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*Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent*  
*"Educating Georgia's Future"*

# **Charter School Renewal Application**

**For Schools Seeking  
Renewal from Both a  
Local Board of Education  
and the  
State Board of Education**

***July 2016***

## CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATION COVER PAGES

**Check One:**    ☒ Start-up Renewal    ☐ Conversion Renewal

When was the original charter term start date? 1999-2004

How many charter terms has the school been in existence? 4

**Name of Charter School:** Oglethorpe Charter School

**Name of the Georgia nonprofit corporation that currently holds the charter:** Oglethorpe Charter School, Inc.

**Local school system in which charter school is physically located:** Savannah-Chatham County Public School System

### **Contact Information for the Governing Board Chair**

<b>Contact Person:</b>	<u>Sam Carter</u>	<u>Board Chair</u>
	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>

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### **Contact Information for the Person Filling out this Application**

<b>Contact Person:</b>	<u>Kevin Wall</u>	<u>Principal</u>
	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>

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# CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Name of Charter School: Oglethorpe Charter School

Proposed Charter Term Length: 5 Years

Current Grade Range: 6-8 Grade range at the end of the charter term: 6-8

Expected enrollment at the end of the charter term: 600

This application was approved by Savannah-Chatham County Public School System Board of Education on September 6, 2017.

For each year of the NEW charter term, indicate the number of students the charter school plans to serve.

	6	7	8	Total
<b>Year 1</b>	150	150	300	600
<b>Year 2</b>	300	150	150	600
<b>Year 3</b>	150	300	150	600
<b>Year 4</b>	150	150	300	600
<b>Year 5</b>	300	150	150	600

1. State the charter school's mission and describe why this initiative is important to the community it serves. Also provide a brief description of any defining features of the school. Include how stakeholders were involved in the petition process and how they will continue participating. (350 words or less)

In 1999, "Oglethorpe Academy" (now Oglethorpe Charter School or OCS) became Georgia's first startup charter school. Its mission was then and has always been, "Partnering with parents and community to inspire students to achieve personal and educational excellence."

From its inception nearly 20 years ago, OCS's founders, parents, faculty and stakeholders have prepared students to realize this mission fully and to launch student-citizens into high school, post-secondary excellence, careers for which they are well-prepared and fully-informed, and into productive lives.

With its original charter term and two full renewal terms successfully completed and a third renewal term on track for successful completion, the Board of Directors, principal and leadership of OCS are petitioning our local and state authorizers for what we believe will be our final middle school renewal before adding a high school program. OCS will use this renewal term to work with its authorizers and complete planning to enhance OCS's academic structure and take students from middle school, through high school, and into college on course for careers and lives of their choosing and their parents' choosing all at one charter school.

The renewal application and curriculum plan that follow supports OCS's vision to meet economic needs through a focus on STEM and arts-related academic excellence. The goals and governing board structure will continue preparing students for high school and college completion at the highest level of each student's interest. The proven financial stability of OCS ensures sustainability and a focus on continuous improvement through data analysis and stakeholder and student engagement.

2. Describe the charter school's academic program, specifically focusing on why it is innovative in your school district(s). Include mention of any waivers of state law and SBOE rule that are needed to implement the academic program. Be sure to describe any special characteristics of your charter school, such as a special population or some other feature or features which enhance educational opportunities. (350 words or less)

Oglethorpe Charter School will continue to offer programs preparing students to excel in the high school pathways focused on "mastery of content" in Savannah-Chatham County's many high school choice programs. OCS will continue to offer courses that allow 8<sup>th</sup> graders to earn high school credit in core academic areas. OCS will continue its STEAM emphasis in middle school prerequisites for Advanced Academics and Engineering and Technology, though all SCCPSS high school pathways will be positively impacted by the middle school's STEAM focus.

3. Describe the charter school's organizational structure, specifically focusing on its innovation and need for flexibility, its general partnership structure with an educational service provider (ESP) if any, and the school's community interest and need. (350 words or less)

Oglethorpe Charter School is overseen by an autonomous Board of Directors with 11 members. The goals and governing board structure in this application embrace the requirements of an innovative, high quality charter middle school with a mission focus on preparing students to understand their own economic opportunities in high school and beyond. OCS's annual measures, its use of charter flexibility, and its proven financial stability ensure sustainability and a focus on continuous improvement through data analysis and stakeholder and student engagement. OCS is an independent charter school that has no management contracts.

4. Charters are typically granted for five years to balance the need for freedom to succeed with authorizer oversight responsibilities. If you are requesting a term length of 6-10 years, please explain why. (350 words or less)

Oglethorpe Charter School has been one of Georgia's most successful middle schools for the better part of two decades. OCS is requesting a five-year charter renewal term (and its state-leading fifth charter term overall). During the next five years – and possibly much sooner - OCS will complete its plan to add a college and career academy high school program in concert with its local and state authorizers.

## PAST PERFORMANCE

1. Complete and attach as Exhibit 5 the Performance Framework available on the GaDOE's Charter Schools Division website to show the school's performance during each year of your current charter term and include with your charter school renewal application. This Performance Framework will be presented to the State Board of Education with your charter petition, so please ensure it is accurate.
2. Page 10 Provide a narrative describing how the charter school performed in meeting the academic and organizational goals set forth in its current charter contract. In your narrative:
  - Address the school's performance in each year of your current charter term.
  - You are urged to include any supporting charts, tables, or graphs that provide quantitative data.
  - If your charter school did not meet all of the goals in its charter contract, explain any mitigating factors to which this can be attributed, and explain how the school plans to address them in the upcoming charter renewal term requested.
3. Page 15 Describe the school's current financial situation. In your description:
  - Include an explanation of financial results.
  - Detail any financial successes or struggles the school experienced during the current charter term. Include any instances of fraudulent behavior or accusations of fraudulent behavior by school staff, governing board members, or anyone else associated with the school.
  - Explain how the school will address any struggles discussed above as well as any outstanding debts. Explain how the school will allocate any surplus funds.
4. Page 15 Provide a brief overview of the school's current governance structure. In your description, you must include:
  - Specific examples of decisions the governing board has made on behalf of the school;
  - Specific examples of decisions the school leader has made on behalf of the school;
  - How the governing board holds the school leader, any charter partners (ESP/CMO/EMO), and any independent contractors accountable; and
  - The governing board's training program for the current and proposed charter term. Attach as Exhibit 6 a copy of the board's Governance Training Plan.
5. Page 16 Describe how the school provides state- and federally-mandated services to **students with disabilities**. Reciting the requirements of law and rule is insufficient. Your description must include the school's practices and procedures to:
  - Evaluate and identify students with disabilities;
  - Develop, review, and revise Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);
  - Integrate special education into the general education program;
  - Ensure that the school facility meets the requirements of other related laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504;
  - Address student discipline;
  - Handle programming disputes involving parents;

- Ensure confidentiality of special education records;
  - Purchase services from special education vendors or to contract with your local district to provide a continuum of special education services and how this arrangement will work; and
  - Secure technical assistance and training.
6. Page 19 Describe how the charter school provides state- and federally-mandated services for English Learners (ELs). Reciting the requirements of law and rule is insufficient. Your description must include the diagnostic methods or instruments that are used to identify and assess those students, as well as the instructional program that is provided to ELs.
7. Page 20 Provide the number and percentage of students receiving In-School Suspensions, Out-of-School Suspensions, or Expulsions during the current charter term (e.g., the past 5 years). How does this discipline and dismissal data compare to the [Office of Civil Rights data](#)?

	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic		%		%		%
American Indian		%		%		%
Asian / Pacific Islander		%		%		%
Black / African American		%		%		%
White		%		%		%
Two or More Races		%		%		%
Total Population						

8. Page 21 Describe in detail any difficulties faced during the charter term that were not already addressed above, how the school dealt with such difficulties, and if they remain an issue for the school. Also explain how the school plans to avoid these difficulties during the upcoming charter renewal term.

## PROPOSED CHANGES

9. If the answers given above to questions 1 - 8 reflect a change to any of the following, please provide the rationale for the change:

A. Page 22 **ACADEMIC CHANGES:**

- The academic program and curriculum.
- The use of waivers/innovations.
- School programs – this includes Students with Disabilities, Gifted and Talented, English Learners, etc.
- Any assessments being used.
- Any administrative positions.

B. Page 26 **GOVERNANCE CHANGES:**

- The school's governance structure.
- The school's governing board composition.

- The school's relationship with an Educational Service Provider or other Charter Partner.
- The relationship with the local district.

C. Page 26 **FINANCIAL CHANGES:**

- The school's financial structure.
- The school's CFO.
- The school's relationship with any major creditors (e.g., landlords, investors etc.)

D. Page 26 **OPERATIONAL CHANGES:**

- The school's facilities – this should include any proposed expansion or renovations.
- The school's attendance zone and any enrollment priorities being used (see O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1)).
- Whether the school will utilize a weighted lottery to provide an increased chance of admission for educationally disadvantaged students pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1) and State Board Rule 160-4-9-.05(2)(g).
- Any services provided to students such as transportation, food service, etc.
- The grades the charter school will serve. Please note this includes adding additional grades or reducing current grades.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

10. Page 28 Briefly describe how the school has and will continue with its proposed changes to serve the needs of its students for the upcoming (renewed) charter term.



**CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATION**  
**for OGLETHORPE CHARTER SCHOOL**

## PAST PERFORMANCE

### Performance In Meeting Academic And Organizational Goals

Please note the Performance Framework attached (as required) as Exhibit 5.

According to the most recent report by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), in Year

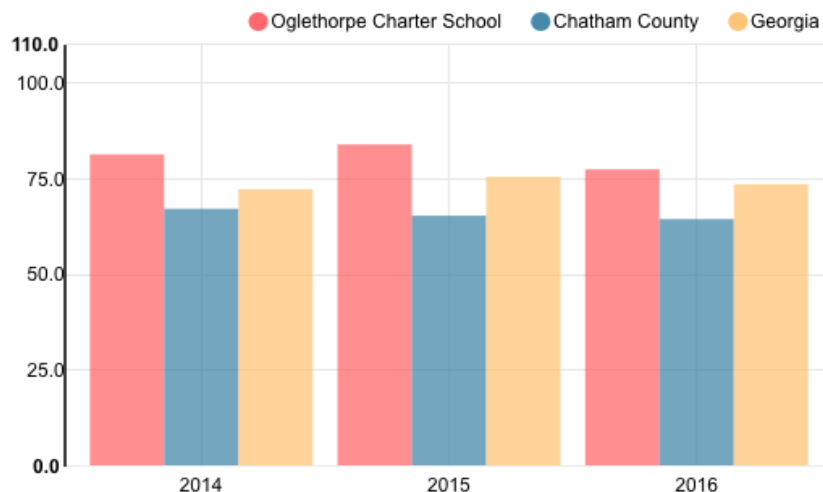
Three of its current charter (most current year for which complete data are available):

- Oglethorpe Charter School's overall performance is higher than 63% of schools in the state and is higher than its district.
- Its students' academic growth is higher than 69% of schools in the state and higher than its district.
- 81.4% of its 8th grade students are reading at or above the grade level target.
- Oglethorpe Charter School is Beating the Odds (meaning that it performs better than similar schools) and has a four-star School Climate Rating.

For all three years of Oglethorpe's current charter term, the school has exceeded both the state and district

College and Career Ready Performance Index scores:

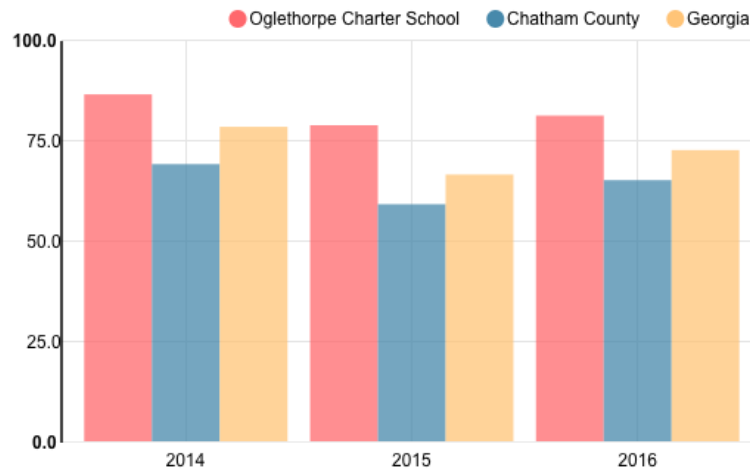
CCRPI Single Score



Oglethorpe's students have also surpassed both the state and district performance in reading scores during the current charter term:

### Reading at or above the Grade Level Target (8th Grade)

Percent of students in grade 8 achieving Lexile measure greater than 1050



Oglethorpe's performance in Georgia Milestones exams have only been reported for Years 2 and 3:

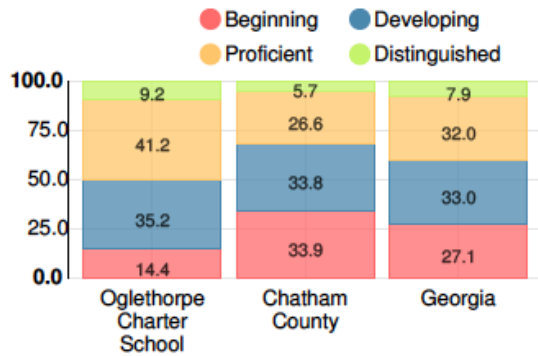
School Year	Subject	Number Tested	Beginning Learners	Developing Learners	Proficient Learners	Distinguished Learners
2015-16	English Language Arts	594	14.0%	42.9%	37.4%	5.7%
	Mathematics	547	13.9%	43.1%	35.3%	7.7%
	Science	591	34.5%	35.9%	26.9%	2.7%
	Social Studies	592	18.8%	47.8%	27.5%	5.9%
2014-15	English Language Arts	569	14.6%	35.1%	41.1%	9.1%
	Mathematics	570	10.5%	39.5%	36.0%	14.0%
	Science	570	33.5%	36.8%	25.3%	4.4%
	Social Studies	567	21.3%	46.9%	23.8%	7.9%

For both years that Milestones performance has been reported, the percentage of Oglethorpe's students scoring Proficient and/or Distinguished has surpassed district performance on all Milestones tests and the state on every test except Science.

## Oglethorpe Student Performance – 2015 Georgia Milestones

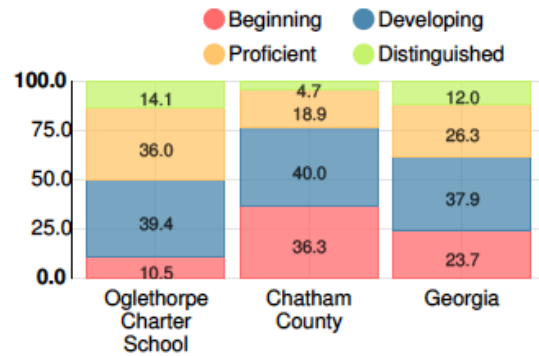
### English

Percent of students scoring in each performance level on 2015 Georgia Milestones for middle school grades



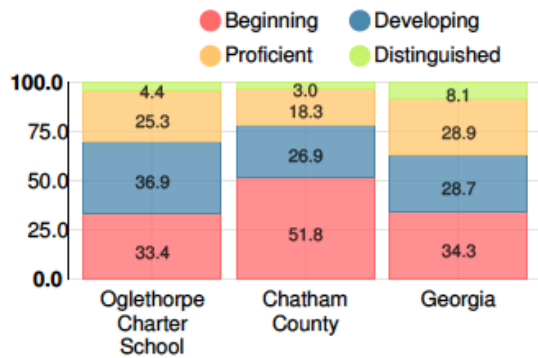
### Mathematics

Percent of students scoring in each performance level on 2015 Georgia Milestones for middle school grades



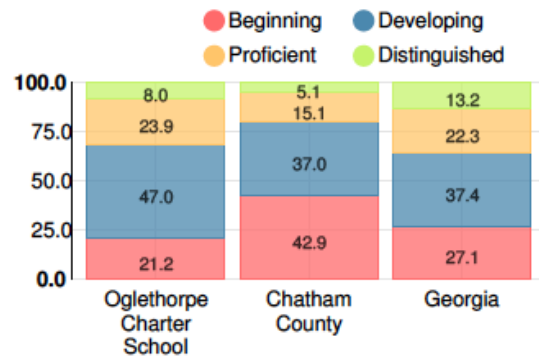
### Science

Percent of students scoring in each performance level on 2015 Georgia Milestones for middle school grades



### Social Studies

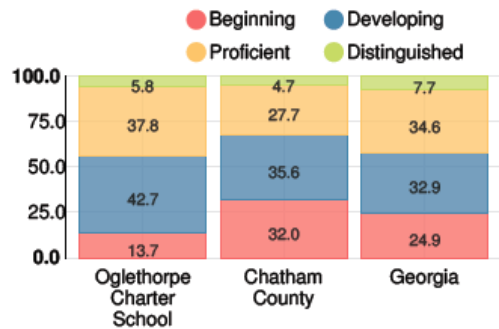
Percent of students scoring in each performance level on 2015 Georgia Milestones for middle school grades



## Oglethorpe Student Performance – 2016 Georgia Milestones

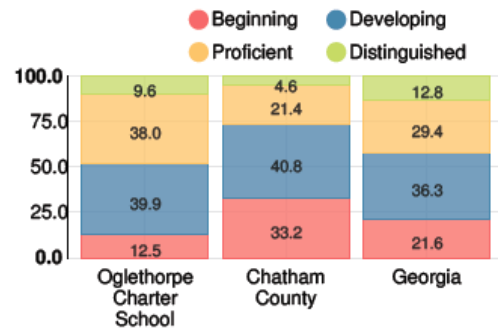
### English

Percent of students scoring in each performance level on 2016 Georgia Milestones for middle school grades



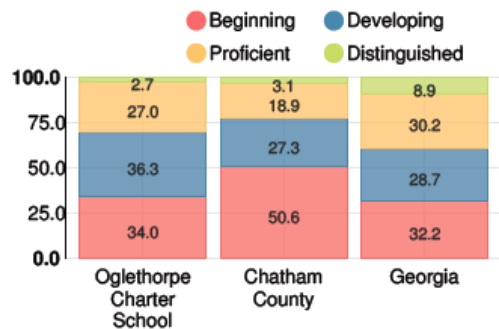
### Mathematics

Percent of students scoring in each performance level on 2016 Georgia Milestones for middle school grades



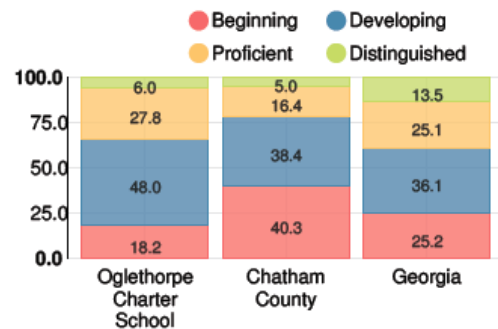
### Science

Percent of students scoring in each performance level on 2016 Georgia Milestones for middle school grades



### Social Studies

Percent of students scoring in each performance level on 2016 Georgia Milestones for middle school grades



Oglethorpe’s strengths in English and Math are enhanced by using the charter’s flexibility to double-up teaching those courses. To bolster performance in Science, the school has recruited a new STEM instructor and begun blending Arts to embrace the trend toward STEAM instruction. Oglethorpe expects the 2017 Milestones reports to show gains in Science.

In the current term, 90% of students taking high school credit courses are required to meet or exceed standards on state administered end-of-course tests. *This measure represented a 5% higher benchmark*

than in the charter contract that ended in 2013. As the table below shows, for the Years 2 and 3,

Oglethorpe has exceeded 90% by yet another five percent:

School Year	Subject	Number Tested	Beginning Learners	Developing Learners	Proficient Learners	Distinguished Learners
2015-16	9th Grade Literature and Composition	48	0.0%	4.2%	70.8%	25.0%
	Algebra I	47	0.0%	4.3%	66.0%	29.8%
2014-15	9th Grade Literature and Composition	30	0.0%	6.7%	63.3%	30.0%
	Coordinate Algebra	42	0.0%	4.8%	69.0%	26.2%

Regarding Organizational goals and measures, for each year of the current charter term:

1. Oglethorpe has attracted and/or retained highly qualified faculty and staff.
2. Oglethorpe has involved all stakeholders in the school improvement process.
3. The OCS Governing Board has developed and/or continued monitoring a three-year strategic plan.
4. The OCS Governing Board has continued its unbroken record of fiscal health including operating within an approved budget, maintaining adequate emergency reserve funds, and passing an annual, external audit.
5. The OCS Governing Board ensures the curricular and educational programs are aligned with the school mission
6. The OCS Governing Board and administration have complied with all applicable laws, rules, regulations and provisions of the charter contract.
7. Oglethorpe has complied with annual with reporting requirements to SCCPSS and the state.

As a final measure of Oglethorpe's academic and organizational performance, the Georgia Charter Schools Association named Oglethorpe a finalist for its 2017 Charter School Of The Year Award.

### **Current Financial Situation**

OCS is a healthy school financially. The Governing Board has approved an operating budget annually that meets operation needs and provides for adequate operating reserves, and the school has received audits with no findings from certified public accountants in Savannah each year of the current charter term.

The school operates frugally and allocates surplus funds - many times at the request of faculty - to further support the school's mission, for professional development, for equipment or curricula to enhance teaching and learning, to support planning (such as planning to add a high school/college and career academy program in the near future), and to further solidify the school's emergency reserve.

### **Overview Of The School's Current Governance Structure**

The OCS Governance Training Plan is attached as Exhibit 6. It was developed by the Georgia Charter Schools Association (GCSA), a training vendor approved by the State Board of Education, which also conducts the annual training for OCS's Governing Board.

In the current charter term, the Governing Board has overseen the transition to a larger middle school enrollment (growing by a third to 602 from long-time middle school enrollment of 400), occupying and utilizing a new facility constructed by the district and funded by an educational special local option sales tax, selecting and evaluating an excellent principal/instructional leader, maintaining the school's focus on fulfilling the school's mission and meeting accountability targets, and operating in a fiscally-sound manner during a difficult economy.

Kevin Wall has been the principal of Oglethorpe for 11 years. In that time, he has worked with the Governing Board to oversee the enrollment growth of the school by nearly 30%; successfully completed

two prior charter renewals approved by the local district and by the state; helped negotiate the design, occupy and use a state-of-the-art facility working hand-in-hand with the district and its Board of Education; and served as the instructional leader driving Oglethorpe's consistent trend of academic success. His most successful action has been the creation of the "looping" cohort (doubling the enrollment of one grade's cohort and assigning them to a new, designated team of instructors who stay with that cohort through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and then loop back to take another 6<sup>th</sup> grade cohort) to maximize the capacity of the current facility.

The Governing Board evaluates the principal annually after the conclusion of each school year, upon receipt of accountability data, using the state's LeaderKeys (LKES) framework. The principal in turn evaluates the faculty using the state's TeacherKeys (TKES) framework. There are no contracts with vendors providing school back-office functions (such as with an ESP/CMO/EMO). The principal and Governing Board agreed in 2016 to hire an independent consultant to assist with the college and career academy expansion planning, and that consultant submits monthly reports to the principal, who shares them with the Governing Board. That consultant's work is also included in the approved, annual budget with all expenses included in the annual audit.

The Governing Board is currently comprised of 11 volunteer directors who represent parents and the community. Per Oglethorpe's bylaws, the current structure is six parent members and five community members. There is currently one vacancy for a community member. Four of the parent members are employed in local higher education.

### **State And Federally-Mandated Services To Students With Disabilities**

Oglethorpe will continue to comply with all federal laws regarding Exceptional Child Education (ECE). The Special Education teachers employed by Oglethorpe participate in the development of any IEP ("individualized education plan") for exceptional students attending Oglethorpe. The Department of



Specialized Instruction at Oglethorpe will continue to maintain the same administrative responsibilities as found in all other middle schools in the district. Oglethorpe will continue to use the Savannah Chatham County School System's Department of Specialized Instruction administrative process, forms and secure digital storage to comply with the requirements of procedural due process and to ensure the confidentiality of special education records.

The goal of the Exceptional Child Education program at Oglethorpe is to assist students in meeting their educational objectives and needs as described in their Individual Education Plans (IEP) and to help them master grade level standards. This is done with the support of full-time, certified Special Education teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff who supervise the formation and implementation of the Individual Education Plans. The Inclusion Model is the primary form of direct services provided to students at Oglethorpe. This model is used to ensure that each student has the maximum benefit of grade-level academic instruction. The Pull Out Model is used sparingly on an as-needed basis. Additional support is given as needed in the form of classroom accommodations and modifications, testing accommodations and modifications, study skills instruction, social/emotional consultation, speech therapy, and occupational therapy.

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be developed and implemented for every student identified and placed as a student with a disability covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Oglethorpe will continue to provide ESE services as documented on the IEP. Once a student is enrolled, Oglethorpe will review and make a good faith effort to implement any existing IEP as required by law. If it is determined by the IEP committee that the student has needs that cannot be met at Oglethorpe, the IEP committee will focus on the appropriate placement for the student.

The Oglethorpe Governing Board shall be responsible to ensure that the needs of ESE students are being met. Therefore, the District staff shall have access to view, review, copy, retrieve, request, and/or recover the ESE files at Oglethorpe upon request.

Oglethorpe will continue to comply with all federal special education laws and regulations, including section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The Charter School shall report its student enrollment to the SCCPSS Board in accordance with the Board's policies and procedures. The SCCPSS Board includes the Charter School's enrollment in the SCCPSS Board's report of student enrollment.

Oglethorpe fully embraces Response to Intervention (RTI) with grade level planning RTI meetings. All core academic teachers participate in the bimonthly meetings during their planning periods with the Principal, Director of Instruction and Guidance Counselor. Special education referral is only made after all RTI instructional strategies have been exhausted.

Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) document the type of assessment to be given (regular or alternate) and if accommodations are needed. An active Section 504 student's individual 504 Plan will document any accommodations to standardized testing that are needed. An active student's individual IEP Plan will document any accommodations to standardized testing that are needed. Results of District and State assessments shall be reported separately for Oglethorpe and used to report academic performance.

Oglethorpe uses student data to identify students in need of additional support through tutorials and direct instruction, as well as those who require enrichment. Oglethorpe uses student data to evaluate academic progress and set new goals and objectives.

Oglethorpe will not waive the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through § 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements, and Oglethorpe will therefore comply with any recommendation or direction of the State Board with respect to O.C.G.A. § 20-14-1.

If required supplemental educational service cases arise, Oglethorpe provides supplemental educational services pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.03 and ESEA/CCRPI. If required remedial educational cases arise, Oglethorpe provides remediation services pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01 and ESEA/CCRPI.

### **State And Federally-Mandated Services For English Learners (ELs)**

Oglethorpe will continue to comply with all federal laws regarding EL student (also known as ESOL). The designated EL coordinator at Oglethorpe maintains the same administrative responsibilities found in all other middle schools in the district. Oglethorpe will continue to use the Savannah Chatham County School System EL administrative process and forms to comply with the requirements. The EL coordinator at Oglethorpe is the point person for the identification of potential EL students. The coordinator consults with the Savannah Chatham County School System district EL coordinator to provide appropriate EL services for all identified EL students attending Oglethorpe.

The following table is from the state's data system regarding the enrollment percentages at Oglethorpe for EL students during the current charter term (there have been none), as well as for special needs students (around 6% consistently) and gifted students (over 30% consistently):

		Enrollment Percent		
		2015-16	2014-15	2013-14
Compensatory Programs	English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (Grades K-12)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Remedial Education (Grades 6-8)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Special Education (Grades K-12)	6.0%	5.8%	6.1%
	Special Education (PK)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Selected Programs	Alternative Programs (Grades K-12)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Gifted (Grades K-12)	30.1%	32.5%	36.2%

**Discipline And Dismissal Data**

The following tables document discipline and dismissal data for each year of the current charter term.

Since this data comes directly from the files of the administrator (assistant principal) overseeing discipline and was double-checked by additional staff specifically for this application, these figures are more accurate than the discipline and dismissal data reported by the Office of Civil Rights:

Year One (2013-14)	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
American Indian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian / Pacific Islander	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Black / African American	0	0%	13	2.31%	0	0%
White	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Two or More Races	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total Population - 562						

Year Two (2014-15)	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	0	0%	1	0.2%	0	0%
American Indian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian / Pacific Islander	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Black / African American	0	0%	42	7.04%	13	2.18%
White	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Two or More Races	0	0%	3	0.5%	0	0%
Total Population - 597						

Year Three (2015-16)	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
American Indian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian / Pacific Islander	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Black / African American	1	0.17%	28	4.7%	9	1.5%
White	1	0.17%	2	0.3%	0	0%
Two or More Races	0	0%	5	0.83%	0	0%
Total Population - 602						

### **Difficulties Faced**

The only significant difficulty faced by OCS this charter term – viewed by the school and its stakeholders as more a challenge than an obstacle – was the requirement to expand the school’s enrollment from its traditional 400 to 600. Considering that the tradeoff was another five-year charter renewal AND the ability to occupy a brand new facility constructed by the district with SPLOST funding, it was a reasonable expectation and a generous, far-sighted offer by the district.

Oglethorpe’s principal and academic team came up with a plan to double the size of the Year One 6<sup>th</sup> grade cohort and create a “looping team” of dedicated instructors to take half of that expanded cohort, stay with them through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, then loop back to 6<sup>th</sup> grade and repeat the cycle.

There was a significant learning curve among the teachers recruited for this team. All but one left after Year One of the current charter term (five of six certified teachers) and had to be replaced before Year Two. Having learned much about the flexibility and strengths needed by such a team of educators, however, Oglethorpe’s principal and academic team recruited capable replacements who have since helped the school’s largest ever cohort complete 8<sup>th</sup> grade (in 2016) with stellar academic performance. In the just-completed school year, the looping team taught a new 6<sup>th</sup> grade cohort of 145 students.

## PROPOSED CHANGES

### Academic Changes

From its inception nearly 20 years ago, Oglethorpe Charter School's founders, parents, faculty and stakeholders have envisioned adding a high school program to realize the school's mission fully and to launch student-citizens into post-secondary excellence, into careers for which they are well-prepared and fully-informed, and into productive lives.

This application for a renewal term will give OCS the time to complete its planning to add a high school program when the time is right that can also receive state certification as a college and career academy. With its original charter term and two full renewal terms successfully completed and a third renewal term on track for successful completion, the Board of Directors, principal and leadership of Oglethorpe have decided that now is the time to move toward fulfillment of that vision and complete Oglethorpe's academic structure to take students from middle school, through high school, and into college on course for careers and lives of their choosing and their parents' choosing. OCS will eventually embrace the model described in Georgia law since 2011 and become a "college and career academy" (CCA) partnering with local post-secondary institutions, businesses, other government and nonprofit organizations to provide a seamless connection between public 6-12 and post-secondary education and public and private employers in the Savannah area. That transition is such an ambitious undertaking, with so many questions that need to be answered about governance, curriculum, personnel, funding and facilities (among other tasks) that OCS has accepted the advice of its local authorizer and will dedicate this renewal term to completing a thorough, acceptable CCA plan.

In May 2016, Oglethorpe's governing board (made up of parents, higher education representatives, and public and private employers) approved a plan to engage a college and career academy consultant to help coordinate a stakeholder and data-driven process to expand one of the state's most successful charter

middle schools into a hybrid middle-high school-college academy that meets the legal requirements of a “college and career academy.” School founders and leaders met with college and business stakeholders over the summer and formed a 57-member, public-private volunteer “Steering Committee” in September 2016. That group has met monthly for much of the last year and will continue to work during a renewal charter term as needed.

The curriculum plan for the charter renewal term will continue – essentially unchanged – OCS’s current focus on STEM and arts-related academic excellence (STEAM), career-oriented exploration in preparation for enrollment in SCCPSS’s Choice Programs in high school with an eye toward college and meaningful careers.

Since the current charter term began, OCS was named the recipient of a grant from the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) to develop a computer science curriculum for all middle schools in Georgia.

Oglethorpe is only slightly modifying its academic goals to accommodate the major changes in state accountability (principally the evolution of the state’s CCRPI accountability framework, Georgia Standards of Excellence – GSE – and their accompanying Georgia Milestones exams). Charter schools receive flexibility from certain state and local rules in exchange for a higher degree of accountability for raising student achievement. Charter schools are held accountable by their authorizer(s) for upholding the terms of their charter. OCS has observed as well that the state is approving charter contracts that have only two academic goals. Therefore, Oglethorpe’s new, proposed academic goals and measures are as follows:

**Goal 1: (see Addendum in Exhibit 31 for the district-provided Goal 1 and measures. Please note that this goal and its measures were nevertheless separately approved and signed by the OCS Board of Directors and Principal).**

**Goal 2: “Beat The Odds” as measured by Georgia DOE against similar schools.** *All measures will be determined by the state of Georgia.* This is a goal that Georgia DOE will write into OCS’s charter contract, using its own language. In essence this goal is a placeholder for DOE’s action.

**Goal 3: Oglethorpe Charter School’s curricular programs will reflect continuous academic improvement.**

*Measure 1:* With a baseline established in the final year of the current charter term (2017-18), the percentage of OCS middle school students scoring Proficient or Distinguished on the English, Math, Social Studies and Science middle school Georgia Milestones exams will increase by 1% annually.

*Measure 2:* With a baseline established in the final year of the current charter term (2017-18), the number of OCS 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students earning high school credit by scoring Proficient or Distinguished on the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Literature and Composition End of Course (EOC) exam or Algebra EOC will continue to increase annually while the combined percentage remains above 96%.

The following are other minor academic changes based on recent conversations OCS faculty and administration have recommended:

OCS will use its charter flexibility to further develop and embed its culture of achievement around “mastery of grade level standards” in middle school.

OCS will further enhance the academic connection of academic coursework by adding Service Learning for all ELA/Reading classes in middle school. OCS’s Service Learning program will take students from the classroom into community settings to apply academic and real-world concepts towards meeting a community need – yet another way for students to “learn by doing” and also to see the immediate impact on others of their own actions.



Nearly one-third of OCS's current enrollment qualifies for the school's gifted program, an outstanding ratio that the school expects to increase. All classrooms at OCS are heterogeneously grouped, gifted-clustered classrooms. The cluster-grouping model is used throughout the school. Tiered lessons are provided in all classrooms. The majority of the eligible core academic teachers (with at least three years of teaching experience) – including Art and Spanish teachers – are gifted certified. The advanced content model of instruction is provided for gifted students taking the high school credit 9th Math, 9th grade English Composition Literature, and 9th grade Spanish classes. 100% of all gifted students participate in the Social Science Fair as 7th graders, and select gifted 8th graders from STEM classes participate annually as well. OCS offers after-school gifted opportunities such as Odyssey of the Mind, Stock Market Game and the PAGE Academic Bowl. Leadership opportunities and membership in the National Junior Honor Society, Student Council and Beta club are available for gifted students with each society and club meeting monthly and performing multiple community service projects.

Gifted identification is an ongoing process at Oglethorpe. OCS employs a full-time gifted coordinator who is involved in the identification and testing of potentially gifted students. Many students arrive in 6th grade already being identified as gifted learners. OCS also has students that enroll from private schools or homeschool. Parent recommendations, teacher recommendations, and academic performance in the classroom are some of the avenues used to identify and serve gifted students. The gifted coordinator and all gifted certified teachers at OCS will continue to maintain the same administrative responsibilities as found in all other middle schools in the state.

OCS will not change its assessment program. OCS will also continue its waiver-based double-blocking of math and language arts for middle school students.

OCS will continue to develop partnerships with higher education institutions. OCS recently entered into an agreement with Savannah State University (see OCS-SSU MOU attached as Exhibit 30) to become a

Professional Development School (PDS). Through this partnership, OCS will help Savannah State (and will benefit itself) in the preparation of new teachers, faculty development, inquiry directed at the improvement of practice, and enhanced student achievement. OCS envisions other higher education partnerships that will directly and positively impact “teaching and learning” for all faculty and students.

### **Governance Changes**

In 1999, “Oglethorpe Academy” (now Oglethorpe Charter School or OCS) became Georgia’s first startup charter school. The OCS Governing Board is currently comprised of 11 volunteer directors who represent parents and the community. Per Oglethorpe’s bylaws, the current structure is six parent members and five community members. There is currently one vacancy for a community member. Four of the parent members are employed in local higher education. Moving forward, this charter renewal and the expansion to add a high school program and to make the entire school a “college and career academy” according to state law will result in a transition to a majority employer board; however, those changes may not take place during a renewal charter term.

**Academic, Organizational, and Financial Goals and Measures** – The proposed new goals and measures for this application appear in the appropriate headers in this section for Academic Changes (above), Financial Changes (below) and Operational Changes (below).

### **Financial Changes**

Oglethorpe has been notably successful in managing allocated public investment since its 1999 founding. OCS will make no changes in its financial operations during a renewal term. The budget has more than adequate reserves and is attached for review (see Exhibit 23).

### **Operational Changes**

OCS proposes only one significant operational change for a renewal term: in the area of student discipline, OCS faculty has been studying “the relevance factor.” Once students fully understand how

education will help them personally throughout their lives, they take ownership of their graduation plans, and discipline issues almost completely disappear. To provide an even better foundation for students who might need help developing that understanding, OCS will plan and implement a restorative justice program that includes extra training in social skills and Saturday sessions for students who self-identify as being interested.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

After almost two decades of excellence as a middle school, Oglethorpe Charter School will use its renewal term to plan and propose adding a high school program and transitioning the entire school into Georgia's first-ever startup charter college and career academy serving grades 6-12.

All the required academic, organizational, governing and financial changes required to make OCS's expansion plan successful will be addressed in the resulting plan. In this section, OCS's planners and Directors offer a more personal explanation of the timing and opportunity for such changes.

The people who govern, manage and teach at Oglethorpe have always been committed to the success of the school and its students. Growing and adding these programs has also always been foreseen. OCS's team has determined that now is the time, and there will never be a better time, to realize the vision of this school fully. Simply put, the time to plan for Oglethorpe's Future is Here. Now.

Savannah and Chatham County are growing, our state is growing, and indeed the national economy is growing. Opportunities abound for students who are serious about their educations and their careers. As the school system, state government and the nation all transition to new leadership in the timeframe OCS will begin its next charter term, OCS wants its students and parents to understand there is no better place to live, work and learn than Savannah, Georgia. Oglethorpe has been successful, but past success does not relieve any school – especially a charter school – from the expectation to improve continuously.

The planning for adding a high school CCA program has already begun with a volunteer, public-private Steering Committee with multiple subcommittees, by OCS's academic team and administration, and finally by the OCS Governing Board. That work will continue through the next renewal term. OCS intends to show the state that there is another way to create college and career academies. Already

Georgia's first true startup charter school, OCS now intends to become the first startup charter to earn CCA certification serving grades 6-12. The OCS Governing Board fully realizes that all facility concerns must be addressed and approved by the Savannah Chatham County School System before any high school expansion can take place. This 5 year charter renewal will be for middle school only to allow the OCS Governing Board sufficient time to determine if high school expansion is a viable option for the future.

Finally, OCS also intends to continue as – and to improve its ability to remain – a best practice among SCCPSS middle schools in how to engage students and parents to appreciate fully the value of teaching and learning, and in how to connect 6-8 education seamlessly to high school, to higher education, and to the world of work.

## EXHIBITS

The following Exhibits are required to complete your Charter School Renewal Application Package. Please tab the Exhibits to match the item numbers below. Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible.

1. Attach an official copy of the certificate of incorporation for the required Georgia nonprofit corporation from the Georgia Secretary of State. Please Note: All charter school contracts—including those of start-up and conversion charter schools—must be held by a Georgia nonprofit corporation.
2. Attach a copy of the by-laws for the nonprofit corporation.
3. Attach a copy of the governing board's Conflict of Interest Policy.
4. Attach a copy of the governing board's Conflict of Interest Form.
5. Attach a completed Comprehensive Performance Framework for Locally-Approved Charter School Evaluation.
6. Attach a copy of the governing board's Governance Training Plan using the governance training memo available on GaDOE's website.
7. Attach a completed Locally-Approved Charter School Partners Roles and Responsibilities chart. This chart shows the balance of authority between the charter school's board and management, as well as the autonomy of the charter school from the district.
8. Attach a copy of any admissions (pre-lottery) application the charter school proposes to use. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066 and SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.05, any admissions application must conform to the open enrollment requirement. Therefore, admissions applications should be limited to a student's name, contact information, home address for the purpose of verifying the student's residence within the school's attendance zone, grade level, and information required for any enrollment preference, such as identifying a sibling already enrolled at the charter school. If the charter school proposes to utilize a weighted lottery for educationally disadvantaged students, the admissions application may also include questions tailored to the subgroup(s) the school will offer an increased chance of admission according to the weighted lottery guidance available on GaDOE's website.
9. Attach a copy of the policy setting annual enrollment, re-enrollment, and lottery deadlines, including a description of the lottery procedures detailing how enrollment priorities will be applied and an assurance of complete transparency in its procedures.
10. Attach the charter school's annual calendar and the charter school's daily school schedule.
11. Attach a copy of the scope and sequence for each proposed course/grade level.
12. Attach a copy of the charter school's Student Code of Conduct.
13. Attach a copy of the charter school's Student Discipline Policy and Procedures, including any Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS).
14. Attach a copy of the rules and procedures concerning how the school will address grievances and complaints from students, parents, and teachers. Include the role the governing board will play in resolving such grievances and complaints. If this included in another response, please indicate that.
15. Attach a copy of the charter school's Employee Policies and Procedures.
16. Attach proof of the school's insurance coverage, including the terms, conditions, and coverage amounts.

17. Attach a copy of any intended education service provider contracts or arrangements for the provision of education management or support services, including with any EMO, CMO, ESO, etc. Such contracts shall describe the specific services for which the contracting organization is responsible. Such contracts should clearly delineate the respective roles and responsibilities of the management organization and the governing board in the management and operation of the charter school. Such contracts must also include the fee structure.
18. Attach a copy of any agreements with your local school district or Board of Education.
19. Attach a copy of any Letters of Intent and/or agreements detailing any proposed partnerships, including agreements with other local schools/systems for the charter school students' participation in extracurricular activities such as interscholastic sports and clubs.
20. Attach a copy of any MOU/lease/proof of ownership for the school's facility.
21. Attach a copy of the school's Certificate of Occupancy.
22. Attach a copy of the facility's Emergency Safety Plan.
23. Complete and attach the budget template located on the Charter Schools Division's website:  
Please note that the budget template includes:
  - A monthly cash flow projection detailing revenues and expenditures for the charter school's first two (2) years of operation;
  - A spreadsheet projecting cash flow, revenue estimates, budgets, and expenditures on an annual basis for the first five (5) years of the charter term.
  - Back-up documentation proving the legal reality of additional sources of revenue included in the budget template – i.e., funds other than state and local funding, including bank statements and/or signed grant award letters
24. Attach the résumé for the charter school's Chief Financial Officer.
25. Attach the charter school's signed Assurances Form (see below).
26. Attach the charter school's signed and notarized Affidavit (see below).
27. Attach the charter school's signed Local Board of Education Resolution approving the charter school's application.
28. Attach the charter school's signed Governing Board Resolution approving the charter school's application. This will serve as the formal petition to the SBOE.

Additional Submissions

29. For conversion schools only, attach the charter school's Confirmation of Teacher and Parent Vote - NOT APPLICABLE. Replaced with Facilities Improvement Plan – Options A and B.
30. OCS-Savannah State University Professional Development School Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
31. Addendum in response to SCCPSS Charter Review Committee Recommendations.