recognizes that, at times, the involvement of outside support is essential to the continued attainment of learning in certain individuals.
- Outside agencies/support may include parents/caregivers, local behavioral health/home health agencies as well as other community resources.
- The mission and purpose of our school will be the thread that holds our collaboration together. Therefore, outside support agencies will be required to follow the rules and regulations determined by the Board of Trustees, Principal, as well as other staff.
- It is our hope to provide every single student with the best possible support that will enable and provide sustainable learning in order to achieve the highest possible level in academia.

The Summit Charter School is committed to providing a quality education to children with disabilities appropriate to their needs, abilities, and interests and that complies with all applicable

laws and regulations pertaining to the education of students with disabilities enrolled in charter schools.

Summit Charter School will have an open enrollment policy: any eligible public school student in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania can attend, with certain preferences as established by Pennsylvania’s Charter School Law. The school will not discriminate in its admissions policies or practices on the basis of geography, intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a student with a disability, test scores, disabilities, etc.

The Summit Charter School recognizes that each student is unique, talented, and a critical member of the school community, regardless of his or her level of ability. The school is a student-focused organization that respects individual talent, fosters diversity and innovation across the organization, and strives for the achievement of goals in every aspect of its operations.

**The school will comply with all applicable Federal and State legal requirements, including Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code “Charter School And Cyber Charter School Services And Programs For Children With Disabilities;” applicable provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (“IDEA”), 20 U.S.C.A. § § 1400—1419 and its implementing regulations at Title 34 CFR Part 300; applicable provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act 1973, 29 U.S.C.A. § 794, and its implementing regulations at 34 CFR Part 104; as well as those provisions of the Charter School Law that pertain to the education of students with disabilities, 24 P.S. §§ 17-1701-A, et. seq., and provisions of the Public School Code of 1949 incorporated therein. Please see below and Appendix B for special education policies for further information regarding the education of students with disabilities at Summit Charter School.**

## **Enrollment**

Summit Charter School will not include measures of achievement or aptitude in its admission policies or practices. The school will comply with all applicable state and federal laws regarding the enrollment of students, including but not limited to: Section 24 P.S. Section 17-1723-A, Enrollment and Chapter 711.7 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code. Summit Charter School will not deny enrollment or otherwise discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of a child’s intellectual ability, or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a person with a disability, proficiency in the English language or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district. 24 P.S. § 17-1723-A.

## **PA-Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)**

MTSS is a comprehensive system of supports that, in the Commonwealth, includes standards-aligned, culturally responsive, and high-quality core instruction; universal screening;

data-based decision-making; tiered services and supports; flexible grouping, family engagement; building level leadership; and, professional learning. Summit Charter School will develop Multi-Tiered Systems of Support through problem-solving processes that engage both the administration and professional staff. These processes will determine how staff are assigned, how students will be grouped for instruction, intervention, and/or enrichment, how schedules are designed, and how the data identified needs of the students will be met in literacy, numeracy, and behavior. A tiered system will be implemented beginning with kindergarten and continuing through the grade levels. Data teams may determine that a student needs to be referred for evaluation for special education based on lack of progress, at which point the information and data collected during the implementation of tiered supports will inform the multi-disciplinary team conducting the evaluation.

### **Child Find**

Summit Charter School shall adopt written policies and implementing procedures to ensure that all children with disabilities who are enrolled in the charter school and who are eligible for special education and related services are identified and evaluated.

#### **The written policy and implementing procedures will include:**

(1) Public awareness activities sufficient to inform parents of children applying to or enrolled in the charter school of available special education services and programs and how to request those services and programs. Written information will be published annually in a local newspaper, as well as shared directly with families and on the school's website.

(2) Procedures to comply with applicable provisions of the law relating to parental requests for evaluations. All professional personnel will be trained in the legal mandates and the school's procedures for meeting those mandates.

(3) Systematic screening activities that lead to the identification and evaluation of children with disabilities enrolled in the charter school. 22 Pa. Code § 711.21.

(4) Systematic activities to assure those incoming students who are already identified will, upon enrolling, receive the special education services to which they are entitled.

Summit Charter School will ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations regarding the rights of children with disabilities. In addition to Child Find activities, the **school will** provide a Student Assistance Program (SAP). SAP is a systematic team process designed to address issues such as, but not limited to, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and/or mental health issues which pose a barrier to the student's success. SAP teams are comprised of various professionals who are tasked with connecting the student and the family to school and/or community resources

to address the identified need. The SAP team consists of building-level leaders and school support staff. They review all information (including observation data, assessment data, behavioral logs), may consult with the parent or student, brainstorm solutions, make recommendations, and monitor the results through a formal intervention plan. Recommended interventions may include small group instruction, 1:1 teacher check-ins, strategic student partnering, more intensive support from a learning specialist, or referral for a special education evaluation.

## **Screening**

Summit Charter School will comply with Section 711.23 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code regarding Screening. Summit Charter School will establish a system of screening to include the following:

- (1) Universal review of existing data for ALL students on a regular basis to identify those students whose progress is not meeting grade level expectations. Data Teams are comprised of teachers and administrators will review relevant records such as, but not limited to, performance on classroom, school-wide, and state assessments, transcripts, attendance, discipline, and health records.
- (2) Hearing and vision screening in accordance with section 1402 of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P. S. § 14-1402) for the purpose of identifying students with hearing or vision difficulty so that they can be referred for medical intervention and/or referred for evaluation for Section 504 accommodations or special education.
- (3) Provision of diagnostic activities and targeted interventions within the general education setting that identify and address the deficit skill(s) in academics or behavior.
- (4) Progress monitoring of students who are receiving Tier II or Tier III interventions to determine if further intervention is needed.
- (5) Referral for evaluation for special education for those students who have failed to make adequate progress even with intense intervention over time.

Screening or intervention activities will not serve as a bar to the right of a parent to request an evaluation at any time. Summit Charter School will comply with applicable provisions of the law relating to parental requests for evaluations. Screening procedures may include but are not limited to ongoing analysis of the student's response to research-based quality instruction; performance on statewide assessments; reviews of enrollment records, health records, and transcripts/report cards, etc.

## **Evaluation**

Summit Charter School will comply with Section 711.24 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code regarding Evaluations. The group of qualified professionals at Summit Charter School, which reviews the evaluation materials to determine whether the child is a child with a disability under 34 CFR 300.306 (relating to determination of eligibility), will include a certified school psychologist when evaluating a child for autism, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, other health impairments, specific learning disability or traumatic brain injury. In addition to the requirements incorporated by reference in 34 CFR 300.301 (relating to initial evaluations), the initial evaluation shall be completed and a copy of the evaluation report presented to the parents no later than 60 calendar days after Summit Charter School receives written parental consent for evaluation, except that the calendar days from the day of the last day of the spring school term up to and including the day before the first day of the subsequent fall school term will not be counted. Parents may request an evaluation at any time, and the request must be in writing. If a request is made orally to any professional employee or administrator of Summit Charter School, that individual shall provide a copy of the permission to evaluate form to the parents within 10 calendar days of the oral request. Copies of the evaluation report shall be disseminated to the parents at least 10 school days prior to the meeting of the IEP team unless this requirement is waived by a parent in writing.

## **Reevaluation**

Summit Charter School shall comply with § 711.22 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code regarding Student Reevaluations. Summit Charter School shall reevaluate students with disabilities at least once every 3 years. Children with disabilities who are identified as intellectually disabled shall be reevaluated at least once every 2 years.

Summit Charter School respects that the parent or teacher of a child with a disability has the right under 34 CFR Part 300.303(b) (relating to reevaluations) to request a reevaluation annually. In addition to compliance with the requirements of 34 CFR 300.303 (relating to re-evaluation), the reevaluation timeline utilized by the school will be 60 calendar days, except that the calendar days from the day after the last day of the spring school term up to and including the day before the first day of the subsequent fall school term will not be counted.

## **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

Summit Charter School will comply with Section 711.41 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code regarding students with IEPs. When a child with an IEP transfers to Summit Charter School, the school will upon enrollment ensure that the child receives special education and related services



in conformity with the IEP, either by adopting the existing IEP or by developing a new IEP for the child in accordance with the requirements of IDEA.

For students who are 14 years of age or older, the school will include a transition plan which includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals related to training, education, employment and, when appropriate, independent living skills.

The IEP of each student shall be implemented as soon as possible but not later than 10 school days after its completion.

### **IEP Team Process**

Once the evaluation team has determined a child has a disability and requires special education and related services, an IEP will be developed within 30 days of the eligibility determination. From that point on, the IEP will be reviewed yearly unless a meeting prior to the annual due date is necessary. The annual IEP will be implemented within ten school days of the IEP meeting. Special Education reevaluations will be conducted every three years or more frequently if needed. If a student has an intellectual disability, the reevaluation will take place every two years or more frequently if needed. An IEP meeting will take place within 30 days of the completion of the reevaluation report. The report will be provided to the parent at least ten days prior to the reevaluation IEP meeting. If a student comes from out of state, and the disability is not recognized in the state of Pennsylvania, the school will still provide FAPE and comparable services while offering to conduct a new evaluation.

### **The IEP Team will include all required members including:**

- the parents;
- a minimum of one general education teacher;
- a minimum of one special education teacher and any related service providers;
- a designated school representative knowledgeable about the special education programs, curriculum and resources (LEA);
- the student (if turning 14 years or older during the duration of the annual IEP or if the parent wants the student to participate prior to age 14);
- a qualified person that can interpret the evaluation findings; and

· anyone else the parent would like present at the meeting that is familiar with the child and their education.

Parents are IEP Team members and Summit Charter School will take all steps needed to ensure that one or both of the parents are present at each IEP Team.

**The IEP developed will address:**

- any new evaluation reports,
- student strengths,
- parent input,
- both present level academic and functional performance,
- measurable yearly goals (and objectives if the student is alternatively assessed),
- how the disability affects progress in the general education curriculum,
- services and programs with dates (including transportation needs),
- progress reporting (at least quarterly during the school year ) and how the progress will be evaluated,
- participation in general education classes (and other activities) with children without disabilities,
- accommodations (including supplementary aids and services), and
- participation in Pennsylvania statewide testing.

The IEP Team will also examine behaviors, including how they may interfere with learning (or that of peers) and if a behavioral management plan should be created. The IEP Team will take into account if the student has limited English proficiency, communication and assistive technology (AT) needs, as well as eligibility for Extended School Year (ESY) services. If the student is transition age (14 years or older), transition assessments, annual goals, activities, and courses of study will be developed to support postsecondary goals.

Summit Charter School will hold annual reviews of the IEP, including reviewing student progress within the existing IEP, reevaluating whether the student is benefitting from the

program, and creating new IEP goals. If the student is not benefitting from the program, a new IEP will be developed and changes will be recommended regarding the student's placement.

### **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities will be educated with children who are nondisabled; and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the general educational environment will only occur if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. In determining the educational placement of a student with a disability, the placement decision is made by a group of persons, including the parents, and other persons knowledgeable about: the child, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options. Such a decision must be made in conformity with the LRE provisions of the federal regulations. In selecting the LRE, the IEP team will give consideration to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services that he or she needs. A student with a disability will not be removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general education curriculum. In providing nonacademic and extracurricular clubs and activities, each student with a disability will participate with nondisabled children in extracurricular clubs and activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of that student.

Summit Charter School will provide special education and related services within the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for all students. This includes taking into consideration supplementary aids and services, accommodations, and ESY while ensuring the student is educated with nondisabled peers, to the maximum extent possible, and making expected gains on IEP goals. The special education coordinator will work closely with the general education teachers to ensure that every student receives accommodations, modifications, and all needed services to access and progress in the general education curriculum. Assistive Technology (AT) may include collaboration with PaTTAN AT consultants and Intermediate Unit (IU) staff, access to PaTTAN's short-term AT loan library and AIM Center (Accessible Instructional Materials), closed captioning, speech to text, and text to speech. In addition, available supports for hearing impaired students include closed captioning or American Sign Language. Extended School Year (ESY) will be considered by the IEP Team, at each IEP meeting, determining if potential regression over school interruptions or other relevant factors may interfere with the student's access to FAPE.

### **Continuum of Services and Placement**

Summit Charter School will have a continuum of special education and alternative placements available to ensure FAPE is being provided in the LRE.

- Consultative support will be provided for the general education teachers to provide modifications and accommodations to the general education curriculum.
- Itinerant, supplementary or full-time special education support will be provided
- Direct related service support (for example: speech-language, occupational, or physical therapy, psychological counseling,) will be provided face-to-face, via computer, and related service provider school offices.
- Related services will include: parent training, autism support, parent groups, student support groups, and itinerant hearing or vision support consistent with the student's IEP.
- Ongoing progress monitoring will be provided for every student: including frequent and thorough review of student performance, attendance or non-attendance, and participation data as reported to the student, parent and teacher.
- Every conversation (phone, email message, in-person) and consultation with the student and/or parent, as well as general education teachers, will be carefully logged.
- Providers of direct/related services will be tracked with close scrutiny by the special education staff of any missed appointments or incomplete services.
- Intermediate Unit classrooms may be provided if the IU agrees to provide services via contract.
- Private placements will be arranged if required.

Alternative placements will be considered when the use of supplementary aids and services, accommodations, and ESY are no longer meeting the needs of the student. Alternative placements will include special classes, special schools, approved private placements, and home and hospital instruction. Resources to support alternative placement options may include collaboration with the student's resident school district, IUs, and approved private schools. Once an alternative placement is agreed upon by the team, a NOREP and Procedural Safeguards will be issued to document the team decision.

### **Program for Alternately Assessed Students**

Summit Charter School will provide a comprehensive program for students qualified to take Pennsylvania's alternative state assessment, PASA. To the greatest extent possible, these

students will be included with their same age classmates so they may enjoy age-appropriate communication and socialization. Students participating in the alternative curriculum program may or may not have classes with their general education peers. For example, some alternative curriculum students will participate in only alternative courses, while others may participate in electives with their general education peers, in addition to their alternative core coursework. The LRE will differ for these two groups of students and is determined by each student's IEP team. The Alternative Education Program will include specially designed instruction to address each student's IEP goals as well as alternative curriculum resources.

### **Transportation**

Summit Charter School shall comply with § 711.42. of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code regarding the transportation of students with disabilities. School districts of residence shall provide transportation for Summit Charter School students with disabilities eligible under IDEA and to protected handicapped students under Section 504, to/from the school to the extent required by state regulations. This includes transportation to an ESY program if that program is held at Summit Charter School. When transportation-related accommodations are needed for special education students, the accommodations will be outlined in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Service Agreement and services funded in accordance with Pennsylvania requirements.

### **Access to Instructional Materials**

Summit Charter School shall comply with Section 711.45 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code. To ensure the timely provision of high quality, accessible instructional materials to children who are blind or have print disabilities, Summit Charter School shall adopt the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS). It is a technical specification, endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education that publishers must use when creating files. The NIMAS refers to a standard for source files of print instructional materials created by publishers that may be converted into accessible instructional materials. The School will, in a timely manner, provide print instructional materials in specialized, accessible formats (that is, Braille, audio, digital, large-print, and the like) to children who are blind or have print disabilities. Summit Charter School will take all reasonable steps to ensure that children who are blind or have print disabilities have access to their accessible format instructional materials at the same time that students without disabilities have access to instructional materials. The School will not withhold instructional materials from other students until instructional materials in accessible formats are available -- See 22 Pa. Code § 711.45(c).

Receipt of a portion of the instructional materials in alternate accessible or specialized format will be considered receipt in a timely manner if the material received covers the chapters that are

currently being taught in the student's class. If a child who is blind or has a print disability enrolls in school after the start of the school year, Summit Charter School will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the student has access to accessible format instructional materials within 10 school days from the time it is determined that the child requires printed instructional materials in an alternate accessible or specialized format.

Summit Charter School may coordinate with the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) to facilitate the production of and delivery of accessible materials to children who are blind or other persons with print disabilities to the extent needed. The NIMAC refers to the central repository, established under section 674(e) of IDEA (20 U.S.C.A. § 1474(e)), which is responsible for processing, storing and distributing NIMAS files of textbooks and core instructional materials. If coordinating with NIMAC, Summit Charter School shall require textbook publishers to deliver the contents of print instructional materials to the NIMAC in NIMAS format files on or before delivery of the print instructional materials to Summit Charter School.

Assistive technology will be available to further enhance access to instructional materials such as the use of scanners and screen readers.

### **Education Records - Confidentiality**

Summit Charter School will maintain records and confidentiality for children with disabilities consistent with the regulations for the Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 and its implementing regulations at 34 CFR Part 99, applicable provisions of the Public School Code of 1949, and Chapter 12 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code as well as Chapter 711.8 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code.

When the educational records for a child with a disability are transferred from Summit Charter School to another educational agency or institution in which the student is enrolled or intends to enroll, Summit Charter School shall transfer the student records, including the most recent IEP, within 10 days after Summit Charter School is notified in writing that the child is enrolled in another public agency, private school, approved private school or private agency.

Summit Charter School shall request and take all reasonable efforts to obtain student records in accordance with Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code and shall respect the confidentiality of student records to the extent required by applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

Summit Charter School shall maintain educational records for children with disabilities consistent with the regulations for the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C.A. § § 1221 note and 1232g) in 34 CFR Part 99 (relating to family educational rights and

privacy), including publishing an annual notification of rights regarding student records in accordance with FERPA and IDEA.

### **Projections of Special Education Programming and Personnel**

The Board of Trustees, school leadership, faculty, and staff of Summit Charter School will value the individual differences of all children and look forward to enrolling students with special needs and providing them with appropriate support, instruction, and programs. Summit Charter School plans to provide the highest level of inclusion in regular education classes appropriate to each child with a disability. The administration will provide all staff with the professional development and systemic structures to assure that students can receive the accommodations and/or modifications described in their IEPs or Section 504 Service Agreements.

Multi-disciplinary teams will identify the educational needs of each IDEA-eligible student. The IEP team will determine how to address those needs. Instructional needs will be addressed in the Annual Goals which will describe what a student is expected to learn that is outside of the general education curriculum. Goals will be articulated as defined by federal and state laws and regulations. Specially designed instruction will include accommodations and/or modifications designed to assure that the student receives educational benefit from his or her instructional program. IEP teams will assure that any special factors such as blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, communication needs, assistive technology needs, limited English proficiency, behaviors that impede the student's learning or that of others, or health needs will be addressed in the IEP. The team will consider what supplementary aids and services would be necessary for a child to meet success in the general education setting. Final determination of the student's placement, including the amount of time in the general education setting, will occur only after all such considerations have been addressed by the IEP team. The administration will assure that a continuum of services is available.

For students who have disabilities that substantially limit or prohibit participation in or access to school programs, but who do not require specially designed instruction, Section 504 Agreements will include related services and accommodations as required under the Rehabilitation Act of 1974 and Chapter 15 of the Pennsylvania School Code. The Administration will develop policies and procedures to ensure that such students are identified, evaluated, and provided an accommodation plan that will assure that the student has equal opportunity to participate in his or her school program and extra-curricular activities.

Summit Charter School commits to a staffing level for the opening of school based on anticipated enrollment projections. (See [Appendix C](#) for Projected Enrollment Chart.) Based on the demographics of the Pocono Mountain School District, it is anticipated that 19% of enrolled students will be eligible for special education. Therefore, Summit Charter School expects to

employ (with the term “employ” describing traditional employment with the school, a 1099 arrangement, a contract(s) with the requisite Intermediate Unit, and/or contracts with staffing or therapy agencies) special education teachers; paraprofessionals; speech, occupational, and physical therapists; school personnel staff such as school counselors, school psychologists, and social workers; and other personnel as required to meet identified needs. Staffing decisions for professional, licensed, and paraprofessional staff will be in compliance with state certification, licensing, and/or qualification requirements. Once the actual student population has been determined and individual needs identified, the administration of Summit Charter School will assess whether there is a need for additional staff or services. The Annual Report to the Pennsylvania Department of Education will include the certifications and/or qualifications of staff providing services to students with disabilities. Staffing needs will be assessed on a regular basis, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Department of Education and professional organizations. It is the intent of the Founders, Board, and school leaders to create a favorable instructional environment for individuals with disabilities; therefore, staffing levels may exceed mandates if it is determined to be helpful for students with disabilities. Summit Charter School will utilize all staffing options available, including, but not limited to, direct employment, 1099 employment, contract with the appropriate Intermediate Unit, and/or contracts with staffing or therapy agencies. Such agencies or individuals may provide services on-site or through virtual options.

Summit Charter School will comply with Section 711.5 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code regarding personnel at the school. Persons who provide special education or related services to children with disabilities at Summit Charter School shall be required to have appropriate certification, in accordance with Chapter 711.5 and 24 P. S. § 17-1724-A.

The supervision of the Special Education programs - staffing, programming, etc. - will be a shared responsibility among administrators such as Principals and a Special Education Coordinator(s). Individuals who are tasked with supervisory responsibilities will hold the required certification. The administrative team will devise a Professional Development Plan that addresses the specialized knowledge necessary to meet the needs of students with disabilities in general and the unique needs identified in student IEPs. The Plan will identify potential providers to include, but not be limited to, IU20 Intermediate Unit, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), University partners, and private consultants or entities. The Plan will address how Professional Development activities will be documented, Act 48 credit awarded, and Paraprofessional hours tracked. Staff will be encouraged to request specific training as they recognize a need; a procedure by which to make a request will be articulated.

The Summit Charter School will provide special education programs and services that are reasonably calculated to result in meaningful progress for enrolled IDEA-eligible students. The



administrative team will develop a plan that provides for appropriate instructional groupings for students with high incidence disabilities as well as for students with low incidence disabilities and that provides for a continuum of services. Should a student's IEP team determine that after exhausting all supplementary aids and services the Charter School is unable to provide an appropriate instructional setting for a student with a disability within their planned programs, the IEP team will work with the administrative team to identify an appropriate placement which may require a contract with an alternate placement such as an Intermediate Unit operated program, Approved Private School, or licensed private school.

### **Procedural Safeguards Notice**

Parents of children who receive or who may be eligible for special education services have rights under IDEA 2004. The *Procedural Safeguards Notice* provides a detailed explanation of those rights. Summit Charter School will give parents a copy of the *Procedural Safeguards Notice* and the explanatory *Procedural Safeguards Letter* at least once each school year. Parents can also obtain a copy of the *Procedural Safeguards Notice* from Summit Charter School at any time. An additional document will be available to help parents to better understand the *Notice* document. *The Parents' Rights: Understanding the Procedural Safeguards Notice* provides a summary of those rights. Parents will also receive the Parents' Rights documents upon initial referral or upon the parents request for an evaluation and in accordance with discipline procedures when a change in placement occurs.

### **Surrogate Parent**

As part of the IEP process, Summit Charter School will recognize a qualified adult must participate as the "parent" (34 CFR 300.30) for the student. A surrogate parent is someone who acts on the child's behalf in matters relating to the identification, evaluation, educational placement, and provision of FAPE to the child. A surrogate will be appointed and trained on how to participate and make decisions on the child's behalf in the following situations: a biological, adoptive, foster, parent, or guardian is not available; a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives or a person who is legally responsible for the child is not available; the child is an unaccompanied homeless youth.

Summit Charter School will have a method in place to secure a surrogate when needed. When it is determined that a student is in need of a surrogate parent, the surrogate will be appointed within 30 calendar days. Summit Charter School will maintain a pool of trained parent surrogates and may collaborate with Intermediate Units (IUs) when additional surrogates are needed.

Summit Charter School will not allow the following persons to be appointed as a surrogate parent: employees of an agency already involved in the care or education of the student; school employees; or persons with a potential conflict of interest.

### **Allowing for Differences in English Language Skills and Ethnic Background**

Evaluations must take into account the child's English language skills and ethnic background to ensure that the testing and evaluation will not be unfair for children of any race or culture. Tests must be given in the native language or mode of communication that is most likely to give accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is clearly not feasible. Evaluations also must take into account the child's disability to make certain the test measures what it is supposed to measure. For example, a child with a severe visual impairment should be provided with appropriately-sized testing materials to accommodate for his disability.

### **School Professional Development Related to Child Find**

The school's Special Education Coordinator will provide the entire Summit Charter School staff with Child Find training and compliance progress updates. At the start of the school year, the staff will be provided training on documenting information received by parents regarding special education evaluation requests, including timelines and the importance of timeliness in responding and alerting the Summit Charter School special education team. Subsequent professional development for school staff will include how to interpret universal screening results, intervention processes and results, as well as measures of compliance with Pennsylvania Special Education Evaluation Timelines.

### **Disproportionality**

Summit Charter School will collect and examine data regularly to ensure disproportionality is not evident in the areas of identification, academic settings and placements, and disciplinary measures. In addition to cultural sensitivity and awareness training, the following practices will be implemented to ensure students are found eligible for special education services without unjust bias:

- Evaluations will be administered by trained and licensed personnel.
- More than one single measure or assessment will be used to determine a disability.
- Evaluations will not be discriminatory or racially/culturally biased.

- Evaluations will take into consideration the child's English language skills, including ethnic background.
- Evaluations will be administered in the child's native language, or mode of communication.

If there is any evidence of disproportionality, the school will review, and revise if needed, all procedures and policies that may be contributing.

### **Students Who Enroll With An IEP**

During enrollment, families will be asked if their child has an IEP or 504 plan. Parents may provide a copy of the documents or Summit Charter School will obtain the documents. Summit Charter School will conduct IEP meetings within 30 days of enrollment for all new students to adopt the IEP, amend the IEP, or conduct an annual review. In addition to being active participants in the IEP Team meetings, parents will be provided with Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) detailing the decisions of the IEP Team.

### **Related Services**

Summit Charter School will offer a vast range of options for the delivery of related services. Related services provided to Summit Charter School students will include, but are not limited to:

- speech-language services,
- occupational therapy,
- counseling services,
- social work services,
- behavior therapy,
- special transportation,
- physical therapy,
- audiology services,
- social skills,
- autism support,
- parent training,

- orientation and mobility,
- closed-captioning, and
- American Sign Language translation.

Related services will be equally accessible to all students in Pennsylvania. It is anticipated that most students receiving related services will receive a combination of speech-language services, occupational therapy services, and counseling services. Summit Charter School will provide related services by engaging IUs, private businesses, agencies, hospitals, adult service providers, and so forth. For each provider serving enrolled students, Summit Charter School will maintain copies of licensure and certification, background checks, etc. consistent with Pennsylvania law.

### **Assistive Technology**

Summit Charter School will provide students with Assistive Technology (AT) as defined by IDEA, any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially-off-the-shelf, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. Consistent with Pennsylvania Chapter 711, the IEP Team will consider assistive technology needs for every student with an IEP. Students have access to screen readers, text readers, dictation and word prediction software, large monitors, alternative keyboards and mice, and other high- and low-tech AT devices as specified in the students' IEP.

Summit Charter School is mindful of the USDOE/DOJ/OCR Guidance related to assistive technology through “Dear Colleague” Letters in this ever-evolving area, including (1) Dear Colleague Letter (June 29, 2010) and Frequently Asked Questions concerning the obligation of colleges and universities to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to emerging technologies in education; (2) Dear Colleague Letters (May 26, 2011) to elementary and secondary education officials and postsecondary education officials and Frequently Asked Questions regarding use of electronic book readers and other emerging technologies in compliance with civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability; and (3) Dear Colleague Letter (November 12, 2014) and Frequently Asked Questions concerning effective communication for students with hearing, vision, or speech disabilities in public elementary and secondary schools.

### **National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard (NIMAS)**

Summit Charter School will ensure timely delivery of print instructional materials in accessible formats to blind or other enrolled students with print disabilities. Summit Charter School will work with Accessible Media Providers (AMPs), such as Bookshare, to provide eligible students

files in the NIMAS standard. These files are based on the international DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System) standard, essentially the DAISY/NISO (National Information Standards Organization) Z39.86 2005 standard and is required by Federal IDEA regulations. DAISY is an internationally recognized technical standard used to facilitate the creation of accessible content. These files are electronic documents created by textbook providers, submitted to AMPs, and then requested by public schools. These files will be provided to eligible students as part of the school's accessibility provision and assistive technology considerations of the students' IEP teams.

### **Independent Living and Life Skills**

As part of Summit Charter School's postsecondary transition planning and alternative curriculum program, the school will implement independent living and life skills programming for students with IEPs. Designed to provide life skills support, this program will provide the instruction necessary for students to function independently as adults to the fullest extent possible. Independent living and life skills will be addressed in students' IEPs with appropriate transition activities and goals clearly determined and outlined after conducting thorough transition interviews and assessments with the students and their families. All goals and associated activities will be directly aligned with students' present levels. Activities may range from self-care to money management to community navigation. Frequent, regular progress monitoring and documentation of goal progress is an integral part of Summit Charter School's life skills and independent living programming. As appropriate, the team may determine that intensive interagency collaboration is needed to best meet the independent living and life skills goals.

### **Support for Parents of Students with Disabilities**

Summit Charter School will provide specific parent engagement activities for parents of students with IEPs.

Summit Charter School will engage parents of students with disabilities in their role as they support their student's learning through training, resource sessions, tips, and connect with other parents. While these resources are designed specifically for these families, they are open to all parents. Resources and sessions specifically for parents of students with disabilities could include:

- Understanding Special Education Processes at Summit Charter School
- How to Support Your Child's Learning Differences,
- Creating the Best Learning Environment for Your Child

Special education staff will provide these sessions quarterly to parents.

## **Transition**

Students turning age 14 or older (or younger if appropriate) during the duration of the annual IEP will have a transition plan developed by the IEP Team. The transition plan will prepare the student to move from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education or adult education, independent or supported employment, and, when appropriate, independent living skills or community participation. The student will be invited to join and participate in the IEP meeting. The transition plan developed will include the following: Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance, Courses of Study and Transition Activities, agency linkages, measurable annual goals/objectives, and services that the student needs to reach the goals listed in the transition plan.

The following steps will occur to engage students in the transition process:

- The IEP Team Meeting Invitation will be addressed to the student.
- The Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance will include formal and/or informal transition assessments. The assessments will be both age-appropriate and student-focused to determine the students' strengths, needs, goals and interests. The assessments selected may include, but are not limited to, the Casey Life Skills assessment, the Myers Briggs, Keys2Work, and/or PACareerZone.
- Courses of Study will be addressed by the IEP Team to ensure the student is taking courses and making sufficient progress to meet their post-secondary goals by the time the student graduates or transitions to adult services.
- Transition activities will be tied to transition goals. Depending on the student's post-secondary goals, activities may include college visitations and participation in state-wide Career Days. A vast number of agencies are available to support a student's transition plan and activities throughout Pennsylvania.
- Goals and objectives will be developed by the IEP Team and areas of focus will include education, employment, and independent living. Goals will be developed based on the transition assessment results.
- The special education coordinator and high school special education team will monitor and support student internships and job shadow opportunities across the state by collaborating with local businesses, colleges and universities, and the PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). These opportunities will be based on the student's interests and transition plan.

Monitoring will include observing the student in the vocational setting, providing ongoing and frequent feedback and support and, when needed, modeling skills. For students who are graduating or reaching maximum age, a Summary of Performance document will be created to ensure the student has personal summary information that includes all of the student's abilities and limitations summarized, recommendations for continued supports for a successful transition, and input from both the student and individuals supporting the student.

### **Interagency Collaboration**

Summit Charter School will work with students' resident districts and intermediate units to benefit enrolled students with IEPs. Interagency collaboration will be a critical element of Summit Charter School's continuum of special education services. This collaboration will be necessary when considering related services, mental health and welfare support, postsecondary transition planning, bridging to adult services, and placement considerations. This system will not replace the school's responsibilities to serve enrolled students with IEPs; rather, this intensive interagency collaboration is designed to provide additional placement considerations to students' IEP Teams when students need full-time support. Summit Charter School will contract with resident districts and intermediate units to establish these relationships. The Summit Charter School interagency coordinator, the special education coordinator or designee, will serve as a resource for families and as the liaison between Summit Charter School and local districts and intermediate units.

### **IEP Progress Reporting**

Student progress on annual goals and objectives will be monitored regularly using a variety of tools. The data will be summarized and provided to the parents quarterly throughout the school year, unless the IEP Team agrees upon more frequent updates. Data collection tools may include rubric scores, curriculum-based assessments, tests, portfolios or fluency probes. Data may also be accumulated during small group or one on one instruction. Teachers will chart the data collected and analyze the data points weekly to ensure the student is on track to meet the goal by the annual IEP due date. If the student is not making expected progress on the annual goals or objectives, instructional adjustments will be made accordingly in an effort to increase progress, such as increased repetition opportunities or the re-teaching of critical skills. Related service goals will also be regularly monitored and a summary included in the quarterly report provided to parents.

### **State Testing**

All students will be expected to participate in the appropriate grade level state testing assessments. Students with an IEP in grades 3-8 will take the Pennsylvania System of School

Assessment (PSSA) with accommodations (outlined in the Pennsylvania Accommodations Guidelines) to be determined by the IEP Team. For students in high school with an IEP, Keystone Exams in the areas of Algebra 1, Literature, and Biology will be administered with allowable accommodations to be determined by the IEP Team. The IEP Team may determine some students eligible to take the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) in grades 3-8 and 11, rather than the PSSA or Keystone Exams. These will typically be students with significant mental retardation/ intellectual disabilities who have met the six eligibility criteria. Allowable exceptions will be considered for students identified as English Language Learners for all required state testing assessments. All teachers and administrators administering state assessments will be thoroughly trained in test security, roles, responsibilities, chain of custody of the testing materials, and penalties for violations.

Students unable to exhibit proficiency on the Keystones exams will participate in school-led supplemental instructional services in their academic area of need. If the student is still unable to pass the Keystone Exam, he/she may complete a Project Based Assessment (PBA) that corresponds with the content of the specific Keystone Exam module. Determining eligibility for the PBA will be based on the PDE Keystone Guidelines.

### **Graduation and Dropout**

Students with IEPs will have the right to stay enrolled through the school year in which they turn 21, or graduate with a high school diploma, whichever comes first. As with all students, Summit Charter School's goal will be for students with IEPs to graduate with a high school diploma. Summit Charter School will implement strategic initiatives with the goal of dropout prevention. These researched-based practices, such as those cited by the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, will include:

- mentoring,
- attendance monitoring,
- supporting parents, and
- providing strong family and student engagement activities to help students with disabilities feel connected to their school.

Students with disabilities who satisfactorily complete a special education program developed by the IEP Team will be granted and issued a regular high school diploma. The parents or guardians will be provided with NOREP. If the parents disagree with the notice, they may begin due



process by asking for an informal meeting, mediation, or a special education due process hearing.

## **GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING**

Because the Summit Charter School model calls for a strong focus on Restorative Practices, our Guidance Staff is of particular value.

Summit Charter School plans to employ two full time Guidance Counselors and provide access to a School Psychologist (either on staff or through a relationship for an agency resource) in our first year of operation with 360 students. This shows a much lower counselor to student ratio than what is typically seen in other school settings.

Students may receive both individual and group counseling services on-site.

### **Guidance Department**

The mission of the Summit Charter School guidance department will be to provide both individual and school-wide programming to support the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic growth of the students with creative and holistic methods. They will look to provide a thriving and enriching environment where each individual student can discover who they are, who they would like to be and how they can contribute to the world around them.

To accomplish this, students will have the opportunity to meet one on one with a member of the guidance department to establish a connection and to assess individual needs. The Guidance Counselor will provide services that include Social and Emotional Learning, College and Career Planning, Academic Success, and Crisis Intervention via:

- Individual meetings
- Small group meetings
- Class meetings
- School-wide programs

Summit Charter School recognizes that family involvement is crucial to the success of children and based on family systems theories, families are more successful when all members are supported; each family member is a part of the Summit Charter School family. Parents have easy access to operations staff, teachers, and guidance staff to communicate concerns. “Parent Visit Days” occur annually and allow parents to observe their child/children live in the classroom. Parent/Teacher Conferences are also held twice a year and Town Hall meetings are held throughout the year..

Additionally, the guidance department offers monthly parent meetings to address student needs and provide parental support. These meetings will be divided by grades as follows: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 and will cover topics such as improving parent-child communication, understanding social media, suicide awareness and prevention, recognizing bullying and other topics as needed. An annual survey will be dispersed to parents to determine needs and interests.

### **Social and Emotional Learning**

Social and emotional learning is an integral part of the educational experience at Summit Charter School. It is infused throughout the curriculum and through the execution of a growth mindset teaching style. Classroom culture also embodies SEL, naturally through the writing of classroom constitutions and daily restorative circles.

Summit Charter School is founded upon a philosophy of civics and shared justice, through our student government, weekly school meetings, and student justice committees and restorative justice practices, Social and Emotional learning is not just theory but is put into practice daily.

### **The following principles will be taught for Social and Emotional Learning:**

**Self Awareness:** Students will learn to recognize strengths and limitations with confidence and optimism using a “growth mindset philosophy.”

**Self-management:** Students will learn how to regulate their emotions, manage stress, control impulses, be self motivated, and make and achieve goals.

**Social Awareness:** Students will learn to recognize the points of view and perspectives of others, to develop compassion, to empathize with them, and to establish an understanding and respect for diversity and multiculturalism.

**Relationship skills:** Students will learn to communicate clearly, listen with the intent to understand, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively and fairly, and seek and offer help when needed.

**Responsible Decision Making:** Students will learn to make positive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethics, safety, respect, and social norms.

Our social and emotional learning is inspired by and utilizes programs such as those that teach mindfulness, positive psychology, growth mindset, compassionate communication, digital

citizenship, Random Acts of Kindness, CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) Khan Academy courses, the responsive classroom, etc.

### **Career and College Planning**

The goal of career planning at Summit Charter School is to assist students in developing an awareness of natural talents and abilities to discover purpose and mission for their life. Students of all grades will have opportunities to showcase skills and develop interests through exposure to a variety of career and academic paths. Students' individual learning styles will be examined and teachers and the guidance department will respond to students' interests and provide programming to meet those needs. This will include a fluid curriculum to meet the ever-changing interests and choices of the students and support the dynamic nature of self-exploration and career choice.

High school students will have the ability to take part in test preparation for the SAT and ACT tests and learn how to get the most out of high school. We will assist them with the exploration of colleges and financial aid/scholarships/grants, applying to colleges, and life after college, including learning to manage student debt. There will also be a curriculum that assists to navigate career choice, salary negotiation, networking, understanding the cost of living and income ratio, etc.

Additionally, non-traditional paths will also be presented such as and for example, taking a gap year, entrepreneurship, learning a trade and participating in an apprenticeship, focusing on an artistic pursuit, applying for an internship with Projects Abroad, charity work, etc.

Programming will provide career awareness and preparation, career acquisition and retention, and will utilize curricula such as resources from PHEAA for third, fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades, Khan academy courses, and PA Career Zone. Summit Charter School will also take advantage of community resources and opportunities such as job shadowing, career fairs, college expos, field trips to local colleges, and youth internship opportunities.

C. What teaching methods will be used? How will this pedagogy enhance student learning?

Summit Charter School teachers will utilize a student-centered model in a project-based curriculum that encompasses the following methods:

- Personalized instruction
- Direct instruction/demonstration
- Group and peer-to-peer collaboration
- Experiential learning
- Community based
- Guided learning
- Student-driven components (continuum)
- Authentic student presentations and exhibitions
- Flipped learning model as students get older/demonstrated
- Student-directed/independent learning
- Democratic classroom methods
- Student voice

As we prepare children to become independent, free-thinking, citizens of the world, the Summit Charter School empowers students to reach their “personal summit” by cultivating a classroom and community network of democratic systems. At the center of these democratic systems is an authentically led, student-voice driven culture that promotes shared governance.

Backed and powered by a spiral learning continuum, along with the incorporation of methodologies such as Cooperative Learning, Experiential Learning, Flipped Learning, Project-based Learning (PBL), and Restorative Circles, students are uniquely enriched with personalized and individualized differentiated learning, peer-to-peer collaboration, and group task opportunities. In turn, through these applied teaching methods, students are able to connect meaningfully to the decision-making, mindfulness, and problem-solving practices, qualities conducive to that of a 21<sup>st</sup> century scholar.

Further, students are equipped with an ever-evolving growth mindset, whereby they are encouraged to expand on their conceptual understanding and overall higher-order thinking skills through innovative and movement-rich presentations, portfolios, projects, and exhibitions that showcase and, most importantly, measure the direct connection of the content with that found in the real world.

Students learn in different ways, at different paces, and through different modalities, so our teaching methods aim to reach each individual learner as well as the collective to ensure growth for everyone with a “foundation of a common body of knowledge.”

D. Attach the school calendar and identify hours of the school operation, as per Section 1715-A(9).

Please see [Appendix D](#) for a draft of our school calendar. For a sample academic period schedule, please refer to the “Schedule” document in the “SCS Curricula, Assessment, and PD” folder (Appendix A).

The Charter School proposes that its school day begin at 8am and end at 3:30 pm.

## 4. School Accountability

### School

A. What methods of self-assessment or evaluation will be used to ensure that the school is meeting its stated mission and objectives?

As emphasized above, the Applicant is constrained by the Application developed and distributed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as to what questions are posed - not to what the PMSD thinks should be asked. The Applicant is asked to describe the methods of self-assessment or evaluation that it will use to ensure that it is meeting its own stated mission and objectives, which are unique to the charter school. The form application does not request how the school’s stated mission is aligned toward meeting state academic performance standards, meeting individual student growth models, and or improving academic performance nor does the form application request a “detailed, actionable plan toward ensuring students meet not only the school's academic standards, but state academic standards of achievement.”

- The Board of Trustees will, at least quarterly, review the most current levels of aggregated student performance as a direct relation to the stated mission statement and overall school objectives.
- The school Principal will monitor class projects and work schedule to ensure aspects of the School's objectives are being met or exceeded.
- Since we believe that teaching in a project-based learning environment is unique, we will ensure all of our staff, teachers, and board members are educated on the overall mission, including orientation and professional development. It is vital that we have all parties involved with the school in order to understand the fundamentals and help cultivate the learning process. For this reason, we will ensure all staff are educated on the mission/objectives.
- In order to build curriculum that supports and enhances the mission and objectives, School leadership and the Board of Trustees will review and approve curriculum that aligns with our goals.
- The school will engage in periodic surveys with parents in order to evaluate their concerns and needs and redirect efforts where necessary to ensure compliance with stated mission and objectives.

- The School will host periodic town hall meetings with all members of the school community to openly discuss concerns that may exist to determine goals and objectives that are consistently met for all stakeholders.
- At the completion of each marking period, student progress and growth assessments (PNGA) will be issued to parents by their teacher to ensure the school is achieving the educational mission for the student body.
- While not specifically measurable, the school will also host multiple open house and project exhibition events allowing students to showcase their work and our program to not only our student body but the public at large.
- Student civic surveys will be distributed once every trimester to measure progress on the following outcomes: Student knowledge of School Meeting Process, Student Knowledge of Justice Committee process, Student rates of satisfaction regarding the goals of the Summit Charter School Democratic and Restorative Environment.
- The School Principal will present to the Board of Trustees, twice in an academic year, examples of School Meeting minutes to demonstrate School Meeting is managed via Robert's Rules of Order.
- School Meeting Minutes will be posted in Google Classrooms and on the parent portal for review by all stakeholders to ensure School Meeting is managed via Robert's Rules of Order.
- The School Principal will present two times each academic year a summary of Justice Committee cases and the resulting actions.

B. How will teachers and administrators be evaluated? Describe your standards for teacher and staff performance.

The Board will employ all staff including the CEO, Principal(s) and teachers. All employees will be evaluated based on competencies along with state required metrics on student performance as required by law. The professional competencies will align with the core standards for teaching and may vary by type of teaching position (e.g. Special Education). Competencies will be reviewed with employees at the beginning of the school year and will be available to employees for viewing and comment throughout the school year. Employees will receive at least a formal end-of-year review in May or June (teachers having more frequent feedback) . Throughout the school year, they will receive periodic feedback both formally and informally from administration.

Teachers will be evaluated in multiple phases beginning with curriculum that is age specific for the class homebase. This will be approved by the Principal or Curriculum Administrator, who

will review this compared to the state specific standards to ensure compliance.

Teachers will also be responsible for appropriately incorporating the vision and mission of the school and our educational and cultural philosophies into lesson plans, both of which will be overseen by the school administrators.

Regular meetings of the teaching staff will occur to ensure a constant flow of review and feedback on performance is being provided.

School administrators will also have separate regular meetings with the head of operations and/or the school Principal to ensure all aspects of school operations are being completed correctly and on time.

The Board of Trustees will review all information available on teacher and administrator performance and take appropriate action if necessary, up to and including termination of employment, in cases when/if performance does not support academic standards or intended culture of the School.

### **Teacher Evaluation Process**

Summit Charter School will use a teacher evaluation process that fully embraces Charlotte Danielson's Framework for teaching, which has been adopted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As such, teacher preparation and planning, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities will all be considered in the evaluation process.

The Teacher Effectiveness tool is the Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument. This teaching framework is a rubric which assesses in a range from unsatisfactory to basic to proficient to distinguished. It is aligned with Act 82. Summit Charter School will use this framework solely for evaluation purposes. It includes the following domains that will be considered in evaluating annually its teachers and other instructionally certified personnel:

1. Domain 1 - Planning and Preparation includes six components from "Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy" to "Designing Student Assessments."

2. Domain 2 - The Classroom Environment includes five components from "Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport" to "Organizing Physical Space."

3. Domain 3 - Instruction includes five components from “Communicating with Students” to “Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness.”

4. Domain 4 - Professional Responsibilities includes six components from “Reflecting on Teaching” to “Showing Professionalism”.

Teachers will prepare and plan for instruction with formal lesson plans. These lesson plans, along with other evidence obtained during pre and post-observation conferences will determine the score of Domain I of the Danielson Framework. The Principal or other approved Administrator will formally observe teachers a minimum of two times per year to score Domains II and III of the Danielson Framework. Formal observations will be done more frequently, if necessary, and especially if the teacher is in need of a corrective action plan. Additionally, informal classroom observations will be conducted by approved administrative staff to allow for teacher feedback and growth.

A teacher’s score in Domain IV of the Danielson Framework will be determined by evidence of on-going professional development, family communication, contributions to the school community, and other indicators of professional responsibility.

Formal observations will score Domains II and III twice per year and those scores will be averaged and worth 30% each (for a total of 60%) of a teacher’s overall yearly evaluation score. Domains I and IV will be scored one time per year near the conclusion of the school year and will be worth 20% each (a total of 40%) for the End of Year Summative Evaluation score.

Administrator(s) will hold a pre-conference and post-conference for one of the two yearly teacher evaluations. The End of Year Summative Teacher Evaluation will be reviewed with each teacher at the close of the school year.

Summit Charter School will ensure that all teacher evaluation criteria adopted by the state of Pennsylvania will be followed and updated in accordance with all state mandates.

The components of teaching will also be clustered into six domains of teaching responsibility: planning and preparation for learning, classroom management, delivery of instruction, monitoring, assessment, and follow-up, family and community outreach, and professional responsibilities. Competencies for teachers will be evaluated in the context of the school’s goals, which evaluate student growth and achievement metrics, and observations of an employee’s proficiency within each competency will be evaluated using various methods, including parent and student feedback, observations of lessons and interactions, and review of relevant documentation and data.



The outcome of an individual teacher’s evaluation will affect future decisions regarding staff retention, promotional opportunities, or disciplinary action and termination decisions. The competencies will be aligned with student achievement metrics and may include any of the following:

- parent feedback,
- observations,
- statewide assessment results,
- school assessment results, and/or
- student participation/completion.

### **Evaluation Process for School Administrators**

The Board will employ the school administrators. The school administrators will be evaluated based on competencies along with state required metrics on student performance as required by law. The professional competencies will align with the administrative position (e.g. Principal). The Board will evaluate the school administrators using data and may be assisted by consults. School administrators will receive at least a formal end-of-year review in May or June. Throughout the school year, they will receive periodic feedback both formally and informally from the Principal and/or Board.

For administrators, the Summit Charter School will employ the Principal Effectiveness tool which includes the Framework for Leadership rubric which assesses in a range from failing to needs improvement to proficient to distinguished. It is aligned with Act 82 categories and with the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership (PIL) program. The Summit School will use this framework solely for evaluation purposes. It includes the following domains that Summit will consider in evaluating annually its administrators:

1. Domain 1 - Strategic and Cultural Leadership includes five components from “Creates an Organizational Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals” to “Celebrates Accomplishments and Acknowledges Failures.”
2. Domain 2 - Systems Leadership includes seven components from “Leverages Human and Financial Resources” to “Ensures School Safety.”
3. Domain 3 - Leadership for Learning includes five components from “Leads School Improvement Initiatives” to “Maximizes Instructional Time.”

4. Domain 4 - Professional and Community Leadership includes three components from “Maximizes Professional Responsibilities Through Parent Involvement and Community Engagement” to “Supports Professional Growth.”

Please note that the Summit Charter School will consider alternate evaluation tools if at any time we find this system to be misaligned with our school goals and/or PDE changes its evaluation requirements.

Competencies will be evaluated in the context of the school’s goals, which evaluate student growth and achievement metrics, and observations of an employee’s proficiency within each competency are evaluated using various methods including parent, school and community feedback; observations of lessons and interactions; and review of relevant documentation and data. The school administrator competencies may include the following (additional competencies may be assigned based on position, responsibilities, and job level):

- school development and leadership,
- team development and leadership,
- student achievement/data management, and
- personal development and professional skills.

Deficiencies identified through the evaluation process inform the development of performance improvement plans and targeted support and lead into professional development to build the capacities of staff members to achieve growth goals. The continuous improvement model ensures that supervisors identify any unsatisfactory staff performance through frequent assessment and respond to areas of concern with additional targeted support, professional development, and/or performance improvement plans

See [Appendix E](#) for a copy of our Staff Evaluation Form.

C. How do you plan to hold your school accountable to the parents of the children attending your school?

At Summit Charter School, we believe that learning is a life-long process that represents far more than the acquisition of knowledge. We are committed to supporting each student in his or her continual growth of learning goals and content standards. This comprehensive focus will support and empower our students as they develop and share their own individual gifts. Tracking each student's growth in a holistic way is accomplished through a combination of the following:

- Progress & Growth Plans (report cards) that capture Summit Charter School teacher reflections on development in both academic skills and Summit Charter School Personal

Habits (soft skills). These Progress & Growth Plans will be issued three times per year at the end of each trimester. These plans will include teacher observations and descriptions that support the progress and growth evaluations performed throughout the year. Teacher suggestions for future development needs may be included in these plans as deemed necessary. Additional reports may be issued throughout the year to keep parents/guardians informed of concerns, support or interventions as needed.

- Presentations of Learning (POLs) and Project Exhibition Presentations, held two times per year, will provide tangible evidence of each student's growth over time in a way that honors each student for the unique individual that they are.
- Digital and Paper Portfolios will be kept by the teacher to aid in parent conferences and discussions on student growth and development.
- We will implement ongoing communication between students, teachers, and families. To support communication, parent-teacher conferences will be held two times per year (one in the fall and one in the spring). During these conferences, teachers and families will discuss the student's progress and growth in addition to any concerns. Future development and growth plans will be discussed to collaboratively aid the student in moving towards their personal and school focused goals. Additionally, it is our expectation at Summit Charter School that all teachers reach out to students, parents and guardians to discuss any matter of concern regarding a student's progress and growth such as at-risk behaviors, absences, behavior and performance. These communications should be balanced with positive constructive feedback including developmental successes and improvement of the whole student.
- At Summit Charter School, we are dedicated to helping children learn to meet their own needs while empathizing with and respecting the needs of others. Justice Committee (JC) is a student-led committee that works under the guidance of a mentor. JC members help to resolve student conflict by listening and acting as facilitators, helping all parties to acquire a mutual understanding of viewpoints, feelings, and what needs to occur in order for all to positively move forward. The JC members work with individuals and groups of students by communicating clearly, firmly, with kindness, dignity and respect. On rare occasions, teachers may be required to set limits without a student's input. Student interaction with the JC, will be communicated to parents and families. Additional information regarding Justice Committee can be found in the Student & Families Handbook.
- Open Communication and Access to Information: The school will ensure that parents have access to information that is pertinent to school governance and the academic plans for their children in the following manner through:
  - Website – Summit will maintain a robust but easy to navigate website that will host a school calendar, upcoming events and meetings, notifications, policies,

- course offerings and descriptions, staff lists, and any other information that is deemed necessary to communicate via the school website.
- Back to school meetings- Summit will host back to school meetings to enable parents to meet their children's teachers prior to the start of school.
  - Access to school policies and documents that impact student access and success. All school policies and documents that affect academic or social services at the school will be made available to parents through the website.
  - Parent portal that enables parents to monitor student academic and social progress. The school will implement technology platforms that support parental monitoring of student progress. However, parents who do not have access to online platforms will be able to opt into emailed receipt of grades/performance.
  - Provision of parental access to teachers instructing their children – This will be done both through technology and through parent-teacher conferences or schedule meetings outside of class time.
  - Newsletter – The school will maintain an e-newsletter (emailed to families and posted on the website) to ensure that all school constituents have up to date school information as well as being made aware of upcoming events.
  - Parents will be invited to engage in the school's social media environment and will be encouraged to directly communicate with executive leadership to address concerns or provide recommendations.

Summit also proposes that its school community will be part of shared governance. The Board of Trustees values the input of students, teachers, and community members in the design, planning, implementation, and governance of the school. The school will establish mechanisms that allow for parental engagement in the governance structure of the school, therefore enabling transparency and accountability to the parents of children attending the school. This will be done through the following mechanisms: (1) establishment of a Parent Teacher Association to support the School Board and Student Government board in addressing school governance. Parents will be highly encouraged to engage in leadership or participation in the Parent Teacher Association to enable them to play a role in the design and direction of the school; (2) parents will be invited to attend school board meetings and will be encouraged to add parent voice to ensure that school leadership is able to support or address significant systemic or process matters that impact student and school success.

Parents will be encouraged to volunteer in Board roles, committee roles, fundraising, in school programs, career days, reading buddies, Science Fairs, Performance Programs, Field Trips, or any other programs or events that need volunteers at the school.

Summit Charter School will also provide an avenue for parental feedback, by assessing parental satisfaction with the academics, student support services, and school governance by conducting a

parent satisfaction survey each year. The results of this survey will be made available to parents and will be used for planning and school improvement.

D. Discuss your plan for regular review of school budgets and financial records.

The School will adopt a set of financial policies and procedures and internal controls, prepared by its legal counsel and school business manager, to ensure that financial transactions are properly authorized, appropriated, executed, and recorded. The financial duties will be distributed among multiple people to help ensure protection from fraud and error. The distribution of duties aims for maximum protection of the organization's assets while also considering efficiency of operations. Decisions regarding finances - including the appropriate use of school depositories - will be a fully informed decision by the Board of Trustees, guided by the Treasurer, the finance committee and the Board's necessary professionals, given the role of trust that the Board holds as stewards of public funds, the importance of their fiduciary duty to the organization, the need for transparency in business transaction. Decisions of the board should never be the whim of one individual or arbitrary.

The finance committee (sub committee of the overall school board of Trustees) will review the School's financial reports including the balance sheet, P&L Statements, and bank activity, including disbursements each month to ensure all financial obligations are met properly. The finance committee will report and/or present documentation on the overall school financial health to the greater Board of Trustees for the school after each review. Financial reports, including the budget, will be available to the public.

E. Describe your system for maintaining school records and disseminating information as required under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Summit Charter School recognizes the need to protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information in the education records of children. Summit Charter School will ensure the privacy rights of eligible children in the collection, maintenance, release, and destruction of records. Summit Charter School will follow the provisions of the Regulations of the State Board of Education on Pupil Records (PA Code 22, Ch.12), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), the Confidentiality Section of IDEA, and the Confidentiality Section of Pennsylvania Special Education Regulations and Standards and other student data privacy laws.

Summit Charter School will protect, secure, and maintain the security and privacy of all student records. Student educational records that are kept in hard copies will be maintained in locked cabinets, with access limited to those who require it to perform their job. Student information maintained in an electronic Student Information System (SIS) will be secure and restricted, with

access limited to those who require it to perform their job. Summit Charter School plans to use an electronic student information system and record-keeping system.

Summit Charter School understands that, under FERPA, schools must generally afford parents the following:

- Access to their children's education records,
- An opportunity to have the records amended, and
- Some control over the disclosure of information from the records.

Parents may access, seek to amend, or consent to disclosures of their children's education records, unless there is a court order or other legal document specifically stating otherwise. When a student turns 18 years of age or attends a postsecondary institution, the student, and not the parent, may access, seek to amend, and consent to disclosures of his/her education records.

Access to student information and data will be controlled by a central team of administrators, trained in FERPA, using a complex system of roles, permissions, and locations. Data points and reports will be assigned to roles, including Summit Charter School vendors who use student data for accounting and billing purposes. Access to the reports and all student data will be controlled by these roles. All data accessed via the Student Information System (SIS) will be accessed through forced SSL for privacy and security purposes. Private data transmitted between systems for data reporting purposes will always be transmitted with secure FTP or over a private VPN that provides encryption. In addition to the FERPA requirements, IDEA provides additional privacy protections for students who receive special education and related services. Part B of IDEA incorporates and cross-references FERPA. Summit Charter School is aware of the cooperation between FERPA and IDEA and will adhere to the requirements of both. The school will also comply with the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 ("COPPA").

Under FERPA, an enrolling student will fall into one of the certain exceptions that will allow for Summit Charter School to receive student education records from a previous school without the prior written consent of parents. However, upon enrollment, administrative personnel will ask parents to provide written consent for the release of their student's education records by signing a Release of Records form, allowing the school to receive the information from the student's previous district. Summit Charter School will use the PDE Charter School Student Enrollment Notification Form for notification of a student attending a charter school as required. Per FERPA, there are other exceptions to the release of student education records without the prior written consent of parents. Summit Charter School is aware of such exceptions and, outside of these, will require the written consent of parents for the release of their student's education

records to a third party.

While FERPA is vast in its discussion of the review, amendment, and privacy rights related to education records, it does not speak to the retention and destruction of such records and does not include a records retention plan. Along with a strict adherence to FERPA, Summit Charter School will address compliance with a records management program that addresses the creation, maintenance, storage, and final destruction of records in accordance with Pennsylvania laws and regulations.

### **Requests to View Files**

A parent/guardian has the right to review the files of their child. The parent may also request and receive the following:

- An explanation of information in the student's education records.
- A copy of all or part of the student's education record (the cost of which will not exceed the costs of duplication).
- A list of the types and location of the student's education record collected, maintained, or utilized by the LEA.

### **Student Access Rights**

When a student is 18 years of age or attending a postsecondary education institution, the right accorded to and consent required of a student's parent/guardian by law will only be accorded to and required of the student. However, Summit Charter School recognizes that those students who remain enrolled at the school past the age of 18 are subject to Pennsylvania's educational age of majority of 21 years of age.

### **Parent Access Rights**

A parent/guardian, eligible student, or designated representative will have access to the student's education records within 45 days of receipt of a written request in order to inspect, review or copy education records. A parent/guardian also has the right to request and receive the following:

- An explanation of information in the student's education records.
- A copy of all or part of the student's education record. If copies are to be released to anyone other than the parent/guardian, the Consent to Release Information form must be completed by

the parent/guardian.

- A list of the types and location of the student's education record collected, maintained, or utilized by the LEA.

### **Accessing Records**

Summit Charter School will maintain a record indicating the names of those persons who have obtained access, the date of access, and the purpose of access. Administrators, teachers, instructional aides, and the administrative assistant are authorized to have access to personally identifiable information. The parent/guardian has the right to inspect the access record of their child's records.

### **Maintenance of Records**

The Summit Charter School lead administrator will be responsible for ensuring that the education records, confidentiality rules, and education records policy for eligible young children are enforced and administered. This official will:

- Annually notify parents/guardians and eligible students of this policy, its procedures, and their rights. The notification will be in their primary language unless it is not feasible to do so.
- Develop a system of safeguards which will protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information at the point of collection, storage, release, and destruction.
- Be responsible for ensuring that all faculty and subcontracted agency employees, who collect or use personally identifiable information, receive in-service training regarding the implementation of this policy. In-servicing will consist of providing, at the least, yearly presentation of the information to staff and subcontractors.

### **Third Party Access to Student Information**

FERPA provisions allow the school to disclose certain student information to third parties, such as other schools, without the prior written consent of the parent/legal guardian or eligible student. This occurs in two situations: directory Information and situations in which FERPA permits the school to release educational records without consent. All other disclosure of student information to third parties requires the written consent of the caretaker or eligible student.

### **Release of Educational Records Without Consent: Directory Information**

The school may release Directory Information (defined as student name, address, student telephone number, and student grade level) to third parties as permitted by FERPA. If the



caretaker or eligible student does not wish to have Directory Information released to third parties, she/he may prevent the release of this information by indicating so in the FERPA Directory Information section of the Student Information Form. If families do not make a selection, then the school may, without additional permission, disclose the Directory Information to third parties as permitted by FERPA.

### **Release of Educational records Without Consent: Legitimate Educational Interest**

Summit Charter School may provide a student's educational records to third parties in certain situations listed under FERPA. Examples include the transfer of educational records to the student's new school upon request from the new school, and the provision of educational records to school officials who possess a 'legitimate educational interest' in the student's records, and the provision of educational records to contracted parties providing special education related services.

### **Release of Student Records With Consent**

With the exception of that information which FERPA and/or applicable state law or court order allows the school to release without consent, as noted above, the school must obtain written consent from the caretaker or eligible student prior to releasing any educational record or personally identifiable information to any third party. Consent to release this information must be made in writing, be signed by the caretaker or eligible student, and include the following information:

- A specific description of the information or record(s) to be released.
- The party or agency to which the information will be released and their address.
- The signature of the requestor, and the date of the request.

### **Amendment to Education Records**

Parent requests for corrections will be taken very seriously. At the very least, the parent's statement will be entered into the student's record indicating the parent's corrected understanding or perspective on a record perceived to be inaccurate. If this is deemed less than acceptable by the parent, they will be offered the choice of a hearing to amend the records. If the hearing does not result in an amendment of the records, the parents will again be offered the opportunity to place a written statement that will be both kept in the record and will be disclosed with educational records except in the following situations:

- When a parent or student is seeking to change a grade or disciplinary decision.

- When the parent or student is seeking to change the opinions or reflections of a school official or other person reflected in an education record.
- When a parent or student is seeking to change a determination with respect to a student's status in special education programs.

### **Annual Notification**

Each school year, Summit Charter School will notify parents of enrolled students that the school must allow parents to do the following:

- Inspect and review their children's education records,
- Seek amendment of inaccurate or misleading information in their children's education records, and
- Consent to appropriate disclosure of personally identifiable information (directory information) from education records.

The annual notice will also include:

- Information for a parent to file a complaint of an alleged violation with the Federal Policy Compliance Office (FPCO),
- A description of who is considered to be a school official and what is considered to be a legitimate educational interest so that information may be shared with that person, and
- Information about who to contact to seek access or amendment of education records.

The annual notice will be available on Summit Charter School's website and in the Summit Charter School Student and Families Handbook.

F. Describe your system for maintaining accurate student enrollment information as required under Section 1748-A, Enrollment and Notification.

The Summit Charter School Charter School will implement a system for maintaining student enrollment information as required by the Charter School Law (Act 22 of 1997).

The Summit Charter School recognizes and acknowledges the importance of child accounting, as charter school funding is enrollment-based. Summit is committed to integrity at every level and to maintaining accurate, authentic records of enrollment. Summit will develop internal systems

for maintaining up-to-date student enrollment data, which will be essential in completing the required Pennsylvania Department of Education and School District child accounting forms. Summit Charter School notes, however, that Section 1748-A is applicable to cyber charter schools and not to brick-and-mortar charter schools, which is what Summit intends to open. However, in the spirit of cooperation and transparency, Summit Charter School answers as follows:

Specifically, the charter school will collect all of the necessary data for each student and will file all forms required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (i.e. PDE-4059CS Instructional Time Summary, PDE-40262C Annual Attendance Membership Report, PDE-4002CS Summary Report of Aggregate Days Membership) as they pertain to charter schools.

Additionally, the Summit Charter School Charter School will use a student information software system, such as MMS Student Information Management System, Administrators Plus, or PowerSchool, to track enrollment data to ensure our enrollment figures are always up-to-date, reflecting new students and any withdrawals. The school will maintain accurate records, which will include the basic data for each student that is needed to complete child accounting forms and other student data forms to be submitted to the Department of Education (including the use of PIMS). This basic data includes:

- Student name
- Names and addresses of parents or legal guardians
- Nonresident status of student
- Date of birth
- Gender Identification
- Ethnic code
- Grade level
- Entry code
- Entry date
- Withdrawal code
- Withdrawal date
- Exceptionality code

Using the forms required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the appropriate departments (ex. Enrollment and the Business Office) of Summit Charter School will work closely to communicate student enrollments and withdrawals. Notification to school districts of residence of students will be a top priority for both enrollments and withdrawals. Summit Charter School will be responsible for gathering all of the appropriate information that will be included in the enrollment and withdrawal processes and will, within 3 days of receipt, provide

all necessary internal notification. Summit will provide all necessary information to the district of residence within 15 days of enrollment/withdrawal through the use of the Notification Form developed by the Department of Education. Should a dispute arise with the school district of residence over a child's residency, Summit will work with the school district and, if necessary, PDE to ensure the resolution process is completed.

### **Student Evaluation**

A. Describe plans to evaluate student performance.

- Select and use effective strategies to support students' self-monitoring, self-assessment, and goal-setting for their own learning;
- Always proceed with the end in mind as it relates to curriculum by writing measurable learning outcomes. *What do students need to know or be able to do?;*
- Assessment and evaluate strategies that correlate to personalized student learning as it relates to the curriculum;
- Use evidence of student work to determine achievement;
- Plan appropriate interventions to improve student achievement through ongoing assessments and data collection and record keeping;
- Provide feedback and remediation by conferring with students about their progress

B. How will student development toward the school's overall learning goals and objectives be measured?

- Summative assessments such as tests, quizzes, projects and anything that requires graded work.
- Formative assessments in which requires rubrics, and providing and receiving feedback.

C. Describe how student evaluation will be used to improve student achievement and attain the stated learning objectives.

- Assessments (including but not limited to state standardized testing) will be used as a meaningful tool to measure student progress and inform students of their knowledge of a concept or skills as it relates to the curriculum.
- Assessments also provide a meaningful tool for teachers and help identify any concepts or skills that require corrective instruction.
- Students can work to increase knowledge and reassess skills not met through the first

assessment.

- Personal goals will be compared to outcomes. Students in higher grade levels will reflect on this with a teacher or assigned mentor.

## 5. School Community

A. Describe the relationship of your school with the surrounding community.

Summit Charter School takes much pride in the relationships shared within the community that have been developed both in the development of this Application and in the operation of a private school in Monroe County. It is our intention to continue to connect and collaborate with outside organizations and to help make the community we live in a better place to live, work, and learn. We hope that the PMSD would be part of our continuum of community relationships.

Our School habitually searches for ways to partner with other non-profit organizations and local educational opportunities. We believe that the first step toward influencing the world at large is to first do so locally. Understanding local and global challenges provides a productive outlet for students who are learning in an environment that promotes critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and entrepreneurship.

When appropriate and available, students are introduced to local entrepreneurs and business professionals who can speak to an educational interest or opportunity. As a licensed private school (Summit School of the Poconos), our students and staff have already collaborated and/or participated in activities with the Monroe County Historical Society, the Monroe County YMCA, the Monroe County Nature Conservancy, Kettle Creek, The Monroe County Hughes Library, Pocono Alliance, United Way of Monroe County, Sandcut Outdoors, Pocono Wildlife Rehabilitation Services, East Stroudsburg University, and Northampton Community College, among others. Our high school students have already participated in Leadership Conferences and Entrepreneurship Programs at neighboring colleges. Several scientists and professionals have visited the school to talk with middle and high school students. Students participated in live skype projects with NASA. School administrators have connected with and collaborated with administrators at Ad Astra, a private school founded by Elon Musk and located in California. Our students have also participated in a live Climate Action Project with Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year, Michael Soskil and smaller more local projects with AWSOM, and a local Save the Bees project with local experts in the field. These are two of many examples.

All of these initiatives are already part of our school culture and community at Summit School during the last four years of operation as a licensed private school. We expect these opportunities and the impact we can have on the community will only improve as we move from private to charter school status.

The Summit Charter School administration, staff, and Board of Trustees has the deepest desire to collaborate with our local public schools and to find opportunities to help unite the schools in Monroe County.

Monroe County boasts a plethora of natural resources and beauty and is home to a diverse population born from various cultural backgrounds. While this can be a challenge in the educational setting, we believe we can collectively find ways to use it as an advantage, increase education opportunities and experiences in our area, and therefore create a desirable geographical location of residence for tax-payers with school-aged children.

**B. Describe the nature and extent of parent involvement in the school's mission.**

Parent and family involvement is an ongoing process that assists parents/guardians and families to meet their basic obligation as a child's first educator, promotes clear two-way dialogue between home and school, and supports parents/guardians as leaders and decision-makers concerning the education of their children at all levels.

The responsibility for each student's education is shared by the school and the family. Families must work as knowledgeable, cooperative partners to effectively educate all students.

Parents/guardians are invited to participate in the following activities throughout the school year as well as provide feedback:

- Town Hall meetings occur throughout the school year and are a time for school staff to update parents on current initiatives, for parents to provide feedback, and for us to brainstorm through challenges as a community.
- Parental visits/observation days: Parents are provided the opportunity to visit the school and observe their student/s during class.
- Student Showcase and Project Exhibition Night: Parents and families are the audience for presentations put together by students about their projects throughout the school year.

- Surveys allow school administrators and the Board of Trustees to maintain a pulse on what's working, what needs improvement, and the opportunity to address issues before they can manifest into something more serious.
  - Student Surveys: Students periodically receive surveys via email. These are usually anonymous and ask for feedback on teachers, programs, school initiatives, and socio-emotional indicators.
  - Parent Surveys: These are sent via our Remind text message communication system or email. Surveys are usually short and take only a minute or two to complete. These can be completed right from a mobile phone. Surveys are usually anonymous. Parent feedback is an important part of our efforts to create a collaborative and positive school environment.
  - Staff Surveys: Occasionally anonymous staff surveys are distributed via email to collect feedback with the goals of providing a positive, collaborative, and inspired work environment, as we believe this directly impacts our students as well as our staff.

Additionally, parents/guardians have the opportunity to volunteer at Summit Charter School (with appropriate clearances) within the classroom, as a lunch/recess monitor, and as a chaperone for school field trips. Parents are also encouraged to visit on parent visit days, participate as a member of the PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), and serve on committees such as fundraising and outreach.

Summit Charter School's success is based on the commitment and collaboration of all key partners.

As key partners in the Summit Charter School community, staff, families, students, and community partners will:

1. Understand and support the mission of Summit Charter School;
2. Uphold school community limits and support the guidelines set forth in the handbook;
3. Treat all community members with kindness, care, respect and consideration;
4. Agree to utilize compassionate communication and conflict resolution strategies when conflicts occur;
5. Do their best to create a safe and healthy environment at home and at school;
6. Take responsibility for learning, as well as the pursuit and development of passions;
7. Contribute to the well-being of others so that everyone can become a caring and confident learner.

In support of families, staff will proactively maintain effective and collaborative communication with families by:

- Identifying learning goals/content standards to be worked towards at home and at school;
- Responding promptly and professionally (within 48 hours while school is in session unless urgent) to parent questions/concerns;
- Scheduling and facilitating parent-teacher-student conferences as needed;
- Providing meaningful information about student progress and areas for growth.

C. Describe procedures established to review complaints of parents regarding operation of the charter school.

Our School will maintain an open door policy to allow parents to voice concerns directly as well as round the clock electronic medium available for parents to directly email the school administration, teachers, or operations depending on the nature of the inquiry. Our parents have the expectation that we will maintain accountability to our academic and non-academic goals. This expectation will also apply to our mission and vision as they are outlined in this application. We are aware that in any school environment there is always the potential for some problems to arise due to differences in opinions and learning to work together. These difficulties, which can sometimes negatively impact stakeholders, naturally occur in many environments, including those of charter schools. It is the responsibility of all staff members to make adverse situations regarding parents and students known to the administration at the most promptly reportable time possible.

Informational-based questions regarding the school or progress toward meeting goals will be answered as soon as both parties can arrange a meeting methodology such as: face-to-face, by telephone, or via email. Parents are highly encouraged to phone, email, or make an appointment anytime they feel the school has not met a stated objective or mission. While unscheduled visits by parents are discouraged due to security concerns, we recognize that this may be the only way to address open questions/issues. When impromptu meetings are necessary, staff members who can address questions and provide information most appropriately and thoroughly will be made available as soon as practical. We fully expect that most parent concerns or complaints concerning their child's progress will be resolved in the day-to-day interaction among staff, parents, and students. Unresolved concerns will be addressed in the following manner:

- Parents must always first contact the Principal or designee, who will then contact the staff member involved in the situation, if deemed appropriate.
  - If a solution is not reached within three days of this meeting, parents will be invited to communicate electronically, via telephone, or in person with the Principal.



- If after five days the issue remains open, parents and the student will meet with the Principal and other interested parties at the Principal's discretion either in person or through a teleconference.
- The Principal's decision is presumed to be final.
- The parent has the right to continue the process by taking any concern to the Board of Trustees, which will make a final and binding decision at its next scheduled meeting.
  - If the events dictate a special meeting of the Board of Trustees it can be scheduled however, the expectation for the need of this option is projected to be uncommon.

Questions or complaints regarding the School and its progress towards meeting its goals can also be personally brought to the attention of the School by addressing the concern directly with the Board of Trustees. Alternatively, a parent/guardian may request the issue be raised to the Board of Trustees at its next scheduled meeting in writing or through an electronic communication. Such concerns will be handled expeditiously and diplomatically with the intention of bringing those concerned to an agreement and ultimately a positive solution.

## **6. Extra-curricular activities (athletics, publications and organizations)**

A. Describe the program of extracurricular activities planned for the charter school.

**Note:** Charter schools shall be permitted, if otherwise qualified, to be members of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association.

Involvement in afterschool as well as in-school extra-curricular activities provides students with the ability to explore their interests, provide and receive social support from peers and allows freedom in determining the activities they would like to participate in.

Summit Charter School will continue to offer school clubs during the school day. These clubs allow students to explore various subject and interest areas within the controlled learning environment. Students are able to select activities from a pre-established list that could include the following:

- Food club
- Gardening club
- Game club
- Robotics club

Summit Charter School will offer after school extra-curricular activities that will enhance and reinforce its key values as well as allow for introduction of concepts/activities not routinely offered during the school day.

Summit Charter School will focus its extra-curricular activities on things like movement, technology, science and entrepreneurship which could include:

Technology / Science based programs:

- TSA (Technology Student Association)
- Science Olympiad

Democracy / Government based programs:

- Mario Scavello - Senator for a Day
- Model Congress

Academic based programs:

- Scholastic Scrimmage
- Tutoring / homework help
- Khan Academy

Entrepreneurship / Business based programs:

- FBLA
- DECA

Social and Community based programs:

- SADD
- Aavidum
- Key Club
- Art Club
- Journalism Club

Movement based programs:

- Ski Club
- Girls on the Run

Summit Charter School will develop and offer additional activities based on student and parent feedback.

All students, parents and families will be notified of the activity offerings and dates and times for participation. Relevant forms and fees will also be communicated as needed.

Activity participation will be optional and determined by students, parents and families.

All facilitators and volunteers of extra-curricular activities will be required to maintain appropriate clearances and checks as required by law.

Students can also choose to participate in activities at their resident school district as per Pennsylvania law.

B. Describe whether any agreements have been entered into or plans developed with the local school district regarding participation of the charter school students in extracurricular activities within the school district.

Summit Charter School Board of Trustees and staff will work together with area school districts to ensure that our students have the ability to participate in extracurricular activities within their resident district. Additionally, we will determine ways in which the area school district students can also share in the extracurricular activities offered by Summit Charter School. Our goal is to work collaboratively with area public school districts to afford our students the most opportunities possible to explore and participate in activities of their interest.

## II. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### 1. Statement of Need

A. Why is there a need for this type of school?

B. Explain why the charter school model is an appropriate vehicle to address this need.

**A. & B. Why Monroe County needs Summit Charter School and why our Charter School Model is an appropriate way to address this need are outlined in the three sections below:**

#### I. Economics, Parent Interest, and School Choice

- Monroe County is identified as a low income community serving low income students. 41% of Monroe County residents are below the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) threshold (ALICE represents households with income above the Federal Poverty Level but below the basic cost of living).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.uwp.org/wp-content/uploads/ALICE-Report.pdf>

- 50% of Summit School of the Poconos students have consistently qualified for and received financial aid during each year of operation, a need that must be addressed through fundraising and philanthropy.
- Parents consistently express a desire to enroll their children at Summit School of the Poconos but point to an inability to do so due to financial constraints.
- Despite PMSD statements to the contrary, there is little school choice in Monroe County with only one charter school (Evergreen Community with a maximum of 100 students) and a marginal catholic and private sector. It appears that a number of PMSD students - according to data in the PMSD's Annual Financial Report - choose cyber charter schools as their school choice option.
- More than 1 million students are on charter wait lists nationwide.<sup>30</sup>
- Local School Districts do not perform at high levels. The Pocono Mountain School District consistently has schools listed on the state's underperforming schools list.<sup>31 32</sup>
- Economic development continues to be a main talking point in Monroe County and an area of frustration.<sup>33</sup>

Politicians, school officials, and businessmen and women in Monroe County regularly meet to discuss economic development, but little seems to change. There are solid economic arguments that support increased and sound education options in Monroe County. Businesses consider all factors, including education, when considering locations for growth and expansion. To date, Monroe County has primarily attracted businesses to Monroe County with lower-paying wage positions.

As shown in our pre-enrollment numbers, local residents are looking for culture and **school**

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<http://www.publiccharters.org/sites/default/files/migrated/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/NAPCS-2014-Wait-List-Report.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Clear Run Elementary Center and Pocono Mountain West Junior High School earned a "Low Achieving" designation on the 2018-19 OSTCP List of Low Achieving Schools, (<https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Opportunity%20Scholarship%20Tax%20Credit%20Program/2018-2019%20OSTCP%20-%20List%20of%20Low%20Achieving%20Schools.pdf>)

<sup>32</sup> According to Niche.com, Pocono Mountain School District was ranked 243 out of 497 school districts in the Commonwealth. According to U.S. News and World Report, Pocono Mountain High School West was nationally ranked #8,925 and Pocono Mountain High School East, East was nationally ranked #5,929, making both schools the lowest ranked secondary offerings in the county (<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/pennsylvania/districts/pocono-mountain-sd-107448>)

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.pmedc.com/business-resources/regional-overview/quality-of-life/>

**choice.**

Four of the top ten employers in Monroe County are our four public school districts. In order for our public schools to be better supported from a stronger tax base, it would benefit them to see a higher number of larger employers in the area to support school taxes.

It is important to note that school choice cannot be defined merely by one's ability to attend a traditional public school of residence in Monroe County.

To expect change, we must create change, and school choice is a good place to start.

Education can be elevated when educators work together. Summit Charter School hopes to work collaboratively with our local districts to best serve all students in our community and to lift the tide for the community at large.

## **II. Student Needs**

One size does not fit all. Content in this application consistently points to the individual needs of students and the way each student learns. Not all students will thrive in all environments.

Research has shown that school connectedness is a key factor in teen suicide rates. Students who exhibit stronger school connectedness have lower rates of suicide ideation and attempts.<sup>34</sup>

Summit Charter School's class size and cultural model encourages student connectedness by allowing faculty and staff to build meaningful relationships with students. Our democracy model also encourages student engagement and agency. As a community, as educators, and as human beings who are vested in our future (represented by our children), we should all work together to provide opportunities that provide for a variety of places in which students can thrive academically.

Parent, student, and community interest are clearly shown in our pre-enrollment data, [Appendix E](#), and in letters of support from individuals, businesses, and organizations, [Appendix G](#). We continue to collect this data, even after this re-application file date.

**Updated pre-enrollment data as of May 27, 2020 is included in the updated [Appendix F](#). Note that these are conservative calculations of pre-enrollment, removing all names, addresses, or birth dates that appeared even slightly questionable of the 428**

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<sup>34</sup> Marraccini, M. & Brier, Z, M. F. 2017. School connectedness and suicidal thoughts and behaviors: A systematic meta-analysis. *School Psychology Quarterly*. Mar; 32(1): 5-21. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/spq0000192>

pre-enrollments received as of May 27th.

Also note the pre-enrollment chart that shows that 40.3% of these totals are residents of the PMSD. These numbers confirm parent desire for an alternative in the PMSD and the 390 pre-enrollment data included in the calculations here surpasses the proposed 360 students in year one of charter school operation.

### III. Our Model

Our model is unique, and the ways in which it differs are quoted throughout this application. Larger schools attempt to incorporate project-based learning and STEAM into some of their instruction, or they offer special clubs or classes that prioritize the focus, but we weave it into *all* of our curriculum when implemented in the classroom.

The traditional public education model in the United States is more than 150 years old and was structured to provide an education that would serve the majority of students who would exit school and go on to work in a factory during the industrial age. Think, for a moment, about what kinds of traits factory workers had to possess to be successful: pay attention to directions and follow instructions, focus on your singular task only and don't ask questions, stand in a straight line, follow the rules without question.

The institutional organization of schools continues to socialize students for 20th Century economic arrangements: The alarm to signal class transition, designated lunch and break times, individual and restrictive seating, and authoritative teaching methods all encourage students to perform responsive work, not innovative collaboration. It is clear that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is drastically changing key assumptions embedded in previous industrial models of education. The World Economic Forum cautions that communities must plan for new technologies impacting the health and welfare of their citizens, and must imbue their children with the human capital necessary to embrace the challenges of rapidly changing relationships to work.<sup>35</sup>

At Summit Charter School, we are teaching students *how* to think, not *what* to think. We are teaching them the skills they will need to truly compete in today's Fourth Industrial Revolution Age. Some schools have begun to try to incorporate some 21st century skills into their curriculum, such as a goal to focus on the four c's (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity). Summit School of the Poconos does that now - and does it at a high level.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/focus/fourth-industrial-revolution>

Our class sizes are small. Our teachers are learners alongside our students, always investigating, always inventing through daily project-based learning in all classrooms. Our classrooms are all equipped with multiple alternative seating options. Not only are the four c's and growth mindset at the forefront of every lesson and activity, students are graded on these soft skills at the end of each trimester on their Progress & Growth Reports (report cards).

Our low student to staff ratio provides a high level of individual student attention, negating the need for high levels of “crowd control” as seen in larger schools. And perhaps the most important trait that makes us different is our democratic and civics-centered culture. This lays the foundation for everything else we do. It provides students with a voice and, in turn, gives them ownership in their education and the community they spend so much of their day in. If we begin to provide this to our children while they are young, imagine the empowerment we are providing them as adults and what that will mean to our local communities and our world.<sup>36</sup>

Many business owners talk of frustrations on the topic of today's young people entering the workforce. We hear repeatedly that most are not self-directed, that they must be told what to do every step along the way, that they cannot think critically or creatively. We must teach students *how* to think and we must provide them ownership so they are vested in their learning in a new and important way.

These practices take more time from teachers and support staff. Generally, these skills are harder to teach and take longer to foster than teaching kids to memorize information to pass a test. Still, we are committed to providing them to our students. Any individual who visits our School can immediately see an undeniable difference between what we are providing and what other public schools in Monroe County are providing.

**It is important to note that there are many great teachers and administrators in our public schools.** Many times, their hands are tied because of overarching restrictions in how they can teach, the number of students they serve as well as the environment they serve in. Sadly, we've lost many great teachers to the constraints placed on them. More than anything, we need systemic change in education in the United States. Most people reading this application know that. Summit Charter School is eager and willing to collaborate and partner with our local school districts in an effort to work toward that systemic change whether represented through

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<sup>36</sup> The College Board recently reevaluated and revamped its AP Computer Science and U.S. Government and Politics courses, with the goal of encouraging students to understand the role of technology and democratic structures in the Imagination Age. (<https://www.collegeboard.org/membership/all-access/counseling-admissions-financial-aid-academic/two-codes-kids-need-know-computer>)

advocating in Harrisburg, applying for joint grant money, or other collaborative means.

**The need for change and choice should not be about us versus them.** It should be about the reasons we all became educators in the first place - the students and our collective future, as they are the leaders of tomorrow.

It is also important to note that Summit Charter School's intention is not to be a "chain" charter school. Our board and founders are comprised of local members of the community who have deep community roots and success in a wide cross-section of professions. As a private school, we are already a non-profit. Our mission is to provide access to our educational model to students in a fiscally responsible manner. This School is not structured to make anyone wealthy. Many of us have been a part of the development of this School for the last five years. We provide countless hours of work for free, and we intend to continue to do so. We understand the popular points of contention between traditional public schools and charter schools and we call on our local districts to join us in providing an opportunity that defies the norm and benefits many.

## 2. School Demographics

A. What are the school's enrollment projections for the first five years? What is the school's ultimate enrollment goal? What grades will be served? What is the age of kindergarten and age of beginner students? How many students are expected to be in each grade or grouping?

Please see [Appendix C](#), which includes a projected enrollment chart for grades K-12, and a projected breakdown of students by grade every year from year one through ten, when we will reach full capacity.

Kindergarten students must meet the birthdate requirements of students of their school districts of residence but generally should be age 5 before September 1st. .

The Board Members at Summit Charter School understand that middle and high school students require additional resources (i.e. 7-12 certified teachers, more complex materials including science labs, etc). This group carries more expense and these students, at times, require more guidance and resources.

Even so, we have made a conscious decision to increase enrollment in the middle and upper grade levels because we feel this need is greatest in our area with the fewest options available to families.



B. Describe the community or region where the school will be located.

Pocono Mountain Area School District had criticized the applicant for terming the district as suburban and rural district. According to the Pocono Mountain School District's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, dated December 2019, the district describes the local economy:

The proximity to New York and New Jersey metropolitan areas provides an economic advantage to the local community's growth and development. Monroe County's economic industries include healthcare, institutions of higher education, warehouse and distribution centers, research and development, retail, Federal government operated facilities and indoor/outdoor recreation and tourism. Tourism has been a major staple for the local economy and continues to grow each year.

See Pocono Mountain School District, Comprehensive Financial Report, December 2019, page 3. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, Pocono Mountain SD is listed as "rural, fringe." See [https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district\\_detail.asp?Search=1&details=1&State=42&County=Monroe&DistrictType=1&DistrictType=2&DistrictType=3&DistrictType=4&DistrictType=5&DistrictType=6&DistrictType=7&DistrictType=8&NumOfStudentsRange=more&NumOfSchoolsRange=more&ID2=4219500](https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?Search=1&details=1&State=42&County=Monroe&DistrictType=1&DistrictType=2&DistrictType=3&DistrictType=4&DistrictType=5&DistrictType=6&DistrictType=7&DistrictType=8&NumOfStudentsRange=more&NumOfSchoolsRange=more&ID2=4219500). The NCES defines "rural fringe" as meaning a "[c]ensus-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an Urban Cluster." See [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/docs/LOCALE\\_CLASSIFICATIONS.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/docs/LOCALE_CLASSIFICATIONS.pdf)

A study (Kettler et al., 2015) specifically studied rural classifications and specifically, the three NCES rural sub-categories (fringe, distant, and remote), that the classification of "rural fringe" was demographically more similar to schools in the NCES suburb and town categories than they were to rural distant and remote rural schools." Kettler, Russell, & Puryear, *Inequitable Access to Gifted Education: Variance in Funding and Staffing Based on Locale and Contextual School Variables*, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 38, 99-117 (2015).

Thus, the Pocono Mountain School District is elementally both a suburban and rural public school district. As the district is assuredly aware, the school district is divided into two parts: Pocono Mountain East and Pocono Mountain West. The Pocono Mountain East

**attendance area includes: Jackson Township, Pocono Township, Paradise Township, Barrett Township and Mount Pocono Borough. It also includes a small area east of Route 380 that is Coolbaugh Township. Pocono Mountain West attendance area includes: Tobyhanna Township, Tunkhannock Township and most of Coolbaugh Township. Pocono Mountain Area School District encompasses approximately 304 square miles. In 2017 the median family income in Monroe County was \$61,430 showing an increase of 13% over the last 8 years. According to 2017 local census data, it served a resident population of 167,306. Per school district officials, in school year 2013 the county had provided basic educational services to just under 40,000 pupils.**

**As of the 2018 census, the county is 78.2% White, 15.8% Black or African American, 0.6% Native American, 2.6% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, and 2.7% were two or more races. 15.9% of the population were of Hispanic or Latino-Ancestry. The increase in Hispanic/Latino, from less than 10% of the population in the 2000 census, to nearly 16% in the 2018 census, is a significant change in the county demographics. The growth in Hispanic residents is similar to increases in neighboring urban areas such as Allentown and Bethlehem, which are the two major cities in the Lehigh Valley, the closest metropolitan location.**

C. Why was this location selected? Are there other locations suitable to the needs and focus of the school?

This location will allow for easy access and transportation to and from most residential areas. It has afforded the charter school the best environment with a centralized geography to best allow access.

Please see the information above in the Statement of Need Section (II. 1.) and the immediate section above in 2. B. for more evidence on why this location is suitable to the needs and focus of the school.

D. Describe any unique demographic characteristics of the student population to be served, including primary languages spoken.

This is widely addressed in bullet point B, mentioning the county demographics specifically. It is not unreasonable to believe that the county demographics would be an accurate depiction of the attendance of the charter school. The children of Monroe County face many challenges as one of the more depressed counties in the state. In order for students of all demographics and

languages to succeed in the broader community, we expect to have resources capable of addressing the prevailing language(s) of the enrolled cohort including EL supports, an EL Teacher and culturally sensitive practices.

### 3. District Relations/Evidence of Support

A. What efforts have you made to notify the district(s) from which your charter school would draw students?

Months before the filing of this application, individual members of the Summit School Board of Trustees reached out to individual members of the Pocono Mountain School Board which are personally known to them to inform them that we were working on a charter application and to ask if there were any other preferred steps they would recommend. There were none stated.

A letter of intent has been sent to the Pocono Mountain Superintendent and Board Members on Friday, November 8, 2019. A copy of this letter of intent has also been sent to neighboring school districts from which the charter school could reasonably expect to draw students.

B. What efforts will be implemented to maintain a collaborative relationship with school districts?

**Note:** Letters of intent must be sent to all school districts from which the charter school could reasonably expect to draw students.

As education is elevated when educators work together, we are interested in working collaboratively with local school districts to strengthen education options available in Monroe County. We sincerely hope that, together, we can overcome popular points of contention between traditional public schools and charter schools, and that we can work collaboratively to best serve our students and community. We are interested in advocating for systemic educational change for all as well as the pursuit of joint grant awards, should the districts be willing to work on those initiatives with us.

As a licensed private school already in operation, we have already participated in numerous collaborative events with local district teachers, Northampton Community College, and East Stroudsburg University.

In 2017, we received a grant to show the education documentary, “Most Likely to Succeed”

twice. We invited public school teachers and arranged for them to receive Act 48 credits for attending. We also invited and hosted local school board members, teachers, and administrators who served on a Q&A panel with us at the end of each showing.

C. Convey the scope of community backing for the proposed charter school and its founding coalition. Document community support among teachers, parents, students, community members, institutional leaders and others through the use of letters of support, surveys, or other tangible means.

As a licensed private school, we have built a positive reputation in Monroe County since our first school year in 2016. Many of our joint collaborative efforts with local public schools, government, businesses, and non-profit organizations are cited numerous times throughout this application.

Senator Mario Scavello's December 2016 Episode of Legislative Report shows the senator visiting Summit School of the Poconos and talking to students, particularly about our democratic component. Subsequently, he invited our students to visit Harrisburg, which they did.

House Representative Maureen Madden also visited Summit School shortly after Scavello and expressed her support.

Scavello, Madden, and Rosemary Brown all are acquainted with members of Summit School's Board of Trustees and can speak to the integrity of founders.

In addition, to prepare for our Charter Application, we have collected and continue to collect letters of support from local individuals, organizations, businesses, and local philanthropic foundations. Letters, [Appendix G](#), are included with this application and include long time employers and philanthropists in the Pocono Mountain School District such as Weiler Abrasives, Pocono Raceway, Barley Creek, businesses owned by the Trapasso family, Great Wolf, International Sports Camp/Trout Lake, and more. The Farda Family foundation and businesses are also represented, among others, including local long-time and highly regarded Preschools, BioSpectra, and more. We have solid representation of support from our business community.

Because we are already an operating school, we already employ teachers, 100% of whom are in favor of our move to charter school status.

We also already serve students and parents, 100% of whom are in favor of our change to charter school status.

**[At the time of the original hearings for this application, the Applicant attempted to present](#)**

the support of the current students of Summit School of the Poconos. Those students also wanted to speak to the reasons why they attended Summit School and their experiences there. Sadly, those students were not allowed to speak as the board's public comment policy for its regular board meetings precludes those individuals under 18 (and thus, not "taxpayers") and those who are not residents. Our students have a voice in our school community now and will continue to have a voice when we receive our charter. Current Summit School of the Poconos' teachers, staff, and parents were also prohibited from speaking unless they resided in the PMSD.

### **III. DESCRIPTION OF FOUNDING/MANAGEMENT TEAM**

#### **1. Profile of Founding Coalition**

A. Describe the makeup of the group or partnership that is working together to apply for a charter, including the names of the founders, their background and experiences, and references for each.

As a private, licensed school, operating since 2016, we are unique, as we already have a functioning board, staff, and students.

The founding members of Summit School of the Poconos (licensed private school) was initially formed in 2015 through the efforts of a local group of parents, business leaders, educators, and community members who desired to see additional educational options available in Monroe County. Many of those founders remain on the Summit Charter School board today and all current board members plan to serve as board members for Summit Charter School. Many of our original founders who are no longer board members are still involved in the School's growth as members of committees (i.e. education committee). Our board members and founders possess a range of expertise (educational, social services, legal, financial, etc.) that provides solid strength to the formation and operation of our School.

Prior and current parents and students of Summit School of the Poconos are also included in our Founding Coalition, as they have each participated in the forward growth of our school. They are listed in [Appendix H](#).

Resumes for the Board of Trustees can be found in [Appendix I](#).

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES:  
Summit Charter School**

Name	Address/Phone	Email	School Role/Profession
Jennifer Olson	813 Bangor Mountain Rd Stroudsburg PA 18360 570-656-1084	jennifero@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board President, Author & former Financial Advisor
Stacie Golin, Ph.D.	252 Sage Rd Long Pond, PA 18334 570-982-1776	staciem@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Vice President, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Chair of the Social Sciences Department, Sussex County Community College
Nicole Elwood	PO Box 84 De Water Gap, PA 18327 570-690-2013	nicolee@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Secretary, Owner Underground Yoga & Meditation Center
Debbie Boyle	166 Fern Drive Canadensis Pa 18325 510-595-3832	debbie@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Treasurer, Certified Public Accountant
Joseph Farda	167 Ann Lane Tannersville, Pa. 18372 570-350-3856	joef@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Member, Co-Owner, Hideaway Hills Golf Resort, Farda Family Foundation
Barbara Fredericks	115 Valley Terrace East Stroudsburg Pa 18301 570-977-2777	barbaraf@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Member, Co-owner Shawnee Ski Mountain
Dr. Bryn Gillow	141 Karen Glen Way Brodheads ville, PA 18322 570-236-7850	bryng@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Member, Chiropractor/Owner Life Is Good Chiropractic
Karen Long	PO Box 327 Brodheads ville, PA 18322 570-856-1330	karenl@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Member, Chair Human Resource Committee, Owner Moe's Southwest Grill
Desiree McGuire	194 Shiffer Rd Stroudsburg, PA 18360 570-242-1263	desireem@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Member, Senior Data Visualization Technologist, PPL
John McKissick	101 Crest Circle East Stroudsburg PA 570-977-2393	johnm@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Member, Finance Committee Co-Chair, Director and Principal Operations officer for ICE Bonds, Intercontinental Exchange (ICE)
Brett Reigel	18 N. 8th Street Stroudsburg, PA 18360 570-236-2316	brettr@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Member, Attorney/Owner ARM Lawyers
Lauren Thompson	575 Mountain Road Albrightsville, PA 18210 484-515-0028	laurent@summitschoolpoconos.org	Board Member, Regulatory Affairs Manager, Sanofi Pasteur
Katherine Hernandez	637 Lakeside Drive East Stroudsburg, PA 18301 646-739-3697	katherineh@summitschoolpoconos.org	Current School Education Director, Non-voting Board Member

**It must be pointed out that the proposed Board of Trustees is not required to be composed of all residents or taxpayers of the PMSD. Since the Applicant was required to communicate with school districts in proximity to the proposed charter school whose resident children may also opt to attend the proposed charter school, it would be nonsensical that the Board would be compromised exclusively of PMSD residents. As a baseline, however, the Charter School Law does not even have such a requirement. Additionally, the PMSD was incorrect in their assessment of one board member who in fact does reside in the district. This was included in our Findings of Fact.**

B. Discuss how the group came together, as well as any partnership arrangements with existing schools, educational programs, businesses, non-profits, or any other entities or groups.

Summit Charter School has an established reputation.

After much research and discussion, the initial founding group opened Summit School of the Poconos as a licensed private school and 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation in Pennsylvania in the fall of 2016. With a goal of increasing our program's accessibility and our greater impact on the community at large, parents, teachers, staff, and other community stakeholders began meeting to discuss the feasibility of transition to charter status in the summer of 2018. We formed a consensus and voted to pursue charter status in January 2019 as Summit Charter School.

In the last three plus years as a private school, we have partnered with many local schools, organizations, businesses, politicians, and nonprofits. We have listed numerous examples of this already in this application. More are listed below.

As a private school, our secondary students visited King's College for the TecBridge High School Entrepreneurship Institute in January 2019. Several scientists and businessmen and women have visited our secondary classroom to discuss things from chemistry to physics to gerrymandering.

Our middle and high school students have visited and worked on projects with East Stroudsburg University's Innovation Center's Economic Development and Entrepreneurship Program. We have also worked in partnership with Northampton Community College.

We believe in community projects. We have collaborated with, and our students have visited, both of our higher education institutions - Northampton Community College and East Stroudsburg University - in regards to multiple educational opportunities and initiatives.

Professors and faculty from both East Stroudsburg University and Northampton Community College have served on our board and on our education committee, some of whom were original founders of our School.

Other examples of partnerships include but are not limited to NASA, the Brodhead Watershed, Monroe County Conservation Center, Kettle Creek, Monroe County Pocono Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center, the Monroe County Historical Society, Monroe County Beekeepers, and Sandcut Outdoors, all of which have enriched our student experiences and education opportunities.

Our students have visited and worked on projects with artists in residence and musicians in residence.

We are working on the ability for dual enrollment at NCC and ESU as we begin to serve 11th and 12th grade students, although we recognize that dual enrollment looks different for charter schools than for traditional public schools.

We intend to continue and expand on our collaborative efforts and partnerships.

C. Include any plans for further recruitment of founders or organizers of the school.

In January 2019, the Board of Summit School of the Poconos revisited our strategic plan and the structure of committees. The committees were reorganized and new committees were identified by considering areas of expertise that would further strengthen connections and resources to a variety of stakeholders including: the social-emotional health community, inclusion community, general awareness, and financial opportunities in the community at large.

Committees include: Education, Outreach & Fundraising, Governance & Policy, Finance & Facilities, and Human Resources and can be composed of community members, experts, parents, board members, staff, and founders.

Frequent inquiries indicate there is a growing audience of parents searching for alternative education options in Monroe County. This has provided for additional support members of groups and committees working on behalf of the school over the last four years.

**Although we have a well-established board of Trustees and staff, we are committed to thoughtful and continued growth. We do not intend to recruit any additional Founders as the current group has worked on this charter application for an extended period of time. After our charter is awarded, upon expiration of terms or if board members cannot continue their board service, our Board will constitute a Nominating Committee - which is a standard non-profit corporation practice. We remain open to additional committee members, board members, partners, and volunteers who wish to help further the mission and vision of our School. Some examples of referral sources or board development for board members are local politicians who are supportive of the School's mission, executive directors of a local nonprofits, local college and university presidents, local Chambers of Commerce, advertising, public speaking engagements of our own school "ambassadors, local United Ways, philanthropic organization that have board 'banks,' board fairs, and local businesses.**

D. Provide information on the manner in which community groups are involved in the charter school planning process.



Again, we are already a functioning school with a functioning board and staff. We have been a licensed private school through the PA Department of Education since 2016. We have earned support from local parents, businesses, politicians, and educators since our inception in 2016. The School's board members represent a cross section of professions, many of whom are well known and highly regarded in the community, all of whom have enjoyed success in their respective fields. Members of our education committee include high school teachers, Pennsylvania State University System employees and educators, Outreach Committee members, and current Summit School educators. Together, these factors point to the future strength and success of the proposed charter school.

## **2. Governance**

A. Describe the proposed management organization of the school, including the following requirements:

An affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Board of Trustees of the charter school, duly recorded, showing how each member voted, shall be used in order to take action on the following subjects:

- School calendar (must include 990 hours or 180 days of instruction for secondary students [grades 7-12] and 900 hours or 180 days for elementary students [grades 1-6]).
- School cannot be kept open for the purpose of ordinary instruction, on Sundays, Fourth of July, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, the first of January, Christmas, or Saturday, except when Monday is fixed by the board of Trustees as the weekly holiday for the entire school year)
- Adopting textbooks
- Appointing or dismissing charter school administrators
- Adopting the annual budget
- Purchasing or selling of land
- Locating new buildings or changing the locations of old ones
- Creating or increasing any indebtedness
- Adopting courses of study
- Designating depositories for school funds
- Entering into contracts of any kind where the amount involved exceeds \$200
- Fixing salaries or compensation of administrators, teachers, or other employees

of the charter school.

- Entering into contracts with and making appropriations to an intermediate unit, school district or Area Vocational/Technical School for the charter's proportionate share of the cost of services provided or to be provided by the foregoing entities.

As a public charter school, the Summit Charter School will be responsible to the Pocono Mountain Area School District Board and the Department of Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A Board of Trustees will provide fiduciary governance for all operations of the school, delegating day-to-day management functions to the Principal/CEO and other administrators. The board will establish a reporting relationship between the Board or Trustees, School Administration, and the Principal. The Board will be responsible for ensuring that the school is run in compliance with the charter application and all applicable laws and for ensuring the school's sustained financial viability. An affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the Summit Charter School Board of Trustees will be required to take action on the above-listed items.

The Board will set policy for all operations of the school, having ultimate control and responsibility for maintaining proper relationships between the Board, school staff, parents, and members of the community.

Summit Charter School is organized as a non-profit corporation. Summit School of the Poconos is already a 501c3 and documentation confirming such is provided in [Appendix J](#). Summit Charter School can only obtain its 501c3 status completion upon the awarding of the charter and the execution of the charter agreement.

**Articles of Incorporation and EIN for Summit Charter School are included as [Appendix T](#).**

As an independent charter school, Summit will be governed by its Board of Trustees. The Board will govern all operations of the school, delegating day-to-day oversight and management functions to the school leader and his/her administration team.

The Board and the school are ultimately responsible to the parents/guardians who select the school for their children, and its students.

The Board will employ all staff including, but not limited to, its lead administrators. The operating structure of Summit Charter School will be similar to a traditional public school district, with the Administration implementing the policies and procedures of the Board while supervising the teaching staff. The Principal will be responsible for the instructional leadership,

curriculum implementation, personnel decisions, as well as managing the teachers, ensuring that each student successfully completes his/her instructional program. The Principal(s) will be responsible for the overall school operation working with parents, students, support staff, and teachers for the educational programming.

**B. How will the Board of Trustees be selected?**

Upon charter status approval and the move from private school to charter school status, the Summit Charter School Board will be comprised of the existing volunteer Board of Trustees for Summit School of the Poconos. The board currently has twelve voting members. Board member terms will be staggered to ensure organizational continuity and institutional memory. More information can be found in our proposed bylaws, submitted with this application, [Appendix K](#).

**C. What steps will be taken to maintain continuity between the founding coalition's vision and the Board of Trustees?**

The board members of Summit Charter School will carry over from Summit School of the Poconos, many of whom are original School founders, and all of whom have been involved with the School's growth over the years. This provides a solid foundation from which to start.

We believe that maintaining long-term continuity between the School's mission/vision and the Board of Trustees also depends on strong board development and orientation. Development and educational opportunities and strategic planning sessions will occur throughout the year.

In addition, new board members are mentored by a current board member upon an affirmative vote of board membership. This provides new members with the opportunity to enter with a stronger understanding of the Schools mission, vision, culture, goals, and opportunities for growth.

The Board will maintain a continued strategic plan in order to set forth goals and define the Board's course of action in the coming school years.

The topics to be covered through mentorship and training will include but not be limited to the following areas:

1. Historical and cultural perspective on the mission and vision of the School
2. Bylaw, handbook, and policy review
3. What does the Board do?

4. What do Board Members do?
5. The Board/Principal Relationship
6. Recruiting and retaining the peak-performing board
7. More Efficient Board Meetings
8. Accountability & Oversight
9. Long-Range Planning
10. Effective Committees
11. What Boards Should Know About Fundraising
12. Strategic planning workshops

Board members will also complete their Act 55 Board Training through the Pennsylvania Coalition of Public Charter Schools, which has been approved to provide Act 55 Board Training to Charter Schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Both its business management firm, Charter Choices, and school's counsel, Patricia A. Hennessy, Esquire, work with the Pennsylvania Coalition of Charter Schools on the provision of that training and have partnered to provide that training to charter schools throughout Pennsylvania since 2018. See, <http://pacharters.org/register-now-act-55-board-training/>

Board members cannot and will not be personally or professionally compensated for their service on the Board of Trustees.

D. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the Board.

The Board of Trustees will be responsible for maintaining the ability to provide oversight for the charter school, including, but not limited to its educational philosophy, budgeting, curriculum, staffing, and operating procedures.

Among the high level roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees would be:

- Determining continued mission and purpose of the Charter School
- Selecting the school administrator(s) or proper entity to manage day to day operations
- Supporting the charter school administrator(s) and reviewing their performance
- Ensuring effective organizational planning including all resource aspects
- Managing all resources effectively
- Determining and monitoring the charter school's programs and services
- Enhancing the charter school's public image
- Assessing its own performance periodically
- Ensuring the School's compliance under the PA Charter School Law

### **Specific responsibilities of the Board Officers include:**

#### **President:**

The President shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Trustees as well as participate in any subcommittee meetings where applicable presence is necessary. The President shall sign, execute, and acknowledge, in the name of the Board, all contracts or other instruments authorized by the Board, except in cases where the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the Board, or Bylaws, or by law, to some other officer, agent, or employee of the Board or the School. The President shall perform all duties related to the office of President and other duties that may be assigned by the Board from time to time.

#### **Vice President:**

The Vice President shall have identical powers and shall perform all duties of the President if the President should be absent or unable to fulfill their duties. The Vice President shall perform such other duties that may be assigned by the President or by the Board at large.

#### **Secretary:**

The Secretary shall ensure the recording, or provide for the recording of the minutes of all board meetings, or ensure that such occurs, including all votes of the Board, in a book or books to be kept for that purpose as required by law. The Secretary shall also see that written notices of upcoming meetings, along with the minutes from the previous meeting, are provided to all Board members in adequate time prior to upcoming meeting. The Secretary shall maintain a current list of all Board members, including addresses, telephone numbers, and terms of office. The Secretary shall perform all duties incident to the office of Secretary and such other duties as may from time to time be assigned by the Board or the President. Before undertaking the duties of office, the Secretary shall be covered by or furnish a bond.

#### **Treasurer:**

The Treasurer, in coordination with the Business Manager, shall oversee the receipt of all funds, including local, state and federal funds, and privately donated funds. The Treasurer shall also make payments out of the same on proper order approved by the Board of Trustees, signed by an authorized signature of the Board. The Treasurer may pay out such funds on orders that have been properly signed without the approval of the Board, already having been secured for the payment of amounts owed under any contracts which have been previously approved by the Board, and/or by which prompt payment the School will receive a discount or other advantage. The Treasurer shall ensure that the Board permanently retains each annual auditor's report, and each annual financial report. The Treasurer shall also discharge such other duties from time to time as assigned by the Board or the President. The Treasurer shall settle his/her accounts annually with the Board or each school year. Before undertaking the duties of office, the

Treasurer shall be covered or furnished with a bond. Other specific responsibilities have been outlined by law and are described above and reaffirmed in our bylaws.

E. What steps will be taken to facilitate a productive relationship between administrators and teachers?

The small size of the Summit Charter School Charter School and the low student to staff ratio will allow for close working relationships between administrators and teachers, the cornerstone of which will be both an actual open door policy and open electronic communication policy. The Principal will hold regular staff meetings to discuss such topics as goals and objectives, professional development, curriculum development, performance appraisal, and other matters of relevance to the school. There will be the opportunity, at the Principal's discretion, to have additional one on one meetings with staff should the need or request arise. Furthermore, teachers will be guaranteed a voice in the decision-making process, as each year the teaching staff will select one teacher who may serve as an ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees in a non-voting capacity.

F. Discuss the nature of parental and student involvement in decision-making matters where appropriate.

The success of the Summit Charter School hinges on the active participation of all its members in the decision-making process. Therefore, Summit Charter School intends to provide a variety of avenues for parents, community members, and students to offer input on issues concerning the charter school as outlined in greater detail within. A parent advisory committee will be formed to hold regular meetings to review the school's progress and offer feedback, suggestions, and advice on School matters. The Parent Advisory Committee will be open to all parents/guardians of currently enrolled students. The School will host open house events wherein the community at large can tour the facilities and interact with school staff and/or current board members. Parents are often provided surveys by school staff in order to collect feedback.

One unique aspect of Summit Charter School is our shared governance model. Students are invited to enter suggestions or concerns into the School's suggestion box at any time. These, among other agenda items, are addressed at our student-centered School Meeting, which serves as an open forum designed to encourage discussion, debate, and group decision making. This meeting is convened and constituted by our elected student council members and provides students with ownership in their school environment and community and education opportunities.

G. Submit copies of the school's by-laws, contracts and other documents required by pending charter school legislation or applicable law. The requirements for the bylaws follow:

- The bylaws must contain a provision for "failure to organize or neglect of duty". Specifically, the bylaws must outline a removal procedure for the failure of a board member to perform his or her duties as outlined in the Charter School Law.
- No board member shall as a private citizen, engage in any business transaction with the charter school of which he or she is a trustee, be employed in any capacity by the charter school of which he or she is a trustee, or receive from such charter school any pay for services rendered to the charter school.
- A charter school Board of Trustees shall have a designated treasurer who shall receive all funds, including local, state and federal funds, and privately donated funds. The treasurer shall also make payments out of the same on proper orders approved by the Board of Trustees, signed by the president or vice president of the Board. The treasurer may pay out such funds on orders that have been properly signed without the approval of the Board first having been secured for the payment of amounts owing under any contracts, which shall previously have been approved by the Board, and by which prompt payment, the charter will receive a discount or other advantage.
- Procedures for dismissal of an employee must be contained in the bylaws.

Summit Charter School proposed bylaws are included in Appendix K.

H. Submit board members' names, addresses, phone numbers and resumes.

Board member names, addresses, phone numbers, and resumes can be found in Appendix I.

## **IV.FINANCE AND FACILITY**

### **1. Financing**

A. Develop a preliminary startup and operating budget. Applicants are to use the guidance provided in the Manual of Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pennsylvania LEAs to create those budgets. Develop a purchasing procedure that addresses a competitive way to purchase goods and services.

**Note:** For additional financing procedures see Section 1725-A of the Charter School Law.

The school has, in collaboration with Michael Whisman, CPA, Charter Choices, prepared a 5-Year Preliminary Startup and Operating Budget. The Founding Coalition has used the guidance provided in the Manual of Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pennsylvania LEAs to develop this budget.

Whisman is the CEO of Charter Choices, Inc. whose first charter school client was one of the first schools chartered by the School District of Philadelphia in 1997. Prior to founding a charter school service firm in 2004, Michael managed the local charter school audit practice of the 13th largest US public accounting firm. Charter Choices continues to provide business management consulting services to many of Michael's previous clients, including the charter school that started it all in 1997. Since the inception of the charter school law, Act 22 of 1997, Michael has been an active member in the charter school community. Michael has dedicated his career to charter schools and to finding new ways to educate Pennsylvania's students. Charter Choices was established in 2004 and serves 40+ schools. This partnership provided us with a strong foundation from which to convert from private to charter and also allowed us the opportunity to save money by outsourcing this need.

A one through five year budget can be found in [Appendix L](#).

[Revised 5-Year budget included as Appendix L \(Revised\)](#)

The School's Purchases Subject to Bid Policy is included in [Appendix M](#).

Jay Appleton, Project Executive at Greyhawk, Inc. has already provided an outline that shows projected facilities growth aligned with enrollment growth, and estimated costs. This can be found in Appendix N. Mr. Appleton has more than 35 years of experience in the design and construction industry. He leads large and diverse project teams in the development of educational and healthcare facilities, commercial buildings, churches, cultural institutions, and mixed-use/residential projects. With a portfolio that has a cumulative construction cost value in excess of \$900 million, Jay is known as an expert in both site infrastructure development/revitalization and building construction specialties including historic preservation and adaptive reuse. He is also an expert in facility assessment and emergency action and continuity of operations planning. Jay received a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering & Construction Technology from Thomas Edison State College, and is licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a Professional Engineer, with specialization in Civil, Sanitary, and Structural Engineering. The American



Hospital Association has awarded Jay recognition as a Certified Healthcare Constructor (CHC). He is recognized as a leader in construction safety, having been trained in the US Army Corps of Engineers Site Safety & Health Officer and Construction Quality Management programs, as well as OSHA's 30-Hour Hazard Recognition program. Jay is a Certified Site Safety & Health Officer (CSSHO).

Jay provides technical support and leadership to a number of professional and trade organizations. A mentor with ACE, he works with high school students to provide exposure to education and employment in the design and construction fields. He is also an active member of the American Society of Healthcare Engineering, the Construction Management Association of America, and the American Society of Civil Engineers.

In terms of school safety, Jay has completed certification in Emergency Management and was appointed as Mount Laurel Township's Emergency Management Coordinator. As such, Jay understands coordinated response to community emergency needs whether it is a natural disaster, major storm system, long-term power outage, chemical or hazardous material incident or homeland security threat, including the development of plans to handle an "All-Hazard" approach to community safety. The "All-Hazard" approach has been a cornerstone of FEMA's response program since the agency was first established. It integrates the various emergency plans and activities into a "life cycle" of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery (the principles of emergency management) and, when combined with the incident command system, provides a template for inter-agency coordination that is directly applicable to various emergency events.

B. What fund raising efforts have occurred and/or are planned to generate capital or to supplement the per pupil allocations?

The Summit Charter School Board of Trustees recognizes that a successful fundraising campaign is necessary for the long-term financial viability of a charter school.

Once the charter is approved, the Board of Trustees, committees, and staff will pursue funds through partnerships with local businesses and submit grant applications for funding from Title I, Title 2, Title 6, Link to Learn, E-Rate, 21st Century Grants, and other sources, including federal, state and foundation funds. [To be conservative, the aforementioned budget includes only funding that is not competitive and available to all public schools.](#)

The School will also launch a Capital Campaign aimed at partially funding its future school facility. Funders have already expressed interest in supporting this cause.

There will also be several planned student-led fundraisers to supplement the student fund such as approved candy/snack sales. The Charter School will also endeavor on community based fundraising events such as community walk/runs, golf outings, tricky trays, and other profitable events that will assist the school financially.

A parent-led fundraising committee will assist with scheduling and planning. Additionally, the school is an approved 501c3 not for profit, which allows individuals or businesses to make contributions to the school on a federally tax-deductible basis.

Our organization and its members have already led successful fundraising efforts in our three plus years of operation as a private school.

C. Describe the implementation of the following required financial procedures: The treasurer of the charter shall deposit the funds belonging to the charter school in a depository approved by the board and shall, at the end of each month, make a report to the charter board of the amount of funds received and disbursed by him or her during the month. All deposits of charter school funds by the charter treasurer shall be made in the name of the charter school. The Board of Trustees of a charter school shall invest charter school funds consistent with sound business practice. Authorized types of investments for charter schools shall be:

- United States Treasury bills
- Short-term obligations of the United States Government or its agencies or instrumentalities
- Deposits in savings accounts, time deposits or share account of institutions insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation or the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund to the extent that such accounts are so insured, and for any amounts above the insured maximum, provided that approved collateral as provided by law therefore shall be pledged by the depository.
- Obligations of the United States of America or any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith and credit of the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith of the Commonwealth, or of any political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania of any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith and credit of the political subdivision.
- Shares of an investment company registered under the Investment Company of America Act of 1940 (54 Stat.789, 15 U.S.C. \* 80a-1 et seq.) as defined in PA 24 PS 4-440.1 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

**Note:** All Investments shall be subject to the standards set forth in PA 24 PS 4-440.1 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

The treasurer, or a designee of the Charter School shall deposit charter school funds in a depository approved by the board and shall make a monthly report to the finance committee and additionally the charter board of the amount of funds received and disbursed by him or her during the month.

All deposits of charter school funds by the charter treasurer, or designee, shall be made in the name of the charter school. The Board of Trustees under advice of the finance committee of the charter school shall invest charter school funds consistent with sound business practice. In the event excess funds require investment the following authorized types of instruments for the Summit Charter School charter schools shall be:

- United States Treasury bills and/or Short-term obligations of the United States government or its agencies or instrumentalities
- Deposits in savings accounts, time deposits or share account of institutions insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) or the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation. Assets will be deposited to qualified accounts to the extent that such accounts are insured, and for any amounts above the insured maximum, provided that approved collateral as provided by law therefore shall be pledged by the depository.
- Obligations of the United States of America or any of its agencies backed by the full faith and credit of the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith of the Commonwealth, or of any political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania of any of its agencies or instrumentalities backed by the full faith and credit of the political subdivision.
- Shares of an investment company registered under the Investment Company of America Act of 1940 (54 Stat.789, 15 U.S.C. \* 80a-1 et seq.) as defined in PA 24 PS 4-440.1 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

The Treasurer or Business Manager acting as designee shall settle their accounts annually with the Board of Trustees for each year and shall prepare monthly balance sheets, income statements and offer a full accounting of activity (check detail, accounts payable aging, etc.)

An annual audit shall be conducted according to the requirements of Article 24 of the School Code of 1949. Charter School Boards of Trustees are required to follow the requirements set forth for School Boards in this section.

The Summit Charter School plans to implement policies and procedures as defined by this application. Specifically, the following are examples of the proposed financial procedures that the Summit Charter School will follow:

### **Budget forecasting**

No later than 45 days prior to the beginning of each fiscal year (July 1), the Business Manager and the school administration will prepare and submit together to the Board of Trustees a proposed budget ("Proposed Operating Budget") for the operation of the school during the ensuing school year. Each Proposed Operating Budget will set forth all of the revenues that the school anticipates receiving, a proposed schedule of fees and charges for services, and all of the expenditures anticipated to be necessary for the operation of the school, both (1) during the ensuing school year and (2) during the succeeding two school years. Each Proposed Operating Budget will further set forth each category of expense, the sources and uses of funds, fund accounting income statement, cash flow, capital expenditures, and any other appropriate items, for the ensuing year and for the succeeding two years. Each Proposed Operating Budget will reflect the school administration and Business Manager's view of the most economical, reasonable methods of operating and maintaining the School during the years to which the Proposed Operating Budget relates.

The Finance committee will, after reviewing and analyzing the Proposed Operating Budget, communicate to the Operations Manager, the greater Board of Trustees and the school administration any necessary changes, additions or deletions it believes should be made in such a Proposed Operating Budget. After making such changes the Board of Trustees will then approve the Proposed Operating Budget.

It is understood, however, that each operating budget will be a clear estimate only and that unforeseen circumstances such as, but not limited to, the costs of labor, material, services and supplies, casualty, operation of law, or economic and market conditions may make adherence to the operating budget impracticable, and departures, therefore, may be required due to causes of the foregoing nature or for other business reasons. Accordingly, if revenues of the school for any year are less than budget or if the School will require any expense category to exceed the corresponding amount in the budget in any year, then the Board of Trustees school administration, and the Operations Manager will meet promptly to determine if an adjustment to the operating budget is necessary.

### **Financial Statements**

The Finance Committee will report to the school's Board of Trustees in writing monthly, for the previous month, with monthly balance sheets, statements of income and sources and uses of funds with respect to the School for such month and cumulatively for the fiscal year to date, as well as any recommended changes to the then-current approved operating budget that the Operations Manager considers necessary or appropriate. Summit Charter School Board of Trustees and the administration will examine the monthly financial statements to ensure that the School is meeting or exceeding the annual approved budget for the fiscal year. The financial statements will be used as a tool to assist the Board of Trustees and school administration in making decisions that ensure the School's financial viability while meeting the School's mission.

### **Audit**

The Board Treasurer, or the Finance Committee, in consultation with the Business Manager, will engage an accounting firm or other appropriate third party to perform an audit of the books and records maintained for the school in accordance with applicable regulations. This appointment will be approved by the Board of Trustees to ensure no conflicts exist. The audit is to be completed annually and a report to be furnished within 90 days after the end of the School's fiscal year (June 30). The annual school audit will be conducted according to the requirements of Article 24 of the School Code of 1949, using said requirements set forth for school boards.

Summit School of the Poconos (as we are currently licensed) has engaged Weseloh Carney and Co. CPA as our audit firm. They have been performing audit services since our inception in 2016.

### **Operating Account**

The Board will establish new charter school accounts, on an agency basis for the School, one or more bank accounts, with mutually acceptable financial institutions (the "Operating Accounts"). All gross revenues will be deposited into the Operating Accounts, and direct all operating expenses (including, without limitation, payments of operating expenses, payroll, and payroll taxes) will be paid out of the Operating Accounts where the charter school is a party to a transaction. The accounts will be used for and on behalf of the Charter School transactions only. Therefore the Operating Accounts shall be titled as such for the exclusive use in connection with the operation of the school.

### **Working Capital**

The Business Manager or a specific designee shall provide assistance to the school to seek a line of credit with a financial institution. This can be utilized to fund seasonal or other cash flow deficiencies to the Summit Charter School for future use.

## **Payroll**

The Business Manager will provide or contract for "back-office" accounting services for the School, including the following:

- Payroll services, including processing all payroll payments to employees, issuing W-2 statements and maintaining payroll records, payment of all Federal, State, and local payroll taxes, and all employee benefit expenditures.
- Accounts payable services (including, but not limited to, the processing thereof).
- Accounts receivable monitoring and services.
- Maintaining accounting system records and reports in conjunction with a contracted bookkeeper.
- Petty cash management and incidental expenditures.
- Tracking of expenditures for furniture, fixtures and equipment.

The School will employ appropriate staff as necessary to provide the Business Manager with records, data, and direction to ensure smooth accounting procedures.

**The PMSD Administrative Review and Report contains a criticism regarding Title I funds and the alleged failure of the Applicant from providing estimated enrollments from other Monroe County schools with students in poverty. See, Pocono Mountain School District Administrative Review and Report, p. 26. As a baseline, Title I funds are not just for students at or below poverty. If a Local Education Agency (“LEA”) runs a Targeted Assistance (“TA”) Title I program, then based on LEA specific academic and non-academic criteria in addition to a couple federally required criteria, students are deemed eligible for TA services and programs regardless of their economic status. A non-economically disadvantaged child could receive Targeted Assistance Title I services if the TA criteria deems them to be eligible. If a LEA runs a Schoolwide Program Title I program, then ALL students at the LEA are eligible for services and programs regardless of economic status. A LEA in its first year of operation would not be able to apply for Title I and II funds until the Funding Adjustment period in February/March.**

**The PMSD Administrative Review and Report contains a criticism that the Applicant failed to designate a person responsible for completion of federal grants or monthly reporting requirements. See, Administrative Review and Report, pg. 26. The form**

promulgated by the PDE does not require the identification of such an individual to complete the grant applications or who would complete the monthly reporting requirements of the PA Department of Education. To be clear, not all Federal funds require monthly reporting and occur on a periodic basis including quarterly cash on hand reporting, application requirements, program requirements, parent and family engagement are all required at different points throughout the grant period.

The PMSD Administrative Review and Report contains a criticism that the Applicant's budget in Year One does not contain funds for Title III funding for EL students or Title IV. See, Pocono Mountain School District Administrative Review and Report, pg. 26. Applicant must point out the PSMD is incorrect: the funding for Title III stems from October 1 PIMS snapshot, which does not occur until the charter school begins operations. The Applicant budgeted for EL personnel, which was missed by the Administrative Review team but explained at the time of the hearing. Finally, it is unclear why the PMSD has included the Title IV criticism since a first-year school is not eligible to receive Title IV funds.

## **2. Facility**

- A. Provide descriptions of and addresses for the physical facilities under consideration and the ownership thereof and any lease arrangements.

Summit Charter School has explored a space for the school at an existing location which is located within the boundaries of the Pocono Mountain School District. The property under consideration is currently for sale at 205 Old Mill Road in Tannersville, PA. The current owner is Northampton Community College and the Applicant has entered into an Agreement of Sale for the property. Due to the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, the due diligence period has been extended. The intention of Summit Charter School is to purchase the building upon charter status approval and subsequent financing approval. Regular discussions with both the property owners and a local developer have already taken place with the founding coalition of the charter school and will continue throughout our application process. The founding coalition remains open to additional locations beyond the location listed above within the boundaries of the district should this location not come to fruition.

An executed Agreement of Sale and Addendum are attached as [Appendix S](#).

This location was chosen due to the near move-in ready set up. The building previously housed

an educational facility and therefore requires minimal upgrades to make the location suitable as a K-12 school.

B. Explain how this site(s) would be a suitable facility for the proposed school. Consider the necessity of renovation to the facility and compliance with applicable building codes and accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Describe the services of the facility including heating, ventilating, lighting, sanitary conditions and water supply.

The identified school site historically served as a satellite campus for Northampton Community College prior to opening their new facility in Monroe County. Since its original function was to serve as an academic/classroom facility, minor modifications to core spaces within the building will support safe and efficient operation of a K-12 school. Those modifications will be accomplished prior to occupancy by our school. The existing building is accessible in accordance with ADA requirements as was required while operating a community college at this site. Heating and cooling is by way of conventional HVAC, effectively distributed to all interior spaces. Interior lighting is effective and energy-efficient, and is supplemented by abundant natural light. A full facility assessment will be conducted by qualified professionals prior to lease or purchase, and any issues identified by the assessment with regard to code compliance and/or building operation will be addressed prior to occupancy.

Existing potable water for the building is supplied by a well, and sanitary sewage from the building is discharged to an onsite wastewater disposal system. Both systems are adequate to serve the existing building and its operation as a school. Public water and sewer facilities exist in relatively close proximity to the school campus, and our campus development master plan includes connection to those public facilities as the existing building is expanded to accommodate enrollment growth. We understand that, prior to connection to the public water system, we will be responsible for periodic water testing in accordance with, and subject to review by the Pennsylvania DEP.

The overall (14 +/- acre) site is ideally suited to operation as a school campus. Parking is abundant, access and circulation for both passenger vehicles and buses is safe and efficient, and land is available for development of on-site athletic facilities.

We are working with Greyhawk, Inc for Project & Construction Management services in regards to the work necessary prior to occupying the building as well as the work necessary for facilities expansion as our enrollment increases.

**In the “Administrative Review and Report” provided to the SSP team on the evening of the**



February 5th Charter Application hearing, commentary was provided that addresses “Operations & Facilities”. This commentary in the body of the report is supplemented by a letter from D’Huy Engineering, Inc. (DEI), dated January 28, 2020 which documents a facility assessment performed by DEI. Based on the facility assessment presented by Mr. James Lynch of D’Huy Engineering, it is noted that “approximately \$910,000 is needed before the property would be appropriate to use as a public school. In addition, Mr. Lynch estimates \$500,000 should be budgeted as an allowance for HVAC equipment replacement over 10 years, because the HVAC system is at the end of life.”

The Summit School team initially visited the NCC property in 2019 to evaluate the suitability of the campus and the building for use as a K-12 school. Jay Appleton, PE, participated as a member of the evaluation team in his role as Owner’s representative to SSP. Mr. Appleton is a licensed Professional Engineer in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and has been involved in the planning, design, and construction of educational facilities for almost 40 years. Mr. Appleton compiled a list of issues that need to be addressed as part of a renovation program prior to occupancy of the existing building as a school by SSP. It is noted that a much more comprehensive assessment of the building will be conducted by a enhanced team of appropriately credentialed professionals as an initial step in the design of the renovation program. The assessment will evaluate site conditions, utilities, building envelope, building systems, life safety systems, ADA compliance, and campus/building security.

Based on Mr. Appleton’s initial brief assessment of the property, he prepared a construction budget of \$1,400,000 for renovations prior to occupancy. (This is included in the “Development Cost Projection” included with the original charter application.) We believe that our initial evaluation of the property is accurate, and that the anticipated pre-occupancy improvements to the property will provide a safe, healthy, programmatically appropriate learning environment for the students, staff, and visitors to SSP. It is worthy to note that Mr. Appleton’s projections were higher than the projections of Mr. Lynch. It is also noted that neither the applicant nor any of its representatives were permitted to attend the site inspection performed by PMSD.

It bears repeating that the facility review exercised by the PMSD and the property considerations that formed the basis of the District’s denial, were, in fact, impermissible under Pennsylvania’s Charter School Law. The Applicant has provided more than what is actually required by Section 1719-A(11) of the CSL, 24 P.S. § 17-1719-A(11) which requires an application to include a description and address of the physical facility in which the charter school will be located, as well as information about the ownership of and any lease arrangements related to that facility. During this application process, Summit not only

identified a location for the Charter School, it also provided information as to ownership. It provided a review by its Owner's Representative, including the types and budget for renovations. The Charter School Appeal board previously determined that a letter of intent to lease a proposed charter school facility is sufficient evidence of a location for the charter school to comply with the CSL. *William Bradford Academy Charter School*, CAB Docket No. 1999-8 at 13. Not only did the Applicant satisfy the statutory requirements for this part of the charter application process under Charter School Law, it even addressed the types of concerns raised by *In re: Environmental Charter School*, CAB Docket No. 1999-14 at 17, in that identified and/or acknowledged that work will be required to prepare the property for use as a school as well as providing a budget for said work.

C. Discuss the plan for maintaining the facility on a daily basis (custodial) and extended basis (facility maintenance).

The school will employ custodian/maintenance personnel directly or will contract through a vendor to fill these positions. This decision will be made as we further explore our options and discuss with our Business Manager. The facility will be maintained in a manner that ensures smooth daily and long term maintenance of such facilities and student health and safety. The facility may likely require a full time facilities manager to adequately manage the building, IT, security, central HVAC, electric distribution, landscaping, snow removal, and other necessary operations. Procedures will be developed for all required maintenance, routine/daily cleaning, and operational needs. In addition, a Master Facilities Plan will be developed during our due diligence period in order to ensure that sufficient time for implementation and reserves for capital projects are included in final financial projections.

D. Discuss any progress, partnership developments or other future steps toward acquisition of a facility/land.

As previously mentioned, the School has engaged in conversation with several Project and Construction Management Firms, Business Advisory Services Firms, and firms that provide Financing in order to ensure plans for future growth of School facilities and appropriate learning spaces and environments that will meet the needs in accordance with our projected growth plans for staff and students, legal requirement, and safety.

Michael Bartolacci, Sr. Vice President of the Garibaldi Group, represents Summit School of the Poconos/Summit Charter School as our commercial Real Estate Agent. Michael continues to investigate other potential school sites, should that information be needed in the future.

Loren Speziale, Partner and Attorney at Law at Gross McGinley LLP, represents Summit School of the Poconos in conjunction with the Agreement of Sale between Summit School and Northampton Community College for said facility.

Charlie Vogt, Attorney at Law at CJ Vogt Law, has represented the school several times since 2015 in regards to locations we have considered or occupies, leases we have held with landlords as a private school, permits, building codes, etc. Mr. Vogt will help with local permitting, etc when Summit Charter School is ready to move through those phases after charter status approval.

E. Describe facility financing plans.

To date, we have obtained two letters of support as it relates to our facility and facility financing plans from The Reinvestment Fund, Inc. and Charter Schools Development Corp, both of which are non-profit entities that could provide financing and assist in the purchasing of the facility. These letters are included as Appendix O.

As mentioned above, we have provided an estimated facilities growth plan and estimated cost that will correspond with projected student enrollment growth.

### **3. Liability and Insurance**

A. Describe your school's insurance coverage plans, including health, general liability (including school operation, extracurricular activities and parent volunteer activities), property, and director and officers liability coverage (see Section 1727-A of the charter school legislation).

#### **Legal and Liability Insurance**

The representatives of the Summit Charter School Board of Trustees understand the need to protect the School, its Board and employees in the conduct of their work.

Summit Charter School will obtain all necessary insurance either through a broker or independently. The School will obtain the best rates through competitive bidding or by allowing the broker to shop rates consistent with the quality of coverage or through joining a consortium of charter schools that have already obtained competitive premiums.

The School currently has liability insurance given its daily operations and function as a private school. As a charter school, we will secure any required insurances including but not limited to: general liability or other insurance (including coverage for after-school and field trip activities), errors and omissions coverage, Trustees and Officers Liability insurance, employee liability and dishonesty, cyber liability, property insurance, and Workman's Compensation.

Copies of appropriate certificates of insurance will be provided to the Pocono Mountain School District prior to the opening of the charter school. Provisions for the procurement of insurance have been included in the proposed budget and financial plan.

### **Employee Benefits**

To the best of the School's ability, given the constraints of the health insurance marketplace, every employee of a charter school shall be provided the same health care benefits (ex. medical, dental, vision, prescription etc.) as the employee would be provided if he or she were an employee of the local district. These products will be obtained when the charter is secured, the Board established, assets acquired, etc. The representatives of the Summit Charter School Board of Trustees understands the requirement to provide the same health care benefits for its employees as defined by *In Re: Gillingham Charter School*, Charter Appeal Board Docket No. 2016-11. The Applicant has included in its proposed budget the resources required to procure benefits.

## **4. Child Accounting**

A. Describe your school enrollment and attendance procedures.

As charter school funding is based on enrollment, the Summit Charter School recognizes that a totally accurate child count is necessary to meet audit standards. [The Summit Charter School will follow Commonwealth child accounting procedures \(24 PS 13-1332\).](#)

Students will follow the school calendar, which will include a minimum of 180 days of instruction.

### **Enrollment**

Summit Charter School will implement a system for maintaining student enrollment information as required under the Charter School Law (Act 22 of 1997).

Summit Charter School will collect all of the necessary data for each student and will file all forms required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (i.e. PDE-4059CS Instructional Time Summary, PDE-40262C Annual Attendance Membership Report, PDE-4002CS Summary Report of Aggregate Days Membership) and the participating school districts.

Additionally, Summit Charter School will use a student information software system to track enrollment and attendance to ensure that the enrollment figures are always up-to-date, reflecting new students and withdrawals.

Please see information included under Enrollment Policy under section V 2, which is incorporated by reference.

#### Enrollment Procedures/ Equal Opportunity Student Recruitment Plan

Enrollment will follow all Pennsylvania rules and regulations generally immediately following the period after the lottery has been completed for the upcoming school year. Through its recruitment/marketing and application guidance activities, Summit Charter School will regularly disclose full details about its program and encourage families to carefully review the educational program. Summit Charter School will also provide tools (such as contact with other parents, with permission, if desired) to help parents evaluate whether Summit Charter School is their choice for their child.

An important factor in developing a viable charter school is the ability to recruit and retain students and to ensure diversity in keeping with the School's educational vision which drives our decision-making.

Our steps in the Admissions/Recruitment/Enrollment Process include:

- Conducting market analysis
- Developing and revisiting admissions/enrollment policies
- Recruiting students

Our charter school will admit any applying student for whom there is room in the appropriate grade or class. As public schools, charter schools must admit all eligible students, regardless of race, national origin, ethnicity, gender, religion, language proficiency, physical or mental disability or academic or other achievement. Charter schools must be non-sectarian in their admissions policies, and may not charge tuition.

With respect to admission policies, charter schools must also comply with federal civil rights laws and federal laws relating to students with disabilities. These laws include:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs;
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability;
- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability; and
- Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which calls for a free and appropriate public education for all students, and special education and related services to eligible students with disabilities.

Because of the open admissions policy, our charter school must be prepared to serve a wide variety of students, including, for example, those with special needs, limited English language proficiency or who are performing below grade level. We are mindful that we must be flexible, and understand that their actual student population upon opening may differ from the population we thought we might serve. In reality, many families choose schools for reasons unrelated to the specific program offered, such as proximity to home or work, or the attendance of their children's friends.

A special note is warranted regarding special education. A student may not be denied admission because of special education needs. As a local education agency, each charter school is responsible for providing these services.

As part of the process, charter schools should make sure that families understand the school's program, so they can choose the school that best serves their children's needs. While any student may enroll in any school, not every school is a good fit for every student. For example, a student who needs direct instruction may not thrive in an independent learning environment and a student with little interest in the arts may not be engaged in an arts-focused program. There are a variety of strategies to make sure families clearly understand the program and can assess whether it is a good fit for their child. These might include community presentations, school visits and written materials. We may consider offering prospective students the opportunity to spend one or more days at the school.

We will prepare our materials in multiple languages, and/or develop a system for helping parents who do not speak or read English complete these forms.

A variety of recruitment strategies are listed here and we will likely want to use some combination of strategies. We will communicate our vision and mission. This means

showcasing our program's strengths, but not over-promising. We intend to focus on what is good about our school, not what is bad about district schools as we consider our program to be part of the educational continuum. Sadly, we cannot anticipate the same from charter school opponents.

Where appropriate, we prefer the use of 'hands-on activities' to help families understand our program. We intend to develop marketing materials, including a web page, which are clear and succinct that describe the charter school, including a web page where families could request materials, or even register, on line. Whatever kind of marketing materials are developed, we will ensure that prospective parents know how to follow-up and get in touch with a live person at the school, including making sure that contact information is accurate.

Our marketing materials will be made available to our target populations, in the language and at a level that all can understand. Since more targeted recruitment efforts will likely be more successful than a wider effort, running ads in a local newspapers may generate more interest than those in a major paper.

We intend to also use our current parents and students as they are the best recruiters.

Our school may seek attention in the local media, including calling and sending information on your program to newspapers and radio and TV stations serving the target area. We will also announce school events through public service listings, including the school opening or open house for prospective students and parents.

Other strategies are:

- Contacting social workers, probation officers, welfare officials and people in similar occupations and providing information that they in turn can give to families with whom they work.
- Dropping drop off school materials in those places, e.g., daycare centers, community recreation centers, barber and beauty shops, libraries, stores and other local businesses.
- Attend meetings of community groups to talk about our program.
- Providing real estate professional information on our school to give to potential homebuyers who are often interested in area schools.
- Participation in local fairs or festivals.

- Mass mailings.

The lead school administrator will implement and conduct the enrollment process on behalf of Summit Charter School, under the oversight of the Board and in accordance with enrollment, admission and lottery policies and procedures adopted by the Board and reviewed by counsel, which are consistent with local, state, and federal law. The enrollment policies will be reviewed by counsel and approved by the Board as part of the overall school handbook.

### **Attendance Procedures**

Students are expected to attend school daily (assuming COVID-19 closures are not in place and children are attending school physically). If a child is absent, every attempt will be made to contact that child's parent or guardian to inquire about the reason for their absence. The school will follow the attendance guidelines set forth by public school law.

In accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, students will be expected to attend School on scheduled school days.

When absences occur it is the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to provide a written note or email correspondence to the appropriate School contact, regarding the reason for the absence. In the case of frequent absences or absences not accompanied by a written notification, a member of the Operations staff will contact the student's parent or guardian to determine the cause of the absence(s), whether the absence was excused, and appropriate action will be taken, if needed.

The student information software system previously mentioned will also be used to track attendance quickly and accurately, allowing for seamless communication between the teachers, administration, and parents.

Entering attendance is expected to be taken seriously as a regular part of the school day. Summit Charter School will verify that the attendance records are accurate. Teachers will be part of the attendance procedure and Summit Charter School's administration will monitor and review attendance records on a weekly basis. The expectations and procedures for attendance will be documented in the Student Handbook, alongside the state requirements for days/hours of instruction. Parents must agree to the policies in the Handbook when completing enrollment. Attendance procedures will be addressed in trainings for all stakeholders (parents, students,



teachers, and administrators). If a student accrues too many unexcused absences, Summit Charter School will follow state law in reporting non-attendance and truancy.

### **Unexcused Absences and Truancy, Compulsory Attendance and Truancy Elimination Plan (24 PS 13-1332)**

In order to actively engage in cases of habitual truancy, Summit Charter School staff will report cases when a student has been absent three days, or their equivalent, without a lawful excuse. If a pattern of truancy develops, Summit Charter School will initiate a systemic response to address student attendance. Summit Charter School will engage with parents neglectful in providing written excuses or written excuses in a timely fashion. Regular attendance is imperative to maximize student learning.

**Note:** [State child accounting procedures must be followed. \(24 PS 13-1332\)](#)

Charter Choices will provide the services of billing, payment collection, and reconciliation reports that calculate student allotment in the first two years of our operation under charter status.

#### Reports of Enrollment and Withdrawals

Summit Charter School will notify the student's school district of residence of the enrollment through the use of the notification form developed by the PDE. If the student's school district receiving the notification determines that the student is not a resident of the school district:

- Within seven days, the school district will notify Summit Charter School and the PDE that the student is not a resident and provide the basis for the determination.
- Within seven days of receiving the school district notice of non-residency, Summit Charter School will provide a response to both the school district and the PDE.
  - If Summit Charter School agrees that the student is not a resident of the school district, it will determine the proper district of residence and notify the correct district of residence of enrollment through the use of the notification form developed by the PDE.
  - If Summit Charter School reconfirms that the student is a resident of the school district, it will indicate so in the response. The school district may then appeal to the PDE for a final decision.

If a student becomes ineligible or leaves the charter school, Summit Charter School will ensure all appropriate paperwork is submitted and/or forwarded to the new school and that the student is

dropped from its rolls.

The School will follow a procedure for student withdrawals that includes securing a completed and signed by parent/guardian Withdrawal Form, notification of the home school district of the withdrawal, and the sharing of the student's records with the new school.

## **V. IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **1. Recruiting and Marketing Plan**

- A. Demonstrate how you will publicize the school to attract a sufficient pool of eligible applicants.
- B. What type of outreach will be made to potential students and their families?

In addition to the strategies listed above, a number of methods and conduits will be used to make residents aware of our School and their choice to attend, including but not limited to:

- Host open houses and informational meetings for parents and students
- Utilize Facebook, other social media platforms, and our School website to engage potential students and parents
- Marketing ads and articles in local publications and media outlets including online, radio, and printed newspapers and magazines
- Ensure a promotional presence at community events
- Organize various fundraisers throughout the year in the community
- Build Community Partnerships with local schools, businesses, organizations, and individuals
- Encourage and foster parent involvement as previously stated in this application. Our parents are our strongest advocates.

While operating as Summit School of the Poconos, our staff, board, and volunteers have already implemented fundraising and recruitment efforts in our community. Continued efforts will be made to develop community awareness of our School's mission and vision.

There is currently only one other charter school in Monroe County, Evergreen Community Charter School, and it continually supports a waiting list.

Not every student will thrive at our school, just as every student does not thrive at a traditional public school, but we believe that many will thrive here. We are clear about what makes our learning environment different.

In our three plus years of operation as a private school, parents and students have been invited for a school visit prior to registration to ensure an understanding of our unique school culture. Marketing materials are designed to point to what makes our education model different. We are committed to continuing this level of transparent communication to ensure that incoming students are able to thrive at our School and positively contribute to the foundation of its intended culture. By design, our model is tailored to address individual student needs, both academic and social-emotional.

## 2. Enrollment Policy

A. Describe the enrollment methods and eligibility criteria you will use to select students. Explain administrative procedures to ensure compliance with laws pertaining to Special Education.

The Summit Charter School Board members understand the importance of establishing a fair and equitable criteria for student admissions and shall fully comply with all applicable state and federal laws.

In order to ensure that parents and students who express interest in attending our School understand and are interested in the specific school culture we provide, we will continue to invite prospective parents/guardians to visit our School to explore what makes Summit different. Prospective students will continue to be invited to spend time in the classroom for the same purpose.

Parents and their children should understand what project based learning is (and isn't) and what participation in our democratic and civic-centered culture looks like. Time spent with prospective parents and students will serve to provide potential students and parents alike with tools to evaluate our model. Our School staff will describe that EVERY child will participate in hands-on projects on a weekly, if not daily basis and EVERY student will participate in our democratic functions such as School Meeting, JC, and restorative practices.

The meeting will not serve as a basis for acceptance, but to more appropriately to introduce families to our school and to enable them to evaluate their choices.

**Application for Enrollment:**

Parents of children interested in enrolling at Summit Charter School will be given the opportunity to register for enrollment - or if applications exceed the number of seats- admission to the lottery. The date that the enrollment process opens - including the lottery date - will be determined by the school administration each year and will be posted in the school office, announced at several public board meetings as well as on the school's web site. Information may also be distributed via social media and through local media outlets. The charter school will also provide a courtesy notice to the authorizer.

Parents of children interested in registering for enrollment must complete and return an accurate application form to the school's main office by the deadline provided by the school.

The Summit Charter School will enroll students without prejudice of any kind for any reason, including a special education need. There will be no eligibility criteria to enroll in the School; information regarding disabilities, special needs, IEPs, etc., will not be required as part of the enrollment process. The only criteria are that the students are residents of Pennsylvania, that their parent/guardian can verify residency in accordance with PDE School Enrollment requirements, and that the student is eligible for a grade level provided by the school.

Parents/guardians must complete the School's student enrollment process to demonstrate their intent to enroll their child in the School. All enrollment procedures will comply with the PA Charter School Law and the PDE Enrollment BEC, including public announcement of timelines, deadlines, notification, lotteries, and waiting lists. Only after families have been notified of their acceptance in the lottery will the charter school begin the procedure of collecting any necessary paperwork.

Students who reside in the Pocono Mountain School District will receive preference as stipulated in the Charter School Law. Children of a parent who actively participated in the development of the School will receive preference as stipulated in the charter school law. After the launch year of the School, siblings of currently enrolled students will receive preference as stipulated in the charter school law. The School will implement a student information system for maintaining student enrollment information as required in 1730-A of the Charter School Law.

The Summit Charter School will ensure accurate collection and analysis of student information and demographic data. The data collected in this way will then be used to generate reports for the Board and the PDE. It may also be used to evaluate and modify the school's outreach and recruiting strategies when necessary. The Board and all school staff will focus on accountability and abide by student data privacy laws and regulations.

As a public school, the Summit Charter School will not charge tuition or any prohibited fees. Outreach communications and the school handbook will inform families that the school is tuition-free. The Summit Charter School will be non-sectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations.

As per Section 1723-A, Summit will be open to all students statewide on a space available basis and will not discriminate in its admission policies or practices on the basis of intellectual ability, athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a person with a disability, proficiency in the English language or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district. Students must meet minimum/maximum age requirements and will be subject to Pennsylvania current age restrictions for public school admission and funding or qualify for an exception as noted in state regulations.

For students in Kindergarten, Summit will enroll students who meet the admission age that is determined by their resident school district, but generally are age five by September 1st. Summit will follow 24 P.S. § 13-1304, Admission of Beginners, which states, *“Admission shall be limited to beginners who have attained the age of four years and seven months before the first day of September if they are to be admitted in the fall, and to those who have attained the age of five years and seven months before the first day of February if they are to be admitted at the beginning of the second semester.”*

For students in first grade, Summit will enroll students who are six years old on or before September 1st in the school year for which they are enrolling. As per 22 Pa. Code Section 11.12 the maximum age for high school students is 21 years of age. Specific state requirements for enrollment eligibility will be available for interested families on the school’s website. The school will abide by all federal, state, and local policies and guidelines for student admission and will not impose admission requirements that are inconsistent with these policies and guidelines. The school will comply with the McKinney-Vento Act as well as the Every Student Succeeds Act regarding homeless students. Students who meet the definition of homeless shall not be barred from enrolling due to lack of required documents. The lead school administrator will serve as the liaison for homeless students.

Documentation such as a birth certificate, proof of residency, and immunizations and other health records are required prior to the start of school.

Parents and legal guardians of new students are required to provide proof of residency acceptable to the school prior to admission. Acceptable documentation proving residency includes a current and valid driver’s license with photograph or a current and valid Department of Transportation photo identification card AND one (1) of the following original documents:

1. Current utility bill (electricity, public water, public sewer, natural gas, cable television, or land-line telephone), dated within the last 45 days;
2. Current deed to primary residence;
3. Current lease of primary residence;
4. Property tax bill for the primary residence the most current tax cycle;
5. Most recent real estate mortgage statement for primary residence;
6. Homeowner's insurance policy for primary residence for the current policy period;
7. Copy of a state or federal program enrollment with address, including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Children's Health Insurance Program, etc.;
8. Voter registration card.

All documentation proving residency must match. The name of the parent/guardian and the primary address of the student provided on the student admission paperwork must match the photo identification and secondary source document that is provided.

Students who live with someone other than a biological parent are required to provide documentation proving legal custody and physical residency, no later than the new student/parent orientation. A student residing with someone other than a parent may qualify for enrollment if the requirements of 24 PS 13-1302 are met, and the responsible adult provides a signed affidavit, proof of residency, and proof that they are supporting the child gratis. Students whose parents/guardians fail to provide proof of residency and legal custody acceptable to school administration at or prior to the new student/parent orientation will not be guaranteed admission and will lose any preference in enrollment.

Summit Charter School reserves the right to require a student to withdraw from the school if it is later determined that a student has been enrolled at Summit Charter School under false pretenses (fraudulent address to gain preference, fraudulent documentation to obtain sibling preference, etc.). By completing the enrollment process, parents certify the information and documentation they provide the school is true and accurate.

**Enrollment Preference Hierarchy:**

As permitted by the Pennsylvania's charter school law, Summit Charter School will give preference in admission to the following categories of students, so long as there is availability:

1. Summit Charter School students whose parents are founders of the Summit Charter School, which includes existing and former students of Summit School of the Poconos and Founding Coalition Members).

2. Future children of parents who actively participate in the development of the charter school, including children of Summit Charter School employees and Board Members.
3. Siblings of students currently enrolled in the school. For the purpose of this policy, a sibling is defined as a child who is related to an existing student by blood or adoption, or legal guardianship and who share a legal tie to at least one common parent;
4. Students residing in the Pocono Mountain School District<sup>37</sup> (the school district in which the School is located);
5. Students residing outside the Pocono Mountain School District (all other school districts within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania).

### **Student/Parent Orientation**

Summit Charter School will host at least one new student/parent orientation to provide additional information and to finalize student enrollment. The student who is enrolling and at least one parent/guardian (both are recommended to participate) should attend the new student/parent orientation to complete the enrollment process.

B. Describe the timetable to be used for admitting students, including a plan for the admission lottery for students from both within and outside the district.

A public lottery, if necessary, will be publicly announced in a newspaper of general circulation as well the Schools' website at least one week prior to the lottery being held. Lottery information will be made available in multiple languages. The charter school will also provide notice to Pocono Mountain School District as to the date of the lottery.

The initial lottery will be conducted by the School, after charter status approval and prior to the first day of school under the charter, and in March of the subsequent years in preparation for fall enrollment. This is only applicable should enrollment interest exceed the number of available slots in any grade after the School grants preferred enrollment using the enrollment preference hierarchy mentioned above.

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<sup>37</sup> Summit Charter School will adhere to the enrollment requirements of PA Charter School law and enrollment will be open to all age-appropriate children who will be admitted on a first-come-first-serve basis with the exceptions as permitted by Act 22. In accordance with Act 22, Pocono Mountain School District students have first preference. Students from out of the district may only be accepted if enrollment space is available in that specific grade level.

The school will utilize an electronic system in order to select the names and each student will be assigned a number, rather than be drawn with name. All applicants will be put into grade-level batches and drawn by the lottery software. The order in which the names are drawn creates the list for enrollment and the wait-list.

All families who submitted application forms for the lottery are informed in writing of the results. Students whose names are drawn to fill the grade openings will be provided with registration materials with accommodations made for English Language Learners and those eligible under McKinney/Vento. The school will also contact the family by phone and/or email and will inform them of the deadlines established for the completion of the enrollment process and orientation workshops. The following additional documentation is required for enrollment:

- Student Application
- Student Enrollment Notification Form
- Immunization and medical forms as required by law
- Family Information sheet
- Permission for Field trips form
- Emergency Contact form
- Photo and video authorization or denial form
- Signed and dated Family Acknowledgement of Receipt of the Student & Families Handbook
- Student Transportation Plan Form

If there is no response from the family within the established deadline, they will relinquish their spot and Summit Charter School will contact the family of the next student on the waiting list. When openings occur, wait-listed families are notified, in accordance with their pre-established ranking, and are given the opportunity to accept the space. The wait list, which is formed by the lottery, will be valid that academic year. Each year, a new lottery selection will be performed with current students remaining as students unless otherwise determined by parent / guardian communication with Summit Charter School. Students who do not get placed and still wish to enroll must submit a new application each year.

As noted in the enrollment policy, there are some exceptions to this process. They include the siblings of enrolled students who will be given preference over other names on the wait-list. Preference will also be given to the children and grandchildren of the founders and board members during the application process.

See attached Lottery and Enrollment Policy which is located in [Appendix P](#).



C. Explain how these policies further the mission of the school in a non-discriminatory fashion.

In addition to the content included above:

Summit Charter School is an equal opportunity educational institution, is a non-sectarian institution in all respects, and does not discriminate against any student, employee, or other person on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability, or any other criteria prohibited by law. Admission criteria do not consider intellectual or athletic ability, aptitude, disability, race, creed, national origin, religion, or ancestry. The Student Admissions Policy will be made available to the public.

All students seeking first-time admission at Summit Charter School will be given a home language survey in accordance with the requirements of the United States Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights.

In compliance with federal and state guidelines under the McKinney/Vento Act, Summit Charter School is committed to removing barriers to education that face students experiencing homelessness.

### **3. Human Resource Information**

A. Describe the standards to be used in the hiring process of teachers, administrators and other school staff.

Teachers, administrators, and other school staff must:

- Understand and be committed to the stated goals of the charter;
- Recognize every student's capacity to be a successful learner;
- Be dedicated to providing students with the best available resources ;
- Possess the skills necessary to effectively communicate with students, staff, and parents;
- Possess the desire and skills necessary to lead a student-centered class;
- Follow the guidelines outlined in the Employee Handbook.

In most cases, staff will hold a certification by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in their area of expertise, although past experience and demonstrated proficiency will also be considered as well as educators working towards relevant certifications.

Summit Charter School will employ only professional staff who demonstrate a deep understanding of their academic area, are interested in working in a team environment and student-centered classrooms, subscribe to the theory of the teacher as facilitator in the delivery of instruction, are competent in computer technology, and have a strong desire to continue learning. We further expect that all candidates will be able to explain their relationship to the STEAM enriched curriculum, project based learning, and democracy and shared governance, since these represent the foundation of our culture.

We will also attempt to employ adequate staff members who are bilingual and take steps to provide multicultural and cross-cultural training for our staff.

The Principal will be a person sufficiently knowledgeable in at least one academic area to meet the requirements outlined for the teaching staff, while also capable of inspiring staff in all levels and areas to perform at their maximum potential.

The faculty will meet the certification requirements for charter schools. The Principal will have the responsibility for recommending all faculty to the School's Board of Trustees for their approval. The Principal will follow criteria established by a committee of the Board to determine the most qualified candidates.

As an operating licensed private school since 2016, Summit School of the Poconos already adheres to these practices as they relate to private school and state and federal law.

As stated, the Summit Charter School intends to hire educators who are certified by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in their area of expertise. Past experience and demonstrated proficiency will also be considered. The faculty selection process will be multi-tiered to ensure that the faculty selected can maintain the high expectations set by the School.

The Summit Charter School will comply with all state and federal laws related to employment.

In accordance with the PA Charter School Law, at least 75% of the Charter School's professional faculty will be appropriately certified by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The recruitment, development, and retention of great teachers and leaders are top priorities for Summit.

Responsibility for hiring school personnel is the responsibility of the Principal. Vacancies are posted on the school website and PA-REAP and pushed out to recruitment websites at the local and national level. The school will recruit staff through a variety of channels, including traditional methods for posting job opportunities, plus networking with educational organizations; outreach via enrolled families; and special outreach to teachers and administrators

who are seeking an alternative environment. Potential candidates are screened via a resume/cover letter review, a phone screening, a video or in-person demonstration lesson (if applicable), and a final interview. The screening process will comply with all applicable law and school policy. The interview process is designed to help the Principal determine whether a candidate possesses the necessary skills to be a productive staff member, will work in a manner consistent with the school's instructional philosophy and culture, and is prepared and capable of working cooperatively with colleagues, administrators, parents, and students. Before a final decision is made, Summit Charter School will call references provided by the employee and contact former employers.

All hiring decisions are made by the Principal and then sent to the Board of Trustees for approval. The CEO will offer employment through a job offer letter. The offer letter will include at least the following: job title and position offered, salary, benefits and perks offered, instructions to accept or decline the job offer.

Summit will ensure that teachers meet applicable state certification requirements and will target teachers with a minimum of three years of classroom experience for lead teacher positions.

Employees are free to terminate their employment with Summit Charter School at any time, with or without reason. Likewise, Summit Charter School has the right to terminate employment or otherwise discipline, transfer, or demote employees at any time, with or without cause. Summit will consider employees to have voluntarily terminated their employment if they resign, fail to return after a leave of absence, or fail to report to work or call in for three or more consecutive work days. In the case of a staff resignation, the employee handbook recommends that all employees file a written notice with Summit at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of resignation. Summit believes that a thirty-day written notice is beneficial in order to achieve appropriate educational and operational transition. Should an employee terminate his or her appointment at Summit by voluntarily discontinuing work during the academic year, Summit will cease salary and benefit payments as of the date work was discontinued.

Summit Charter School will prioritize hiring certified teachers. If a teacher does not possess the required certification for a position, Summit will work directly with the teacher to develop a certification plan and initiate an emergency permit procedure and ensure the teacher obtains the required certification within two years. Summit will regularly monitor compliance with Pennsylvania charter school law that requires 75% of staff to hold required PA certifications, with the exception of special education staff. Summit will only hire special education teachers who hold a current certification in Pennsylvania in order to maintain 100% certification of special education staff. The Principal and school administrators will maintain those administrative certifications as required by law.

Furthermore, Summit Charter School will comply with all federal, state, and local laws and requirements regarding the hiring of staff and will not discriminate in hiring, employing, contracting, or retention for reasons of race, sex, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other reasons prohibited by law. Summit Charter School will directly employ all personnel for part-time and full-time staff positions. For related service providers, the charter school will either go through a direct hiring process with independent contractors or utilize the services of staffing agencies.

Ideally, teachers will be hired at least 30 days prior to the start of the school year. Employment history reviews will be conducted for applicants who will be employed in positions involving direct contact with children. Employees of independent contractors must participate in the employment history review prior to the start of employment with a new school entity even though they remain employed by the same independent contractor. These additional steps will be followed for all applicants who are educators even if the applicant is not being hired for a position for which certification is required.

All applicants for employment at Summit Charter School, excluding employees who do not have direct contact<sup>38</sup> with students, must undergo state and federal background checks. Background checks will be no more than one year old at the time of application. Administrators will make and keep a copy of the original background checks. As required by state law, applicants for employment will be required to produce three documents verifying the checks that they have completed:

- Pennsylvania State Criminal History Record (Act 34) where the applicant will submit information online to be run through the PATCH system. The system will generate a report that is sent directly to the applicant for submission to Summit Charter School;
- Child Abuse Report (Act 151) which requires the applicant to complete an application to be submitted to the Department of Public Welfare to investigate whether the applicant has been the subject of, or is currently the subject of, an investigation for child abuse, sexual abuse, or the like, or has ever been disciplined by any employer, public institution, or other authority for such an offense. The Department will, in turn, send a report back to the applicant, which is to be submitted to Summit;

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<sup>38</sup> PMSD has criticized the Applicant for not listing the types of employees who would not have direct contact with children. While this is, again, not a requirement of the CSL in the application process, and is more than self-explanatory, the Applicant's language on this score is in line with the statute as well as the Department's guidance on this issue:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Educators/Clearances/Pages/default.aspx>

- Federal (FBI) Criminal History Report (Act 114) whereas the applicant will submit their fingerprints to the State Police to be run through the FBI repository for criminal history of the applicant;

In addition, the applicant will be required to submit the following forms:

- Arrest / Conviction and Certification Report (Act 24) or PDE-6004, this form that must be completed by the applicant affirming they have/have not been convicted of certain crimes listed on the document.

- Sexual Misconduct / Abuse Disclosure Release (Act 168) - this release must be completed by the applicant for their current employer, any previous employers that were school entities, and any employer where the applicant was employed and held a position with interaction with children. Failure to accurately report required information will subject the candidate to discipline up to, and including, denial of employment or termination if already hired, and may subject the candidate to civil and criminal penalties. The Summit Charter School may use the information for the purpose of evaluating an applicant's fitness to be hired or for continued employment and may report the information as permitted by law.

Individuals may be employed for a single period, not to exceed 90 days, as a provisional employee if all of the following conditions are met:

- The applicant has applied for the three required clearances and the applicant has provided a copy of the completed forms to the School.
- Summit Charter School has no knowledge of information pertaining to the applicant that would disqualify him/her from employment.
- The applicant swears or affirms in writing that he/she is not disqualified from employment pursuant to the grounds for denying employment in § 6344 (c) of the Child Protective Services Law or has not been convicted of an offense of a similar nature to those crimes under the laws or former laws of the United States, or one of its territories or possessions, another state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a foreign nation, or under a former law of the Commonwealth.
- The applicant is not permitted to work alone with children and must work in the immediate vicinity of a permanent employee.

Any candidate who has direct contact with students must obtain and submit a clearance statement for the preceding year from the Department of Public Welfare. The clearance letter is to state that the employee is not named as a perpetrator of an indicated/founded child abuse or neglect report,

or is named as the individual responsible for injury/abuse in an indicated/founded report. This document must be submitted prior to employment. Clearances must be obtained every 60 months. Timelines for renewed clearances will be based upon the date of each individual clearance. Clearances are transferable within the school and a person need not obtain a new clearance letter to change positions within the school. The applicant or employee will be responsible for paying the cost of the required clearances. Summit Charter School will maintain copies of the required information and require the individual to produce the original documents prior to employment or acceptance to serve in any such capacity, except provisional employees for limited periods

**B. What is the targeted staff size and teacher/student ratio?**

Summit Charter School intends to maintain an in-class student/teacher ratio of no more than 20:1 students for 1st through 12th grade, and 10:1 in Kindergarten in most circumstances. However, our unique program of instruction will sometimes call for larger classes, such as multi-age workgroups, academic integration of STEAM/project-based learning clubs, School Meeting and restorative practice functions, or other extenuating circumstances. In such circumstances, teaching assistants may be used, and/or the actual teacher/student ratios may, on occasion, exceed or fall below the 20:1 ratio.

**C. What professional development opportunities will be available to teachers and other staff?**

Professional development will occur at the classroom level, the whole School level, and through opportunities provided to teachers and other school staff through outside organizations.

Classroom: The school schedule will be developed so that all teachers at a given grade level will have preparation and planning times on several occasions during each week. Teachers will be expected to use this time for curriculum development, problem solving, and examination of student progress through assessment materials. Teachers will also be expected to spend several weeks each summer developing curriculum, collecting materials, and working together to plan and coordinate thematic curriculum within and across grade levels.

School: Teachers in school will gather at regularly scheduled meetings to discuss and develop plans for working on school-based issues and themes. They will, for example, be responsible for examining, advising, and modifying, as needed, the school schedule, curriculum areas, and classroom configurations. Teachers and administrators will engage in action research, when appropriate, to gather and analyze data related to identified areas of interest and concern.

Students and faculty from the various departments of educational studies at local colleges and universities will support our administrators and teachers in the process of doing research, when possible (several courses and seminars in these departments engage students in school-based research and some have already visited us as a private school).

External: Funding is expected to become available for teachers and administrators to attend at least one professional conference a year. They will be expected to share what they have learned with their colleagues when they return, so that all staff can take advantage of the experience. Teachers and administrators will also have access to resources and programs presented through area colleges and universities, in particular those sponsored by the Department of Educational Studies. These include speakers, workshops, and the Educational Materials Center, which houses books, current journals in the field of education, and curriculum resources.

D. Describe your human resource policies governing salaries, contracts, hiring and dismissal, **sick and other leave**, and benefits.

Please see our Employee Handbook listed as Appendix Q.

Salaries will be commensurate with qualifications and experience.

All staff will be provided an offer letter that outlines their job duties, salary, and benefits, prior to commencement of employment.

The School will not discriminate in hiring under any of the grounds applicable under state and federal laws. The School wishes to promote diversity and equal access to all categories of employment, including retention and professional advancement, and will ensure equal opportunity, without regard to age, gender, sexual orientation, race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, social or economic status, parenthood, marital status or handicap.

**Health Coverage:**

As mentioned in this application, Summit Charter School recognizes its obligation to provide benefits as the employee would be provided if he or she were an employee of the Pocono Mountain School District pursuant to section 17-1724-A. See attached budget in the Appendix.

**Retirement Plan:**

The School will provide an approved 403(b) as an alternative to the state PSERS plan. The

Applicant has included the planning and resources for the 403(b) plan in its budget. Without a charter, it is an impossibility for the applicant to provide “ a draft plan document for the proposed 403(b) Retirement Plan which identifies the plan's rules, regulations and requirements to ensure the plan meets all of the retirement code guidelines per the Internal Revenue Service.” Additionally, this form Application asks if the Applicant has an existing retirement system and asks for the description of “human resource policies governing salaries, contracts, hiring and dismissal, **sick and other leave**, and benefits.”

E. Identify the proposed faculty.

The Summit Charter School, having acted in the capacity of a licensed school up to this point, already has several staff members that will make the transition to the Charter School, once approved. All of our employees have been properly vetted to satisfy PDE credentials as well as all relevant background checks necessary to work with children.

We expect our current faculty to transition to the charter school along with proposed additions to faculty to satisfy the needs of growth.

It is important to note that we will employ the appropriate number of qualified staff needed to support the numbers of students enrolled in each grade. Additional faculty members will be recruited and hired prior to operation as a charter school.

To effectively increase staff capacity, we will recruit a variety of individuals with a wide range of experience, educational credentials, and interests. By offering an environment rich in creativity, resources, support, and student involvement, the school will attract qualified, innovative, and eclectic individuals who will work as a team towards the school's stated mission.

The school will use a number of resources in order to recruit staff. Positions will be posted on widely used web sites, at teaching institutions that promote progressive pedagogy, employment websites where applicable, and in educational journals.

As previously mentioned, appropriate staff to student ratios in order to fulfill our mission and goals are reflected in our budget included with this application.

F. Attach a report of criminal history record, pursuant to Section 111 of the Public School Code for all individuals who shall have direct contact with students.

The applicant maintains all the requisite checks and clearance for its current employees,



which will be provided upon request for review by the District but not attached to the application. Our current employees are not public employees. To date, the District has not requested a review of such documents.

G. Attach an official clearance statement regarding child injury or abuse from the Department of Public Welfare as required by 23 Pa. C.S. Chapter 63 Subchapter C. 2 (relating to background checks for employment in schools) for all individuals who shall have direct contact with students.

See response to F. To date, the District has not requested a review of such documents.

## **4. Code of Conduct**

A. Discuss any rules or guidelines governing student behavior.

Please see a draft of our Student and Families handbook for information, [Appendix R](#).

The school will have a detailed student handbook (a draft is provided in the Appendix) that will include a clear and fair set of roles and responsibilities for students and school staff that complies with the students' due process rights and aligns with the school's mission. Parents/guardians will be provided with access to the handbook at the beginning of the enrollment process.

Appropriate conduct will be expected of all students. The expectations for student conduct will be explained in the handbook and will include steps to be followed in the event of misbehavior. Summit Charter School will follow formal due process procedures to manage the discipline of students.

The school will regard academic honesty as key to its mission, and will expect all stakeholders to understand that cheating, plagiarizing, or other acts of academic dishonesty are directly counter to the principles of academic excellence and harm most those students who engage in such activities. By engaging in academic misconduct, students cheat themselves of the opportunity to fully develop their intellectual abilities. As part of the school start-up tasks, all students will be required to sign the Honor Code (expected student conduct), as a part of the student handbook, indicating their understanding of the expectations of academic honesty. It will be expected that students will adhere to the Student Handbook and code of conduct throughout the school year, and that all schoolwork submitted in order to meet course or class requirements represents the original work of the student. The expected Student Conduct will serve to reinforce students' commitment to academic excellence and integrity. Students and parents suspected of

inappropriate academic behavior will be confronted immediately and subjected to standard disciplinary action as described in the handbook.

See below.

B. Describe your school's policies regarding student expulsion and suspension, including students with disabilities.

Please see a draft of our Student and Families handbook for information, [Appendix R](#).

The handbook will include practices the school will use to promote effective discipline, a list of offenses which may result in suspension or expulsion, an explanation of the rights of students with disabilities, and policies and procedures for due process. Summit Charter School will establish and adopt suspension and expulsion policies that will be distributed in the school handbook. Summit Charter School's discipline, suspension, and expulsion policies will be in accordance with student's rights and with applicable law.

The school has the goal of limiting suspensions and expulsions to infractions required by law, when the safety of a student or the school population is at risk, and when multiple other measures or consequences for serious infractions have been attempted and not resulted in the desired change in behavior.

Suspension and expulsion data will be reviewed by school leaders and the Board of Trustees on a regular basis (minimally annually) to ensure that suspensions and expulsions are not discriminating against a segment of the student population.

All students enrolled in the school will be expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules for the school, and parents will be expected to cooperate with the school staff in helping students to maintain this conduct. The student code of conduct will be included in the student handbook.

There will be three levels of disciplinary measures utilized by the school: 1) Warning, 2) Suspension, and 3) Expulsion. Each level has associated conduct breach definitions and corresponding disciplinary actions that may occur.

Students that receive warnings from the school will have a conference (via phone or in person) with their parent(s) and the school administrator(s), and the incident will be formally documented in writing and will become part of the student's permanent record. The student will not have a disruption in schooling and will not be removed from the class. Warnings will be

issued when a student demonstrates a breach of expected conduct, but not as serious as those listed under the suspension and/or expulsion categories in this handbook.

When a student is suspended, he or she will be temporarily removed from school or a school-sponsored program or activity. The length of a suspension will be determined by the Principal (up to 10 days at a time). A suspension will be documented in writing and will become part of a student's permanent record. The student will continue with his or her schoolwork during a suspension.

When a student is expelled, he or she will be separated from the school for an extended period of time, or permanently, for disciplinary reasons. An expulsion will be documented in writing and will become part of a student's permanent record.

The school will not discipline students protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), or the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) unless the school complies with the requirements of those acts.

#### Discipline for Students with Disabilities

Exclusion from School may take the form of suspension or expulsion:

(1) Suspension will be exclusion from school for a period of from one to 10 consecutive school days. (i) Suspensions may be given by the Principal or his/her designee. (ii) A student may not be suspended until the student has been informed of the reasons for the suspension and given an opportunity to respond. Prior notice of the intended suspension need not be given when it is clear that the health, safety, or welfare of the school community is threatened. (iii) The parents or guardians will be notified immediately in writing when the student is suspended. (iv) When the suspension exceeds three school days, the student and parent will be given the opportunity for an informal hearing consistent with the requirements of the Pennsylvania Code. (v) Suspensions may not be made to run consecutively beyond the 10 school day period. (vi) Students will have the responsibility to make up exams and work missed while being disciplined by suspension and shall be permitted to complete these assignments within guidelines established by the Board.

(2) Expulsion will be exclusion from school by the Board for a period exceeding 10 school days and may be permanent expulsion from the school rolls. Expulsions require a prior formal hearing pursuant to the Pennsylvania Code. (i) During the period prior to the hearing and decision of the Board in an expulsion case, the student will be placed in his/her normal class except as herein. (ii) If it is determined after an informal hearing that a student's presence in his/her normal class would constitute a threat to the health, safety or welfare of others and it is not possible to hold a formal hearing within the period of a suspension, the student may be excluded from school for more than 10 school days. A student may not be excluded from school for longer than 15 school

days without a formal hearing unless mutually agreed upon by both parties. Any student so excluded will be provided with alternative education, which may include home study. (iii) Students who are under 17 years of age are still subject to the compulsory school attendance law even though expelled and will be provided an education.

(3) The initial responsibility for providing the required education rests with the student's parents or guardian, through placement in another school, tutorial, or correspondence study, or another educational program approved by the Principal. Within 30 days of action by the Board, the parents or guardians will submit written evidence that the required education is being provided or that they are unable to do so. If the parents or guardians are unable to provide the required education, Summit Charter School will, within 10 days of receipt of the notification, make provision for the student's education. A student with a disability will be provided educational services as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004. If the approved educational program is not complied with, Summit Charter School may take action in accordance with 42 Pa.C.S. Chapter 63 (relating to the Juvenile Act) to ensure that the child will receive a proper education. See Pennsylvania Code § 12.1(b) (relating to free education and attendance).

(4) Exclusion from classes—in-school suspension 1) A student may not receive an in-school suspension unless the student has been informed of the reasons for the suspension and has been given an opportunity to respond before the suspension becomes effective. 2) Communication to the parents or guardian will follow the suspension action. 3) When the in-school suspension exceeds 10 consecutive school days, an informal hearing with the Principal or designee will be offered to the student and the student's parent or guardian prior to the 11th school day in accordance with the procedures in the Pennsylvania Code. Summit will have the responsibility to make provision for the student's education during the period of the in-school suspension.

### Hearings

Education is a statutory right, and students will be afforded due process if they are to be excluded from school. In a case involving a possible expulsion, the student is entitled to a formal hearing.

A formal hearing will be required in all expulsion actions. The hearing may be held before the Board or an authorized committee of the Board, or a qualified hearing examiner appointed by the Board. When a committee of the Board or a hearing examiner conducts the hearing, a majority vote of the entire Board will be required to expel a student. The following due process requirements will be observed with regard to the formal hearing: 1) Notification of the charges will be sent to the student's parents or guardians by certified mail. 2) At least three days' notice of the time and place of the hearing will be given. A copy of the expulsion policy, notice that legal counsel may represent the student and hearing procedures will be included with the hearing notice. A student may request the rescheduling of the hearing when the student demonstrates

good cause for an extension. 3) The hearing will be held in private unless the student or parent requests a public hearing. 4) The student may be represented by counsel, at the expense of the parents or guardians, and may have a parent or guardian attend the hearing. 5) The student has the right to be presented with the names of witnesses against the student, and copies of the statements and affidavits of those witnesses. 6) The student has the right to request that the witnesses appear in person and answer questions or be cross-examined. 7) The student has the right to testify and present witnesses on his/her own behalf. 8) A written or audio record shall be kept of the hearing. The student is entitled, at the student's expense, to a copy. A copy will be provided at no cost to a student who is indigent. 9) The proceeding will be held within 15 school days of the notification of charges, unless mutually agreed to by both parties. A hearing may be delayed for any of the following reasons, in which case the hearing will be held as soon as reasonably possible: (i) Laboratory reports are needed from law enforcement agencies. (ii) Evaluations or other court or administrative proceedings are pending due to a student invoking his/her rights under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act 2004 (20 U.S.C.A. § § 1400—1482). (iii) In cases in juvenile or criminal court involving sexual assault or serious bodily injury, delay is necessary due to the condition or best interests of the victim. 10) Notice of a right to appeal the results of the hearing shall be provided to the student with the expulsion decision.

Prior to the formal hearing, there will be an informal hearing. The purpose of the informal hearing is to enable the student to meet with the appropriate school official to explain the circumstances surrounding the event for which the student is being suspended or to show why the student should not be suspended. 1) The informal hearing is held to bring forth all relevant information regarding the event for which the student may be suspended and for students, their parents or guardians, and school officials to discuss ways by which future offenses might be avoided. 2) The following due process requirements will be observed in regard to the informal hearing: (i) Notification of the reasons for the suspension will be given in writing to the parents or guardians and to the student. (ii) Sufficient notice of the time and place of the informal hearing will be given. (iii) A student has the right to question any witnesses present at the hearing. (iv) A student has the right to speak and produce witnesses on his/her own behalf. (v) Summit Charter School will offer to hold the informal hearing within the first five days of the suspension.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support - Every student must be treated with respect. Summit Charter School will implement an evidenced-based, data-driven, school-wide program of positive behavioral supports to improve the academic and social outcomes of all students.

Summit Charter School will maintain a Seclusion and Restraint plan to implement if necessary. A copy of this plan will be available to students and their families in the school handbook. Every effort will be made to avoid the need for the use of restraint or seclusion of a student. Physical

seclusion or restraint will not be used except when used as a last resort and only when:

- the student's behavior poses an imminent risk of injury to self or others; and/or
- other less restrictive interventions are ineffective.

A student will never be secluded or physically restrained by a school employee who has not received extensive training by the school in the use of seclusion and restraint procedures. These strategies may be used in rare and clearly unavoidable emergency circumstances when fully trained school personnel are not immediately available. Untrained staff shall request assistance from trained staff as soon as possible. Physical restraint or seclusion of a student may only be used for a short period of time and will be ended as soon as the imminent risk of injury to self or others has dissipated, usually a matter of minutes.

The use of any drug, medication, or other chemical to control behavior or restrict freedom of movement (except as authorized by a licensed physician or other qualified healthcare professional) will be prohibited. An employee will never give a student any drug or medication that is not a standard treatment or dosage, or both, for the student's medical or psychiatric condition unless otherwise prescribed by a physician and only upon consent from the parent.

Every instance in which seclusion or restraint is used will be carefully, continuously, and visually monitored to ensure the safety of the student, other students, and school employees. Immediately after the imminent risk of injury to self or others has ended, the student will no longer be physically restrained or secluded and a school employee, not involved with the seclusion or restraint, will examine the student to ascertain if any injury has been sustained during the seclusion or restraint of the student. After each incident, a debriefing procedure is followed and the incident will be documented. Summit Charter School will annually review the seclusion and restraint policy. Regular professional development and training on these procedures will be provided to school staff.

Physical restraint and seclusion will not be used unless the student's behavior poses an imminent risk of injury to self or others and other less restrictive interventions are ineffective. A verbal threat or verbally aggressive behavior does not itself indicate an imminent risk of injury, and will not result in seclusion or restraint. Unless a student's destruction or damage to property creates an imminent risk of injury to the student or others, the destruction or damage of property does not itself indicate an imminent risk of injury and will not be the justification for seclusion or restraint of a student.

Time-out is a behavior reduction procedure in which access to reinforcement will be withdrawn for a certain period of time. Time-out will occur when the ability of a student to receive normal reinforcement in the school environment is restricted. Short time-out sessions will be both

developmentally and behaviorally appropriate.

As soon as practical and after every instance in which seclusion or restraint is used on a student, the school administrator or designee will do the following:

- meet with at least one school employee who participated in the implementation, monitoring, and supervision of the seclusion or restraint to discuss whether proper seclusion or restraint procedures were followed, including the use of proper procedures to prevent the need for restraint or seclusion;
- direct a staff person, who was not part of the seclusion or restraint of the student, to debrief the incident with the student in a manner appropriate to the student's age and developmental ability and to discuss the behavior(s), if any, that precipitated the use of restraint or seclusion; and
- provide a copy of an incident report to the parent(s) or guardian(s) and offer the opportunity to request a meeting regarding the incident of restraint or seclusion.

Every instance in which seclusion or restraint is used on a student will be documented in order to memorialize the events that led up the use of either seclusion or restraint. Documentation must be made on the form prescribed by the school and will include the following:

- the student's name;
- the date and time of the incident;
- the duration of any seclusion or restraint or the beginning and ending times of the restraint or seclusion, or both;
- a description of any relevant events leading up to the incident;
- a description of the incident or student behavior that resulted in the implementation of seclusion or restraint including a description of the danger of injury which resulted in the seclusion or restraint;
- a description of relevant interventions used immediately prior to the implementation of seclusion or restraint;
- a summary of the student's behavior during seclusion or restraint, including a description of the restraint technique or techniques used and any other interaction between the student and staff;
- a description of any injuries to students, staff, or others or property damage;
- a list of school employees who participated in the implementation, monitoring, and supervision of the seclusion or restraint; and
- if applicable, a statement that intervention used was consistent with the student's most current behavioral intervention plan or IEP. The designee will attempt to verbally report every instance in which seclusion or restraint is used on a student to the student's parent or guardian no later than the end of the school day or as soon as practical. The designee

will also send written notification, as soon as practical, to the student's parent or guardian after every instance in which seclusion or restraint is used on a student.

Summit Charter School will provide all school employees with training on:

- appropriate use of effective alternatives to physical seclusion and restraint;
- conflict de-escalation procedures;
- positive supports and behavioral intervention techniques;
- the dangers of seclusion and restraint;
- procedures for contacting fully-trained and certified staff when behavioral crises occur;
- the safe use of seclusion and restraint;
- steps to avoid the use of seclusion or restraint; and
- debriefing practices and procedures. This training will be recurrent and will be provided to new school employees. A core group of appropriate personnel will be trained in each building in crisis intervention techniques, which will include the use of seclusion and restraint procedures. Any member of the core group, trained in crisis intervention techniques, including the safe use of seclusion or restraint procedures, may provide training to other school employees under this plan. Recurrent training will be provided to school employees on a regular basis at least annually.

A designee will be designated as the coordinator of data, planning, and oversight of the use of seclusion or restraint procedures. Summit Charter School will establish a committee to conduct an annual review of all individual and program-wide data associated with this policy. The committee will review the following components related to the use of restraint:

- incident reports;
- procedures used during restraint, including the proper administration of specific approved restraint techniques;
- preventative measures or alternatives tried, techniques or accommodations used to avoid or eliminate the need of the future use of restraint;
- documentation and follow up of procedural adjustments made to eliminate the need for future use of restraint;
- injuries incurred during a restraint;
- notification procedures;
- staff training needs;
- specific patterns related to staff or student incidents; and
- environmental considerations, including physical space, student seating arrangements, and noise levels. Upon review of the data, the committee will identify any issues and/or practices that require further attention and provide written recommendations for changes in policies or practices. The committee may recommend review of the training program



to ensure the most current knowledge and techniques are reflected in the training curriculum.

Reflected in the school handbook will be a careful protection of the rights of disabled students through the fair application of due process. A student with a disability may be removed from school for disciplinary reasons to the extent the removal is applied to non-disabled students, as long as the removals do not constitute a change of placement.

Summit Charter School will not discriminate in its discipline policies or practices on the basis of intellectual ability, status as a person with a disability, proficiency in the English language, or any other basis that would be illegal under applicable state and/or federal laws. There are special rules in Pennsylvania for excluding children with disabilities for disciplinary reasons as set forth in Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code as well as the Procedural Safeguards Notice available through PaTTAN.

Summit Charter School personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether a change of placement, made in accordance with the following requirements related to discipline, is appropriate for a child with a disability who violates a school code of student conduct.

To the extent that they also take such action for children without disabilities, school personnel may, for not more than 10 consecutive school days, remove a child with a disability (other than a child with an intellectual disability) who violates a code of student conduct from his or her current placement to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting, another setting, or suspension. School personnel may also impose additional removals of the child of not more than 10 consecutive school days in that same school year for separate incidents of misconduct, as long as those removals do not constitute a change of placement (see Change of Placement Because of Disciplinary Removals for the definition) or exceed 15 cumulative school days in a school year. Once a child with a disability has been removed from his or her current placement for a total of 10 school days in the same school year, Summit Charter School must, during any subsequent days of removal in that school year, provide services to the extent required. If the behavior that violated the student code of conduct was not a manifestation of the child's disability (see Manifestation determination) and the disciplinary change of placement would exceed 10 consecutive school days, school personnel may apply the disciplinary procedures to that child with a disability in the same manner and for the same duration as it would to children without disabilities, except that the school must provide services to that child as described herein under Services. The child's IEP Team determines the interim alternative educational setting for such services. Under Pennsylvania special education regulations, a disciplinary exclusion of a student with a disability for more than 15 cumulative school days in a school year will be considered a pattern so as to be deemed a change in educational placement (explained under Change of

Placement Because of Disciplinary Removals). Summit Charter School will be required to issue a NOREP/Prior Written Notice to parents prior to a removal that constitutes a change in placement (removal for more than 10 consecutive days or 15 cumulative days).

The services that must be provided to a child with a disability who has been removed from the child's current placement may be provided in an interim alternative educational setting. Summit Charter School will only be required to provide services to a child with a disability who has been removed from his or her current placement for 10 school days or less in that school year, if it provides services to a child without disabilities who has been similarly removed. Students may have the responsibility to make up exams and work missed while being disciplined by suspension and may be permitted to complete these assignments within guidelines established by Summit Charter School.

A child with a disability who is removed from the child's current placement for more than 10 consecutive school days must continue to receive educational services, so as to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP; and receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment, and behavioral intervention services and modifications that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not happen again.

After a child with a disability has been removed from his or her current placement for 10 school days during one school year, or if current removal is for 10 consecutive school days or less, and if the removal is not a change of placement (see definition herein), then school personnel, in consultation with at least one of the child's teachers, will determine the extent to which services will be needed to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP.

If the removal is a change of placement (see definition herein), the child's IEP Team will determine the appropriate services to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP.

### **Manifestation Determination**

Within 10 school days of any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct (except for a removal that does not constitute a change in educational placement i.e., is for 10 consecutive school days or less and not a change of placement), Summit Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP Team (as determined by the parent and Summit Charter School) must review all relevant information in the student's file, including the child's IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant

information provided by the parents to determine:

- if the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability; or
- if the conduct in question was the direct result of Summit Charter School' failure to implement the child's IEP.

If Summit Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the child's IEP Team determine that either of those conditions were met, the conduct must be determined to be a manifestation of the child's disability.

If Summit Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the child's IEP Team determine that the conduct in question was the direct result of Summit Charter School' failure to implement the IEP, Summit Charter School must take immediate action to remedy those deficiencies.

If Summit Charter School, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP Team determine that the conduct was a manifestation of the child's disability, the IEP Team must either:

- Conduct a functional behavioral assessment, unless Summit Charter School had conducted a functional behavioral assessment before the behavior that resulted in the change of placement occurred, and implement a behavioral intervention plan for the child; or
- If a behavioral intervention plan has already been developed, review the behavioral intervention plan, and modify it, as necessary, to address the behavior.

Except as described herein, Summit Charter School must return the child to the placement from which the child was removed, unless the parent and Summit Charter School agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the behavioral intervention plan.

Whether or not the behavior was a manifestation of the child's disability, school personnel may remove a student to an interim alternative educational setting (determined by the child's IEP Team) for up to 45 school days, if the child:

- Carries a weapon (see the definitions herein) on school premises or at a school function under the jurisdiction of Summit Charter School;
- Knowingly has or uses illegal drugs (see the definitions herein), or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance, (see the definitions herein), while on school premises or at a school function under the jurisdiction of Summit Charter School; or
- Has inflicted serious bodily injury (see the definitions herein) upon another person while on

school premises or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the PDE or Summit Charter School.

## **Definitions**

**Controlled substance** means a drug or other substance identified under schedules I, II, III, IV, or V in section 202 (c) of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 812(c)). Illegal drug means a controlled substance; but does not include a controlled substance that is legally possessed or used under the supervision of a licensed health-care professional or that is legally possessed or used under any other authority under that Act or under any other provision of Federal law.

**Serious bodily injury** has the meaning given the term “serious bodily injury” under paragraph (3) of subsection (h) of section 1365 of title 18, United States Code.

**Weapon** has the meaning given the term “dangerous weapon” under paragraph (2) of the first subsection (g) of section 930 of title 18, United States Code.

On the date it makes the decision to make a removal that is a change of placement of the child because of a violation of a code of student conduct, Summit Charter School must notify the parents of that decision, and provide the parents with a procedural safeguards notice.

### Change of Placement Because of Disciplinary Removals

A removal of a child with a disability from the child’s current educational placement is a change of placement requiring a NOREP/prior written notice if:

- The removal is for more than 10 consecutive school days; or
- The removal is for 15 cumulative school days total in any one school year;
- The child has been subjected to a series of removals that constitute a pattern because:
  - o The series of removals total more than 10 school days in a school year;
  - o The child’s behavior is substantially similar to the child’s behavior in previous incidents that resulted in a series of removals;
- Of such additional factors as the length of each removal, the total amount of time the child has been removed, and the proximity of the removals to one another; and
- Whether a pattern of removals constitutes a change of placement is determined on a case-by-case basis by Summit Charter School and, if challenged, is subject to review through due

process and judicial proceedings.

### Determination of Setting

The IEP team must determine the interim alternative educational setting for removals that are changes of placement, and removals under additional authority and special circumstances.

### General

The parent of a child with a disability may file a due process complaint to request a due process hearing if he or she disagrees with any decision regarding placement made under these discipline provisions; or the manifestation determination.

Summit Charter School may file a due process complaint to request a due process hearing if it believes that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others.

The hearing officer may:

- Return the child with a disability to the placement from which the child was removed if the hearing officer determines that the removal was a violation of the requirements described under the heading Authority of School Personnel, or that the child's behavior was a manifestation of the child's disability; or
- Order a change of placement of the child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 school days if the hearing officer determines that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others.

These hearing procedures may be repeated, if Summit Charter School believes that returning the child to the original placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others. When the parent or Summit Charter School has filed a due process complaint related to disciplinary matters, the child must (unless the parent and the PDE or Summit Charter School agree otherwise) remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer, or until the expiration of the time period of removal as provided for and described under the heading Authority of School Personnel, whichever occurs first.

### Special Rules for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

The disciplinary removal of a child with an intellectual disability attending Summit Charter School for any amount of time is considered a change in placement and requires a NOREP/prior written notice (if the disciplinary event does not involve drugs, weapons and/or serious bodily

injury). A removal from school is not a change in placement for a child who is identified with intellectual disability when the disciplinary event involves weapons, drugs, and/or serious bodily injury.

According to certain assurances the Commonwealth entered into related to the PARC consent decree, Summit Charter School may suspend on a limited basis a student with intellectual disability who presents a danger to himself or others upon application and approval by the Bureau of Special Education and only to the extent that a student with a disability other than intellectual disability could be suspended.

#### Protections for Children not yet Eligible for Special Education and Related Services

If a child has not been determined eligible for special education and related services and violates a code of student conduct, but Summit Charter School had knowledge before the behavior that brought about the disciplinary action occurred, that the child was a child with a disability, then the child may assert any of the protections described herein.

#### Basis of Knowledge for Disciplinary Matters

Summit Charter School must be deemed to have knowledge that a child is a child with a disability if, before the behavior that brought about the disciplinary action occurred:

- the parent of the child expressed concern in writing that the child is in need of special education and related services to supervisory or administrative personnel, or a teacher of the child;
- the parent requested an evaluation related to eligibility for special education and related services under Part B of the IDEA; or
- the child's teacher, or other Summit Charter School personnel expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the child directly to Summit Charter School's special education coordinator or to other supervisory personnel of the Summit Charter School.

Summit Charter School would not be deemed to have such knowledge if:

- the child's parent has not allowed an evaluation of the child or refused special education services; or
- the child has been evaluated and determined to not be a child with a disability under Part B of the IDEA.

If prior to taking disciplinary measures against the child, Summit Charter School does not have knowledge that a child is a child with a disability, the child may be subjected to the disciplinary

measures that are applied to children without disabilities who engaged in comparable behaviors. However, if a request is made for an evaluation of a child during the time period in which the child is subjected to disciplinary measures, the evaluation must be conducted in an expedited manner. Until the evaluation is completed, the child will remain in the educational placement determined by school authorities, which can include suspension or expulsion without educational services. If the child is determined to be a child with a disability, taking into consideration information from the evaluation conducted by Summit Charter School, and information provided by the parents, Summit Charter School must provide special education and related services in accordance with Part B of the IDEA, including the disciplinary requirements.

### Referral to and Action by Law Enforcement and Judicial Authorities

State and federal regulations do not:

- Prohibit an agency from reporting a crime committed by a child with a disability to appropriate authorities; or
- Prevent State law enforcement and judicial authorities from exercising their responsibilities with regard to the application of Federal and State law to crimes committed by a child with a disability.

Subsequent to a referral to law enforcement, an updated functional behavior assessment, and positive behavior support plan are required.

If Summit Charter School reports a crime committed by a child with a disability, then Summit Charter School must ensure that copies of the child's special education and disciplinary records are transmitted for consideration by the authorities to whom the agency reports the crime; and may transmit copies of the child's special education and disciplinary records only to the extent permitted by FERPA.

### Bullying

Summit Charter School will strictly prohibit any form of bullying/cyber bullying, harassment, hazing, or other destructive actions that may cause emotional and/or physical harm to students. School policies regarding these prohibited behaviors will be documented in the school handbook. Staff trainings regarding student safety are a critical part of the Summit Charter School professional development plan. Summit Charter School will educate administrators, teachers, families, and students on bullying prevention strategies and techniques. Part of the training will stress the impact of bullying and why it is important for schools to develop and sustain bullying prevention strategies. As required by law, Summit Charter School will post a copy of its

Anti-Bullying Policy on its website.

Summit Charter School will encourage the promotion of positive interpersonal relations between members of the school community, and defines harassment, intimidation, bullying, cyber-bullying, or hazing toward a student, whether by other students, staff, or third parties, as “prohibited behaviors” that will not be tolerated. The school handbook will explain that this prohibition includes aggressive behavior, physical, verbal, and psychological abuse, and violence within a dating relationship. These types of behavior are forms of intimidation and harassment and are strictly prohibited, regardless of whether or not the target of the prohibited behavior are members of legally protected groups, such as sex, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, marital status, age, or disability. The Board will not tolerate any gestures, comments, threats, or actions that cause or threaten to cause bodily harm or personal degradation.

This will apply to all school-related activities, participation in clubs, field trips, open houses, and any other in-person school-related activities on or off school property. The school handbook will make it clear that every student is encouraged, and every staff member is required to report any situation believed to be prohibited behavior directed toward a student. All reports will be investigated with appropriate disciplinary consequences as laid out in the school handbook.

### Student Safety

Summit Charter School will provide a safe and supportive environment by keeping students safe from online predators and solicitors. Summit Charter School takes student safety and well-being seriously. Summit Charter School is committed to following and implementing health and safety requirements applicable to public schools and students should be able to learn in a safe and comfortable environment. Summit Charter School will require an Internet Safety Course for students, parents, and staff that provides information about the various threats, challenges, and safety protocols needed to work and learn online. It contains valuable information about practicing safe behaviors online.

Additionally, teachers and other school staff will be trained to become familiar with the signs of distress such as bullying/cyberbullying, neglect and abuse, depression or other issues that would keep them from doing their best and to know how to respond promptly and professionally when they observe such signs or behaviors.

All members of school staff must complete the trainings at the beginning of the school year and then refer to the trainings throughout the year as needed. Completion of trainings is tracked to ensure all staff members have completed them in a timely manner.

### School Safety Plan



Summit Charter School recognizes its need for a school safety plan. Summit Charter School is committed to providing a safe, orderly learning environment for students. To make this a reality the Board has developed a comprehensive school safety plan that incorporates the provisions of Act 26 and includes protocols for responding to crisis situations, including an outline of the steps that will be taken to finalize Summit Charter School's Safety Plan. The document will be reviewed and updated once the staff has been identified and hired in order to modify and change this plan to meet the "real" needs of the school, the facility, its staff, and the community. The steps that will be taken to review and modify the final safety plan include the following:

- Form a School Safety Committee that includes: Board; school administration, community representatives; representatives of the local police and fire department; and parents.
- Review Act 26, "The Safe Schools Act".
- Review the local school district's safety plans to ensure accordance.
- Review safety plans from other municipalities for content and presentation ideas.
- Develop goals and timelines.
- Draft school safety plan.
- Circulate draft safety plan to the Board, the school administration, and community partners for review.
- Finalize the School Safety Plan.

School safety will be the primary responsibility of the school administration and his/her designee who will oversee the security systems of Summit Charter School as well as the behavior of the students and reporting Act 26 violations. In addition, all staff members will be expected to report to the administration any inappropriate behavior in the school environment. It is the primary responsibility of the staff to create a climate of respect and educational focus. Students will also be expected to set a tone of respect, order, and purposefulness. Particular responsibility will fall to staff to model good and safe behavior and to correct or report to the school administration inappropriate or unsafe behavior or events.

All school employees will be mandated reporters and must report suspected abuse. When child abuse is suspected, the law requires the school employee to immediately make an oral report of suspected child abuse via the statewide toll-free telephone number ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313 or an online written report.

If a school employee makes an oral report to ChildLine, the school employee must follow-up

with a written report, which may be submitted electronically, within 48 hours. A mandated reporter must personally make the report. Summit Charter School administration may assist the school employee in making the report (for example, sit with school employee for support if the school employee is uncomfortable in the process) as long as they do not interfere in any way with the making of the report. Afterward, the school employee should inform the administration about the report.

The school employee will not be required to investigate or be certain of the abuse, or even know the name of the person who is suspected of abusing a child. The responsibility will be to make a report when the school employee has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse. ChildLine will forward the report to the appropriate county child welfare agency, who will investigate the circumstances and may contact school employee for additional information or if there are additional questions.

Summit Charter School will require that all employees receive the mandated reporting training. Mandated reporters who hold a professional license or certification under the Department of State and mandated reporters who work for an agency that is licensed, supervised, or registered with the Department of Human Services will be required to receive training.

#### Possession of Weapons

Possession of weapons in the school setting is a threat to the safety of students and staff and will be prohibited by law. A weapon will include but not be limited to any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nunchaku, firearm, shotgun, rifle, replica of a weapon, and any other tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury. A student will be considered in possession of a weapon when the weapon is found on the person of the student or in the student's vehicle, and the weapon is under the student's control while the student is on school property, on property being used by the school, at any school function or activity, at any school-sponsored activity held away from the school, on any conveyance providing transportation to a school or school-sponsored activity.

Summit Charter School will prohibit students from possessing and bringing weapons and replicas of weapons onto school property, to any school-sponsored activity, and onto any public vehicle providing transportation to school or a school-sponsored activity. The Board will expel for a period of not less than one year any student who violates this weapons policy. Such expulsion will be given in conformance with formal due process proceedings required by law and Board policy. The Principal may recommend modifications of such expulsion requirements on a case-by-case basis.

In the case of a student with a disability, including a student for whom an evaluation is pending,

Summit Charter School will take all steps required to comply with state and federal laws and regulations, the procedures set forth in the memorandum of understanding with local law enforcement and Board policies.

The Principal or designee will react promptly to information and knowledge concerning possession of a weapon. Such action will be in compliance with state law and regulations and with the procedures set forth in the memorandum of understanding with local law enforcement officials and the school's emergency preparedness plan. The Principal or designee will immediately report incidents involving weapons on school property, at any school-sponsored activity or on a conveyance providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity to the local police department that has jurisdiction over the school's property, in accordance with state law and regulations, the procedures set forth in the memorandum of understanding with local law enforcement and Board policies.

The Principal or designee will notify the parent/guardian of any student directly involved in an incident involving weapons as a victim or suspect immediately, as soon as practicable. The Principal or designee will inform the parent/guardian whether or not the local police department that has jurisdiction over the school property has been or may be notified of the incident. The Principal or designee will document attempts made to reach the parent/guardian.

In accordance with state law, the Principal will annually, by July 31, report all incidents involving possession of a weapon to the Office for Safe Schools on the required form. The Principal will annually inform staff, students and parents/guardians about the Board policy prohibiting weapons and about their personal responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of the school community.

#### Data Collection and Reporting for Special Education

Summit Charter School will follow the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) requirements and specifications and comply with Special Education Data Collection protocol. Templates will be submitted in the Special Education Domain as students enrolled in charter schools are reported by the charter school. The December Special Education Submission (student template and special education snapshot) will include all special education students with a valid IEP as of 12/1 of the school year. The July Special Education submission (student template and special education snapshot) will include all students that received special education services from July 1 through June 30 who exited at any time during the current school year.

#### Section 504 Eligible Students

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, commonly referred to as §504, is a statute designed to prohibit discrimination and to assure that disabled students have educational

opportunities and benefits equal to those of non-disabled students. An eligible student under §504 is a student who (a) has, (b) has a record of having, or (c) is regarded as having, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity such as learning, self-care, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, and performing manual tasks. §504 plans are typically written for students who are not receiving services under IDEA but who require accommodations and modification to their instructional program. §504 plans may also be written for students who need modified instructional materials or assistive technology due to their disability. Preexisting §504 plans will remain in place for new students and will be updated periodically. School personnel will be alert for and will identify §504-eligible students and will complete a §504 plan for each identified eligible student. Parents of students in the §504 process will be provided with Pennsylvania procedural safeguards and Parents' Rights documents. Federal law requires all public schools to provide students, regardless of disability, with an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the school's education program. Summit Charter School is committed to working with the schools it supports in ensuring students are provided equal access to the education program. Students with disabilities receive access through the delivery of resources and accommodations tailored to each student's individual abilities and needs, including assistive technologies and individualized support.

C. Describe your school's mandatory student attendance plan and its fit with the code of conduct.

Please see a draft of our Student and Families handbook for information, [Appendix R](#).

Also see above.

## **5. Transportation**

A. Describe your transportation program, including transportation for Special Education students and suggestions for improvement.

Transportation will be provided to the students by their home school district in accordance with 24 PS 13-1361, 24 PS 13-1362, and 24 PS 17-1726-A and any other applicable statutes or regulations that apply. Summit Charter School shall comply with § 711.42. of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code regarding the transportation of students with disabilities. When transportation-related accommodations are needed for special education students, the accommodations will be outlined in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Service Agreement and services funded in accordance with Pennsylvania requirements.

Transportation for school-sponsored curricular-related student activities and curricular-related field trips will be contracted by Summit Charter School with a provider of student transport. The school will also use other methods of transporting available and permitted by law when necessary. In response to the request above for “suggestions for improvement,” Summit Charter School believes that it is incumbent on PDE to provide guidance and incentive for school districts to work with charter schools to provide transportation of charter school students.

Parents will also have the opportunity to drop off and pick up their child.

B. What arrangements will be made to transport students and if you plan to implement an extended-day or extended-year program that requires transportation beyond that which the district provides?

Transportation for before and after-school activities, not considered part of the official school day and school year will be the responsibility of the parents/guardians. For special education-related ESY programs, transportation will be provided and funded in accordance with Pennsylvania requirements.

C. What plans are being made for the coordination of transportation of students who live outside the local district to be transported to the school? The school district of student residence must provide transportation to a charter school up to ten miles from its border.

Nonresident students shall be provided transportation under section 17-1726-A of the Charter School Law. The school district of student residence must provide transportation to a charter school up to ten miles from its border.

As a licensed private school, Summit School of the Poconos is already receiving bus transportation from the majority of our Monroe County Districts.

It is anticipated that most, if not all, students attending the Summit Charter School will be entitled to transportation services provided by their school district of residence. Summit Charter School will provide all necessary information and notification to the school districts of residence for coordinating such transportation of students in a timely and professional manner. Pursuant to Section 1726-A of the charter school law, a school district is required to provide transportation to a charter school located up to ten (10) miles from the school district boundary. The parents or guardians of any student enrolling from a school district that is not responsible for transporting

students to the School will be notified that they are responsible for the transportation of their children to the School.

## **6. Food Service**

A. Describe the food service plan of the school.

Summit Charter School plans to contract comprehensive service from a high-quality food service management provider that demonstrates extensive knowledge and experience in providing such services to public schools. The Board of Trustees, in consultation with the School Leader, will select this provider, based upon the lowest responsible bidder. Some general guidelines for the selection of the food service provider will be the School's commitment to providing students the opportunity for a variety of high quality, nutritious, cost-effective meals daily; a requirement that breakfast and lunch be offered in accordance with the USDA guidelines; and a commitment to adhering to the School's Health and Wellness policy (to be developed by the School Leader, in accordance with PDE and federal regulations, and approved by the Board. The policy will meet guidelines for reimbursable school meals and goals for nutritional education, physical activity, and other school-based activities). The School's intention that the food service program be self-funding. The School has already started the process of identifying a food service vendor for the school and has contacted three (3) for pricing and information on services and options in order to ensure quality and price point.

B. What are the plans for free or reduced lunch or breakfast? State regulations for student participation in such a program must be followed (24 PS 13-1337).

Summit Charter School is committed to providing its students with fresh, healthy meals and to teaching children the importance of a healthy diet.

Families will have the option to send in accompanying lunch/snacks with their children so they can have assurances on what food items are consumed.

The Board of Trustees will establish guidelines to assure that no student is without appropriate meals as required by statute. The School will apply and join appropriate existing programs providing free and reduced price meals for eligible students in accordance with (24 PS 13-1337).

The Board of Trustees will continue to investigate vendor pricing and available service that can bring in meals daily for purchase/consumption. The Board will also further consider future plans for use of the onsite kitchen at the proposed location which would service the currently enrolled students and staff as the school grows.

Summit Charter School is committed to ensuring that every student, regardless of family income level, will have equal opportunity to enjoy a healthy nutritious breakfast and lunch daily. Working with and through its food service provider, the School will offer breakfasts and lunches that meet all state and federal requirements and will offer free or reduced-price breakfasts and lunches to eligible students. Federal guidelines will be followed for determining which students will receive free and reduced-priced lunches and breakfasts, and the charter school will make every effort to ensure that parents are notified. Government-donated commodities from surplus agricultural stocks will be utilized as available and appropriate. No distinction will be made between students participating in the free and reduced-price meal program and those paying full price for meals.

Summit Charter School will provide daily breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack to all students and will contract with an approved school meal-provider, to provide breakfast and lunch to be prepared and served at the school. During the school opening process, Summit will solicit bids from local vendors to provide this service and will participate in the National School Lunch Program. Approximate hours of services are: breakfast from 7:45am until 8:30am and lunch 11:15am-1:00pm (time varies by grade level).

**The PMSD Administrative Review and Report contained a criticism that the Applicant failed to properly present Food Service Operations in the Annual Financial Statements, stating that “Food Service Operations are required to be accounted and reported as an enterprise fund when specific criteria are met as described in the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Codification of Governmental Accounting and Financial Reporting Standards section 1300.109. The utilization of an enterprise fund for food service operations is driven by the school providing goods and services to students on a continuing basis and is financed through user charges.” See, Administrative Review and Report, pg. 35.**

**Pennsylvania Guidance on the use of proprietary fund involving food service activities states that “Charter schools are permitted to account for food service type activities in the general fund if the cafeteria operations do not meet the GASB criteria for proprietary fund reporting.” *Manual of Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pennsylvania Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)*, 59 and *Chart of Accounts for PA LEAs*, page B-3.**

## **7. Timetable**

A. Provide a detailed timetable of projected steps and dates leading to the opening of a

charter school.

A timetable is listed below. Because Summit Charter School is already an operating private school, we expect our transition to charter will be easier than those schools which are not yet established. We expect to retain most if not all of our current teachers, staff, and students.

**Timetable  
Summit Charter School**

Future dates are subject to change upon notification of approval:

Formation of initial Founding Board for Summit School of the Poconos	March 2015
Summit School of the Poconos Incorporates in the state of Pennsylvania and receives 501c3 federal non profit approval	April 2016
Summit School of the Poconos is approved to open as a Private Licensed School in the state of Pennsylvania by the Pa Dept of Education Private Schools Board	June 2016
Summit School of the Poconos opens with 100% of expected enrollment as a K-8 school	September 2016
Summit School of the Poconos is approved by the PA Dept of Education to offer 9th grade and subsequently serves 9th grade students in the fall	June 2017 and September 2017
Summit School of the Poconos completes a move into a larger facility to accommodate growth as well as the approval process for such from the PA Dept of Education and the completion of all requirements by local governing bodies (ie occupancy permit, etc)	May 2018
Summit School of the Poconos is approved by the PA Dept of Education to offer 10th grade and subsequently serves 10th grade students in the fall	June 2018 and September 2018
Discussion of and due diligence RE	June 2018



conversion from Summit School of the Poconos to Summit Charter School	
Vote to begin working on Charter Application for conversion of Summit School of the Poconos to Summit Charter School	January 2019
Notification of resident district Superintendent and neighboring district Superintendents	November 2019
Submission of Charter Application to District	November 2019
Press Release Announcing Summit Charter School	December 2019
Public Hearing	Within 45 days of charter application submission
Notification of Charter Approval	No later than 75 days of the hearing
Student Recruitment & Pre-Enrollment	October 2019 & beyond
Teacher Recruitment	March 2020 & beyond
Staff in-service sessions	August 2020
Formal Board Reorganization	Upon charter approval
Introduction of staff to parents and community	July-August 2020
Building permit applications, bids, and renovations commence	Upon charter approval
Licenses and Documents to Authorities	Upon approval and receipt
Staff onboarding and on payroll	July 2020
Grand Opening and School In Session	September 2020

Given the PMSD’s denial of the charter - mostly for elements that were outside of Charter School Law and not even part of the model Application form prepared by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the above timeline will be modified based on the re-application process provided by law.

## 8. Safety

A. Submit written documentation of intent to comply with all applicable safety requirements including the following to demonstrate the safety and structural soundness of the school:

- Inspection by a local building inspector.
- Inspection by a local fire department.
- Approval from the municipal licensing authority for use of any explosives and flammable compounds or liquids in connection with courses taught at the school.
- Compliance with all other federal, state, and local health and safety laws and regulations.
- Application for certificates, licenses, etc. are part of the planning process

**Note:** All necessary certificates and occupancy permits must be issued and in effect prior to the opening of the charter school. *Preliminary clearances on all these requirements should be obtained prior to a lease being executed.*

Summit Charter School will comply with all applicable safety requirements required by law, including the following to demonstrate the safety and structural soundness of the school: inspection by a local building inspector; Certificate of occupancy; approval from the municipal licensing authority for use of any explosives and flammable compounds or liquids in connection with courses taught at the school (such as chemistry); food safety inspection and a food inspection license if applicable; and compliance with all other federal, state, and local health and safety laws and regulations. Its demonstration to that plan is evidenced by its retention of an Owners' Representative, Jay Appleton, who will assist and coordinate the acquisition of all necessary inspections, certificates, etc. Additionally, the Applicant is in the Due Diligence Period with the owner of the building which was delayed by the COVID-19 closures. All of the requisite certificates and approvals are only obtainable with a signed charter agreement.

The school will maintain a Safety Plan and work with local law enforcement to review and modify said plan annually. The school will maintain a memorandum of understanding with the local police department.

As an operating private school, we already had to fulfill many of these obligations in the past in conjunction with private school law. We understand the regulations for charter schools vary from those of private schools. We have already met with PA State Trooper

First Class, David Peters. Trooper Peters is part of the PSP Troop N and is involved in regular school safety initiatives. A connection was made between us and Trooper Peters by House Representative Maureen Madden in 2018.

We understand that applications for certificates, licenses, etc. are part of the planning process and they will be provided to the Pocono Mountain School District as they are received and before operation as a charter school commences.

## **9. School Health Services**

A. Describe your plan for providing school health services as required under Article XIV of the Public School Code.

Summit Charter School will adopt a plan for providing school health services that complies with Article XIV of the Public School Code. Students will be required to submit a record of appropriate health and dental examinations and immunizations. Summit will contract with local health services providers to accommodate enrollment as required to provide services to students and to meet the requirements of Article XIV: School Health Services of the Public School Code.

At least one full-time Certified School Nurse will be available for every 1500 students. The nurse will be the caretaker of health and immunization records for students and will ensure that grade-level appropriate screenings are conducted annually.

Parents and students will receive information about the school's health services in the parent/student handbook including requirements, assistance, and programs the school offers to students.

The School will provide notice to all parents/guardians regarding Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

B. Describe how school nursing services, including administration of medication will be Delivered.

The School plans to employ at least one full time nurse in our first year of operation. Expected staff is reflected in our budget included with this application. However, the School may decide to outsource such services if that option is more financially viable while maintaining School Health

requirements under charter school law.

A Certified School Nurse will be on staff and as the designee of the charter school's administration to complete health forms and recommend policies and procedures for the School's Health Services, complete yearly student health records, complete PDE and PA Health Department Reporting, oversee student health services, provide student health services, inform and educate staff regarding students' health needs, inform the School Leader of the presence of a communicable disease and, when appropriate, notify the County Health Department and families, and administer medication and care to students in compliance with the Guidelines for PA Schools for the Administration of Medication and Emergency Care.

Medications will be maintained in locked cabinets. Student health records, if hard copy, will be maintained in locked cabinets, and if electronic, in a secure electronic student information system. For each student enrolled in the School, the School will request health records from parent/guardian and/or the transferring school. The records will be maintained as confidential records subject to statute and the policies of the School.

A student who presents a statement signed by a parent/guardian that a medical examination is contrary to his/her religious beliefs shall be examined only when the Secretary of Health determines that the students present a substantial health menace to the health of other persons. Where it appears to School health officials or other employees that a student deviates from normal growth and development or where School examinations reveal conditions requiring health or dental care, the parent/guardian shall be so informed and a recommendation shall be made that the parent consult an appropriate health care provider. The parent/guardian shall be required to report to the School the action taken subsequent to the notification. The parent/guardian of a student to be examined shall be notified of such examinations and be invited to attend, have the examination conducted privately at the parent/guardian's expense, and that the student may be exempted from the examination if it is contrary to religious beliefs.

School Nursing services, provided through contracts with local health services providers, may include: 1) A vision test 2) A hearing test 3) A measurement of height and weight which shall use the measurement to compute a child's weight-for-height ratio 4) Tests for tuberculosis under medical supervision 5) Such other tests as the Advisory Health Board may deem advisable to protect the health of the child. Vision tests will be given at least annually and other tests at intervals otherwise established.

Summit will maintain a comprehensive health record which will include the results of the tests,

measurements, and regularly scheduled examinations and special examinations and which will be protected for confidentiality. The student's health record will also include medical questionnaires completed by the student's parent or guardian.

**Although not required by Charter School Law for the contents of applications or requested in the model charter application developed by the Department, the PMSD included in its review of the charter application that the applicant did not include:**

- 1. A plan to monitor the immunization status of students;**
- 2. A plan for exclusion of provisional students as required within the Department of Health regulations -Title 28. Health and Safety; Part III. Prevention of Diseases; Chapter 23. School Health; Subchapter C. Immunization**
- 3. “The Application failed to understand” (which is an impossibility as the Application is not an entity that can “understand”) and plan for the requirements under the School Health Annual Reimbursement Request System (SHARRS) and offers no reimbursement line item in its budget documents.**
- 4. A plan to provide for the staffing needs to ensure the appropriate collection of data and subsequent submission of the SHARRS report;**
- 5. “The Application failed to provide evidence of compliance with Act 35 of 2014.”**

**In the spirit of cooperation, the Applicant provides the following - without waiving the objection that such a denial point was improper:**

**The proposed charter school will comply with all state immunization requirements and other health requirements that are applicable to schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.**

**As discussed, the School Nurse will be responsible for coordination of the school's health services, including acting as the school administrator's designee in preparing and monitoring immunizations records, preparation of the SHARRS reporting (after review by the school administration for confirmation of accuracy and for the provision of ADM information).**

**The School will ensure that all students are immunized against enumerated diseases in accordance with state law and regulations, unless exempt for medical or religious reasons (which includes a strong moral or ethical conviction similar to a religious belief).**

The School will require a certificate of immunization from its students and the school nurse will maintain said form as part of the student's health record.

Any student who has not been immunized in accordance with state regulations will not be admitted to or permitted to attend schools (unless, as noted, that the student has provided written exemption for medical or religious reasons).

The School may allow for provisional attendance by the student if it receives evidence that the student has begun a multiple dose vaccine series, proof of immunization or a medical certificate on or before the student has attended school for five (5) days.

If a student has not been immunized or cannot provide proof of immunization due to their status as homeless, the School shall allow for that student's attendance. The McKinney-Vento Act requires immediate enrollment, even if students are unable to produce immunization or other medical records, recognizing that families and youth who are homeless are frequently unable to obtain and keep copies of records. 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(C). The vast majority of homeless students have been enrolled in school before and usually have had required immunizations. These records should be a part of their previous school records. Since the enrolling school is required to contact the previous school for records, the information should be available quickly (within 10 days of the request, per PDE, in any event.). 42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(3)(C), (D). The enrolling school and the previous school should work together to get immunization records as soon as possible. If a student has not had immunizations, initial doses should be administered as soon as possible, unless the student has a religious or medical exemption (see above).

For those students in foster care students and students transferring into a school from another school within the Commonwealth will be permitted to attend school and will thirty (30) days to provide proof of immunization, a medical certificate detailing the plan to complete a multiple dose vaccine series or to provide information for an exemption.

The School Administrator is responsible (and may delegate the day to day responsibilities, including review of submitted medical certification to the School Nurse) to ensure that families are aware of immunization requirements prior to admission to School as well as documents required as well as available exemptions.

The Applicant understands that it is required to report its immunization data electronically to the Department of Health by December 31 of each year.

As highlighted by the experience with COVID-19, the Applicant understands that it also

bears responsibility to ensure that those students who have been diagnosed by a physician or are suspected of having a disease by the school nurse shall be excluded from school for periods indicated by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. The school nurse is responsible for reporting such suspected communicable diseases to the local health department as well as the state Department of Health.

The Applicant understands that it must implement universal precautions to minimize the transmission of communicable diseases as well as provide instruction to its staff and all of its students (in age appropriate ways) regarding the prevention of communicable and life-threatening diseases.

The School will require that students submit to health and dental examinations – conducted either by the school physician or dentist or a private practitioner in lieu of the school examinations (completed within one year of the student’s entry into the school or the required grade). A comprehensive health examination shall be required upon original entry, in sixth grade, and in eleventh grade. A comprehensive dental examination shall be required upon original entry, in third grade, and in seventh grade.

In terms of 24 PS. Section 1423, the Charter School will avail itself of the Department of Education’s automatic external defibrillator program such that automatic external defibrillators will be available in the school building(s), including the equipment and supplies necessary for the proper operation of said devices. As such, in order to be eligible for said devices and equipment from the department, the School will:

- 1. Assure that two (2) or more persons assigned to the location where the automatic external defibrillator will be primarily housed are trained as required in subsection (d).*
- 2. Ensure that the device will be secured in a safe and readily accessible location and agree to properly maintain and test the device according to the manufacturer's operational guidelines.*
- 3. Submit a valid prescription for the device from a licensed medical practitioner in this Commonwealth.*
- 4. Agree to provide the training required by subsection (d).*
- 5. School personnel who are expected to use the automatic external defibrillator shall complete training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and in the use of an automatic external defibrillator provided by the American Heart Association, the American Red Cross or through an equivalent course of instruction approved by the Department of Health.*
- 6. A school entity may include the training required by subsection (d) in its continuing professional education plan submitted to the department under section 1205.1.*

***Id.*** It is the School's understanding that the Department:

***(g) From funds appropriated for this purpose, the department may assist school entities and nonpublic schools that are not equipped with automatic external defibrillators by providing a discount from the contract bid price obtained under subsection (b) or by providing automatic external defibrillators obtained under subsection (b). Id.***

**In compliance with the School Code, the School will report each year, no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>, on the number, condition, age and placement of automatic external defibrillators in its school building(s).**

**After the initial report is made, SCS may report this information as part of the annual report required by the Commonwealth under section 2505.1 to receive State reimbursement for health services.**

**The Charter School will also ensure that it will have at least one person certified in the use of cardiopulmonary resuscitation during regular school hours when school is in session and students are present.**



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