

Policies for Louisiana Charter Schools

“Best Practice” for Student/Parent and
Employee Handbooks

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Charter schools can have their charters revoked for:

- Poor academic performance
 - Business mismanagement
 - Legal noncompliance
- “A charter school can be shut down at the end of its third year if the school or any of its employees violates its charter, fiscal or accounting standards, or the law”

Why Have Written Policies?

- Convey legal rights and obligations
- Communicate mutual expectations for students, parents, employees, and the community
- Shape the unique culture of a school

Policies for Louisiana Charter Schools

- ***Required by**
- Law
- Regulation
- Ordinance
- Contract
- **Recommended as “Best Practice”**
- To communicate expectations
- To shape school’s unique character
- Convey what is special about school’s message and mission

CAUTION

- *Be aware of legal requirements
- Maintain management discretion and flexibility
- Do not commit to policies to which you are not legally bound
- Be prepared to “live with” policies as written
- Be fair and consistent with implementation
- WHEN IN DOUBT SEEK ADVICE FROM AN EXPERT

Risk of Not Having Written Policies

- Employees not aware of rights
- Violation of law
- Liability and monetary damages
- Morale problems
- Performance issues
- Lack of unity/universal goals

Required Policies Depend On:

- Type of Charter School (Types 1-5)
 - Number and ages of students
 - Number of Employees
- Example:
- *Student admission requirements
 - *Teacher certification
 - *Relevant state and federal employment laws

Designated Contacts

- Encourage Open Communication
 - Best to resolve complaints internally
- Alternative avenues for grievances
 - School Leader
 - Principal
 - Human Resources

Student/Parent Policies: Commitment to Mission (Charter School Law*)

- Mission Statement
- Description of Charter School and Faculty
- Parent/student Contract
- Attendance
- Academic curriculum and homework
- Yearly Calendar events
- Behavior
- Honor code

Student/Parent Policies: Performance Expectations*

- Grades
 - Grading system
 - Report cards
 - Promotional standards
 - Parental action
- Attendance policy
 - Excused and unexcused
 - Makeup work
- Remedial Programs
 - Tutoring
 - Extended day
- Extracurricular activities

Student/ Parent Policies: Behavioral Expectations*

- Honor code
 - Honesty, integrity, respect
- Dress code
- In-school discipline
 - Provide examples
 - Consequences
- Short and long term suspension
- Expulsion

Student/Parent Policies: Discipline

- *Due Process Requirements Mandated
- Dependent on length/type punishment
 - Conference
 - Hearing
 - Legal representation
 - Consistent treatment

Student/Parent Policies: “Harassment” Free Environment

- *Mandatory abuse reporting
- *Harassment policy
- *Anti-discrimination policy (special ed)
- *Violence
- Drugs/alcohol
- Damage to School property

Employee Handbook: Initial Employment

- *Equal Opportunity Employer
- *Teacher Certification Requirements
- Acknowledgement
- Disclaimer about handbook
- “At will” employment
- *Conditions of employment, i.e. criminal background check, drug testing

Employee Professional Standards

- Outline professional expectations and consequences
- Outside employment
- Conflict of interest
- Nepotism
- Gifts
- Conviction/arrest
- Alcohol/drugs

Employee Performance Expectations

- Describe primary responsibilities
- Teaching policies
- Participation in community
- Attendance
- Work product
- Evaluation process
- Promotional standards

Employee Progressive Performance Management

- Train principals, school leader and supervisors
 - To effectively convey expectations
 - How to manage performance
- Fair and Consistent treatment
 - Similarly situated employees
 - Treated the same
 - Cannot violate state or federal employment laws
 - Grievance procedure

***Workplace Free of Harassment/Discrimination**

- Equal employment
- Whistleblower law
- Workplace violence
- Conflict resolution
- Abuse/neglect
- Student disciplinary procedure

Health and Safety

- *Immunization and Health Requirements
- *In-school medication policy
- Field Trips
- *Abuse/Neglect Reporting
- Occupational safety
- Crisis prevention and management
- Environmental concerns

Salary and Benefits

- Employment contracts/term
- Position/standards/duties
- Employment categories
- Salary structure
- Time Reporting
- Payroll Period
- Deductions
- Insurance
- COBRA
- Worker's compensation

Leave and Holidays

- Sick
- Holidays
- *Family Medical Leave
- *Pregnancy/Maternity
- *Workplace accommodation
- *Jury duty
- Bereavement

School Property and Records

- *Public information
- *Public Meeting law
- *Confidential and Privileged files
- Computer and Technology
- Search and Seizure

Recap

- Be aware of legal obligations
- Management discretion
- Communication
- Open door
- Fair and consistent application
- Periodic review
- **WHEN IN DOUBT CONSULT EXPERT**