Agora Cyber Charter School

Revised Application to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of Education

Submitted by:

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APPLICATION FACT SHEET
This application fact sheet is intended to be a "finger-tip" summary of your application. The information furnished below must be an accurate representation of the application and must correspond to the information provided in the body of the application.

Proposed Charter School Name (Must Include "Charter School" in the Title)
                              Agora Cyber Charter School
School Location _5901 Woodbine Avenue_ County __Philadelphia__
Intermediate Unit __Philadelphia County IU_____
Proposed Start Date _September 2005_ Date of School Board Approval_____
Federal Employer Identification Number _____ Aun # (*Supplied by PDE*) 193-255
Contact Person: (First) June (Last) Brown
Organization The Laboratory Charter School
City Bala Cynwyd State PA Zip Code 19004
Telephone 610-617-9121 Fax Number 610-660-8416
E-mail foxsaunt@aol.com

Founding Coalition: Indicate Number of Representatives per Group	Grade and Age Ranges	Projected Student Enrollment Year 1-5
Parents_____10_____ Teachers_____11_____ Business Partner__2_____ Community Based Org.__1_____ Museum_____0_____ Higher Education___1_____ Other Group (Identify)_____	Elementary____K-8_____ Secondary_____9-12_____ Age of Kindergarten__4.5__ Age of Beginners____5.5___ Circle Appropriate Grade(s) (K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12)	1st Year 900 (K-8) 2nd Year 1200 (K-9) 3rd Year 1500 (K-10) 4th Year 1800 (K-11) 5th Year 2100 (K-12) Total Number of Teachers (Year 1): 20.57

Does the charter applicant have an existing retirement system? Yes _____ No _X____
Does the applicant group presently have access to a facility suitable for a school?
Yes __X___ No____
In what type of community will the Charter School be located?
Urban __X___ Suburban _____ Rural _____ Other _____

It is anticipated that the educational services office will be located in an urban community. However, the school will service students throughout the commonwealth.

School Focus:
In brief terms, please describe below the school mission, educational focus, and other essential characteristics of the proposed charter school. (Use additional page if needed.)

Mission

The mission of the Agora Cyber Charter School (here and after referred to as Agora or Agora Cyber) is to provide an innovative, intensive academic preparation that inspires and educates students to achieve the highest levels of academic knowledge and skills and develop proficiency in the design and use of new computer technologies and scientific research. Through a combination of computer-supported instruction in the home and video-conferencing with a certified teacher, a specially-tailored research-based curriculum, and access to a community of experts in science and technology, our students will be fully prepared to be leaders in the digital age.

Agora Cyber Charter School will serve students in grades K-12 throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Additionally it is anticipated that the school will serve as an alternative placement for school age students who are homebound due to short or long term disabilities, court adjudication, those seeking a general education diploma, and for others who experience difficulty in the mainstream. Beginning the first year with 900 students in grades kindergarten through 8, the school will add an additional grade with 300 additional students each year up to a total of 2100 students in grades K through 12. It is further anticipated that as the reputation of the school becomes known throughout Pennsylvania that the numbers will drastically increase.

Agora Cyber students will leave our school fully prepared for higher education. We will ensure that every student's family will have a computer, a high speed Internet connection, web-conferencing hardware and software, hands-on science kits, access to Microsoft certification courses, and high quality curricula that are Internet-based and in hard copy. We will use a centralized building that will serve as our administrative hub and our meeting house for students and their parents. Our students will start at the very beginning of their formal public education experience to develop skills and understanding of the use of computing technologies for communication, research and learning. By the time of their graduation from Agora Cyber, their combination of skills, knowledge and experience will allow them to master the challenges of the most rigorous higher education curricula.

Instruction will be delivered through electronically and via mail. Academic progress will be assessed through portfolios, weekly online tests, teleconferences, reports, growth in written and oral language. For example, children will be required to read to their online teacher at least once a week so that the teacher can assess their fluency, automaticity, phonics, comprehension, and phonemic awareness. These online conferences coupled with the mail-in packages will provide a measure of authenticity. Additionally, students will be tested at each grade level. The Metropolitan and Stanford Achievement Tests or a similar test will be used as assessment in the appropriate grades. In addition, all students will have an opportunity to practice and to develop test taking skills through the use of standardized tests from states like North Carolina, Texas, and Oregon. Also, students will be afforded many opportunities for co-operative learning, through the exchange of e-mail, field trips, joint projects, and other collaborative forms of learning!

Through the use of pre and post test results, teachers will be able to gather and to analyze data to determine students' strengths and needs and to adjust instruction. The PSSA, MET,

and SAT-9 will be administered at a location determined by the school administrator. School staff will supervise these examinations to ensure authenticity.

Teachers will communicate with students and parents on a daily basis through online communication. Additionally, teachers will schedule weekly telephone conferences with parents and students. Also, parents and students will receive report cards and student progress reports electronically.

The number of online and offline hours will be determined by the age and independence of the student. Students in grades kindergarten through two will be required to work 25% of the time online and 75% of the time offline. Parents will be given teacher material and training as to how to best help their student through the learning activities and instruction. Full curriculum materials, which include a teacher's guide, science kit, art supplies, writing materials, and other instructional resources, will allow parents to educate their child in each subject area. By the time a student reaches fifth grade, they will be online 75% of the time in instructional activities. Students will be expected to write intensively, perform research, and do much of their work offline.

FEDERAL GRANT APPLICATION ADDENDUM TO COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION

Public Law 108-382: Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 imposes certain additional requirements for applications for Public Charter Schools. The following application serves as an addendum to the Charter School Application for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and, if approved, may entitle the applicant to federal funds.

I. Describe how the charter school agency will provide for continued operation of the school once the federal grant has expired.

> The Board of Agora Cyber Charter School will raise funds for the school through grant writing, outreach to parents, and innovative partnerships with businesses that will provide needed equipment, supplies, funds and personnel to support our unique program.

II. Describe how the federal sub-grant funds will be used, including specifically how such funds will be used in conjunction with other federal programs (Attach PDE-362: Charter School Start-up Grant).

> Start-up funds will be used for student and staff recruitment, technical equipment, building security, renovation and equipment of a science and technology laboratory, parent and staff training, and equipment to make the program operational. Specifics will be available when the charter is funded.

III. Please check ___X_____ that you will provide an annual report to the Department of Education including information on the progress made in meeting the charter school's stated goals and objectives.

IV. Please check ___X_____ that you will cooperate with the Department of Education in the evaluation of your Charter program.

V. Please check ____X_____ that you will provide additional information and assurances required by the Department of Education.

SIGNATURES

Name of Charter School Agora Cyber Charter School

Date ____October 1, 2004_____

President/Vice-President _____

Board of Trustees
Secretary/Treasurer _____
Board of Trustees

FEDERAL ASSURANCES FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS
PLEASE SIGN THE FOLLOWING ASSURANCES AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THIS
FEDERAL GRANT APPLICATION

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM ASSURANCES FOR PUBLIC CHARTER
SCHOOLS

Pursuant to section 10303(b) of Public Law 108-382: Improving America's Schools act of 1994, as a duly authorized representative of a Public Charter School, I certify the following:
- the charter school, with an enabling state statute, is exempted from state and local rules that inhibit the flexible operations and management of public schools;
- the charter school will make a contribution to assisting educationally disadvantaged and other students in achieving State content standards and State student performance standards and, in general, will contribute to the State's education improvement plan;
- the charter school is created by a developer as a public school, or is adapted by a developer from an existing public school, and is operated under public supervision and direction;
- the charter school operates in pursuit of a specific set of educational objectives determined by the school's developer and agreed to by the authorized public chartering agency;
- the charter school provides a program of elementary or secondary education, or both;
- the charter school is nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations, and is not affiliated with a sectarian school or religious institution;
- the charter school does not charge tuition
- the charter school complies with the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1993, and part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- the charter school admits students on the basis of a lottery, if more students apply for admissions than can be accommodated;
- the charter school agrees to comply with the same Federal and State audit requirements as do other elementary and secondary schools in the State.
- the charter school meets all applicable Federal, State, and Local health and safety requirements; and
- the charter school operates in accordance with State law.

Agora Cyber Charter School   _____
Charter school   Date

_____
Authorized Representative

I. SCHOOL DESIGN
1. Mission Statement:
A. Briefly describe the core philosophy or underlying purpose of the proposed school.

The number of parents choosing to educate their children primarily at home or in small learning environments has grown tremendously over the past decade, as part of a larger movement of parents taking advantage of new educational options for their children. Many parents are choosing to educate their children in alternative ways from their traditional neighborhood public schools with the hope that education can better prepare their child for a rapidly changing future (Smith, June 9, 2003, Number of Black Children Taught at Home Growing, Washington Times B4). However, in many cases, parents making those choices must sacrifice some of the advantages of a larger school system in order to achieve a more personalized experience for their children. As the demands of a high tech, science-driven world become increasingly pressing, many students are suffering from a lack of meaningful, focused, consistent education in science and digital technologies (ZUNIGA and RODRIGUES, Oct. 31, 2003, Schools Boosting Tech Skills, But Reports Show Minorities Lack Computers at Home), The Houston Chronicle. Across the State of Pennsylvania, some students are exposed to a science and technology education that will make them leaders in the field. But, those opportunities are not available to many students, especially those in urban areas. In fact, they are almost non-existent in charter schools, because of limited resources.

As the numbers of low income students and minority students grow in our sate, and more science and technology jobs are contracted out to other states and other countries, it is becoming increasingly important that everyone is provided an opportunity to learn a higher level of science and technology and other important academic skills. Opportunities, like the new high tech school Microsoft is developing with the School District of Philadelphia are available to some students. However, this school will be limited in scope, will not open until at least 2006, and will be limited to very few students of high school age. We contend that a cyber school, with web-based learning focused on intense hands-on science and technological skills is needed to provide the full advantage of fast-developing new research and learning technologies for all children especially minority children. It will be advantageous if this begins in the first years of elementary school.

B. What is your overarching vision of the school?
Explanation: Define a concise plan for an innovative public school that will lead to improved educational performance. Consistency between the mission and the educational programs should be articulated to achieve improved performance.

The Agora Cyber Charter School represents a collective vision for a world-class cyber school that is fully focused on preparation of all students for life in the information age with a focus on students who are on the less than adequate side of the digital divide, i.e., minorities and students with special needs. Our planning team has drawn on their years of experience in charter schools, school administration, web-based learning, educational innovation, technology, research, finance, community development, educational policy and academic assessment to develop a model of education that represents the future of learning in the 21st Century. We firmly believe

that recent breakthroughs in computing, robotics, communication and virtual technologies have created a whole new world of opportunities for student learning, and that a new model of education must be developed to take full advantage of these opportunities. Through a balanced combination of web-based interaction between a highly trained and certified staff, experts in the fields of science and technology, museums, research departments in corporations and universities, parents and students, we can educate students to achieve unprecedented levels of knowledge and skills in every academic area.

In order to satisfy these demands and challenges, the administrators of the ACCS have developed a curriculum to provide an innovative, intensive academic preparation that inspires and educates students to achieve the highest levels of academic knowledge and skills and to develop proficiency in the design and use of new computer technologies and scientific research. Furthermore, we have planned delivery of this education through a combination of computer-supported instruction in the home, meetings, and video-conferencing with a certified teacher. Moreover, we have provided a specially-tailored research-based curriculum, access to a community of experts in science and technology to ensure that our students will be fully prepared to be leaders in the digital age. In addition, we have planned for parent training and involvement in the education of their children.

How Agora Is Different /A Model for Others

The mission of the Agora Cyber Charter School (ACCS) is to provide innovative, intensive academic preparation that inspires and educates students to achieve the highest levels of academic knowledge and skills and to develop proficiency in the design and use of new computer technologies and scientific research. Agora will, ultimately, be represented by the kinds of students that it graduates and sends into the world. Agora students will be knowledgeable, make a difference in the community, be world and "world-class" citizens, leaders in science and technology, and be part of an educated community that includes their family, local communities, and partnerships abroad.

Agora students will be ready for the world. From the beginning, students and their parents will be provided intensive and extensive training. Parents will be taught techniques and strategies to help their child academically, socially, and in community service projects. Research shows that students do better academically when their parent or guardian is involved with their education. Through training workshops and online programs, Agora will expect parents to not only collaborate with their student's learning community, but engage in training that will benefit their student.

A standards-driven, content-rich curriculum that is research-based will enable students at Agora to be knowledgeable. Aligned with the Pennsylvania State Standards, Agora's curriculum will be highly interactive as well as challenging. Learning is an active process and Agora intends to actively involve the student in their education through the use of various modes of interaction including synchronous communication, such as video conferencing and chat and asynchronous modalities, such as fax or email. Multi-sensory activities and experiences will empower every kind of learner to become proficient in the academic areas expected by the state of Pennsylvania.

Agora students will be local and world leaders in science and technology. Advanced placement courses for high school students, experiments experienced first-hand at home, and individual and group field trips will give Agora students the background and content needed to expand higher-order thinking skills. Scientific research that is presented at local and national science fairs will be facilitated through extensive workshops and conferences with learning communities. Beginning in sixth grade, students will learn skills and have experiences in various types of workplaces. This preparation is designed to expose students early to various career options and skills needed after their graduation. Opportunities, such as learning about networking and web design, will allow Agora students to begin using skills that are needed in a technological world. Through computer preparation courses, Agora students in middle and high school will have the edge against other learners because of the numerous courses offered at their cyber school.

Agora students will make a difference in their community and be world and "world class" citizens. Required community service projects beginning in kindergarten will establish a new, but needed interest in the world around students. A global interest begins at home and Agora students will begin their responsibility as soon as they enter school. Foreign language starting in kindergarten will help Agora students to respect other cultures, embrace diversity, and learn another language enabling them to become prepared for future endeavors. Students will communicate with other people locally and abroad using technology to collaborate in various scientific, technological, and cultural projects through organizations such as the Global SchoolNet Foundation and Friendship through Education. Creating a community that celebrates each Agora student's talents and ability to contribute will help to instill a sense of worth and purpose, respect for others, possible life-long connections, and a realization that each person is important and needs to contribute to our world. The community service projects will help to develop responsible and capable citizens that can also apply their learning beyond school. To compete in the new global economy, students must be prepared in numerous ways and Agora students will lead the way.

Agora students will be ready for the world and will be a model for others. Students and their families will work with highly qualified teachers and staff members, develop close relationships with their learning communities, and will have access to a content-rich, standards-driven curriculum. The high expectations of the instructors and members of the Agora staff will challenge, guide, and mentor students through a rigorous, research-based program leading the way to academic excellence. Teams of professionals and teachers will focus their attention on Agora's desired results and use proven research and methodologies to create an environment that promotes active learning, the use of critical thinking skills, and collaboration. These instructional teams will be a model for other schools showing that teamwork and the continuous collaboration of educators, parents and family members, and community partnerships develop the student academically, emotionally, and socially. Sustained community support from members pledging their volunteer services, businesses developing relationships, and other schools, universities, and institutions working together will increase the possibilities that Agora students will have. Ongoing student assessment will also help leaders and educators to make data-driven decisions and provide direction for future pursuits along with the connections the teams will have made. Extensive professional development in special education and best practices provided by Agora will enable instructional teams to develop plans for optimal achievement with its special needs students. Through the intensive parent training programs, opportunities for experiential and

hands-on learning, and local, national, and world-wide collaborations, Agora will expand the educational paradigm to include a more global, responsible, and educated student and community. The dissemination of this information and models used by the Agora Cyber Charter School will, ultimately, help other schools make a difference in every child so that there will be no compromise between the child's needs and the child's ability to succeed.

2. Measurable Goals and Objectives:
A. What are the school's measurable academic goals and objectives to promote student learning?

The school will adhere to all current requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Legislation, and will collect all information necessary to provide accurate results with regard to student progress in aggregated and disaggregated form. Agora's measurable goals and objectives are provided below.

GOALS	SAMPLE OBJECTIVES
ACADEMIC GOALS	
Goal 1. Students will demonstrate proficiency in Mathematics.	Students will become proficient in selecting and using an appropriate strategy to solve systems of equations and in equalities using graphing calculators, symbol manipulators, spreadsheets and other software.
Goal 2. Students will achieve proficiency in Reading and Listening.	Students will distinguish between essential and nonessential information across a variety of sources, identifying the use of proper references or authorities and propaganda where present.
Goal 3. Students will achieve proficiency in Written and Oral Communication.	Students will communicate their ideas and emotions orally and in writing using the appropriate informative, narrative, and persuasive forms.
Goal 4. Students will achieve proficiency in a Foreign Language.	Students will demonstrate skills in utilizing teleconferencing to communicate in the target language with students in other countries.
Goal 5. Students will achieve proficiency in Social Studies.	Students will identify artifacts and documents as either primary or secondary sources of historical data from which historical accounts are constructed.
Goal 6. Students will achieve proficiency in Science.	Students will engage in the design and investigation of the principles at work in their physical environment so that they can analyze concepts used to describe natural phenomena, such as Boyle's Law.
Goal 7. Students will achieve competency in Visual and Performing Arts.	Students will identify the principles of light and darkness at work in visual arts.

GOALS	SAMPLE OBJECTIVES
Goal 8. Students will achieve competency in using Technology.	Students will achieve at a minimum one certification in using computers for workplace-related skills and network development through a program such as Microsoft or Cisco.
Goal 9. Students will demonstrate high levels of Media Literacy.	Students will analyze the arguments made in various media.
Goal 10. Students will demonstrate critical and higher order thinking skills.	Students will identify and evaluate the validity of alternative positions that arise both in the context of the curriculum and in their interactions with others.
Goal 11. Students will demonstrate skills associated with self-directed learning.	Students will demonstrate questioning, inquiry and research skills by analyzing and using technological design process to solve problems.

B. What are the schools measurable non-academic goals and objectives to promote student performance?
*Explanation: Develop clear **measurable** goals with objectives for building the educational program that reflects a commitment to academic excellence for all students.*

NON-ACADEMIC GOALS	
Goal 12. Students will develop a familiarity with available careers in the sciences and technology.	Students will use Internet communications technology and the World Wide Web to explore information about current careers, and communicate with professionals in their areas of interest
Goal 13. Students will develop effective work habits.	Students will provide services in a work environment through internships.
Goal 14. Students will assume responsibility for their own actions.	Students will participate in student-facilitated discussions in which they share their feelings and motivations, and reflect on connections to their behavior and on the implications of their actions.
Goal 15. Students will strengthen their bonds with their families.	Students will participate with their parents in the life of the school around setting goals for themselves and evaluating their progress.
Goal 16. Students will decrease participation in risky behaviors that threaten their health.	Students will analyze the effects of drugs and alcohol on mental and physical performance.
Goal 17. Students will be physically fit.	Students will engage in physical activities, and develop a thorough understanding of how their body and mind interact to create their physical and mental health.

Recognizing that students from a broad range of locations will present a wide individual range of past experiences, needs, and aspirations, Agora Cyber will assess all students upon entry using a variety of instruments such as DIBELS in the lower grades, placement tests, Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA) and TerraNova scores where available. Such assessments will be utilized to determine both academic and non-academic needs, and will result in the development of Individual Learning Plans, (ILP's). The ILPs developed for each student will itemize the short and long-range goals and desires of the student, and will specify the academic, social, medical and behavioral supports necessary for maximizing success.

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

Agora Cyber will be different from existing district programmatic offerings. In the spirit of NCLB, schools are charged to incorporate innovative approaches toward meeting the needs of their students. Agora Cyber seeks to be a model for urban, suburban, and rural schools that are seeking to use technology to improve teacher quality, and to create measurable improvement in student performance. Students will have access to the online curriculum seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. This will allow students to progress at a pace appropriate to their instructional level, maximizing their learning time.

The school's curriculum is standards-based and was designed to meet or to exceed Pennsylvania State Standards. We are committed to helping all students to rise to meet high expectations of both the Pennsylvania standards and the K12 program.

The K12 is research-based, time-tested, and content-rich. It is based largely on the Core Knowledge sequence, a highly specific, rigorous sequence of knowledge and skills to guide schools in the planning and development of a coherent curriculum. Hundreds of public and private schools nationwide now use this sequence to great effect. Both qualitative and quantitative data indicate that schools using the Core Knowledge sequence demonstrate high levels of academic achievement.

K12 team have leveraged the Core Knowledge sequence to build a proprietary phonics program with the help of Louisa Moats, a leading scholar in the field of early reading and a project director at the national Institute of Child Health and Human Development; a math program reinforced by Sadlier-Oxford's *Progress in Mathematics*; and an engaging, hands-on proprietary science program based on Core Knowledge and the American Association for the Advancement of Science's *Project 2061 Benchmarks*. In History, the team has again leveraged the Core Knowledge Sequence to build a proprietary program that emphasizes the "story" of history, what it means to be a good and responsible citizen, historical analysis skills, and spatial sense as they work with maps, globes, and other geographic tools.

Agora Cyber School will utilize the flexibility and individualization of the web-based K12 curriculum. The school has set the standard for mastery in all core subjects at 80%. In the event a student scores below the 80% mark on a given assessment, Agora Cyber will use a learning lab in each hub staffed with paraprofessionals and volunteers to provide students with individual support.

Our initial academic objective is to provide a complete education foundation based on proven methods of instruction and rich challenging content. Our school will require mastery of both knowledge and skills. The administration of Agora Cyber School understands that the students of Pennsylvania need learning experiences that exceed the acquisition of high school diplomas. Consequently, students will have many opportunities to acquire the academic, technological, and career skills necessary to achieve success in college and post-high school careers. These goals will be achieved through the school's vigorous and innovative curriculum delivered by highly qualified instructors and supported by knowledgeable parents.

Curriculum Content (Overview)

The K12 curriculum that Agora Cyber intends to use is a comprehensive program that includes:

Mathematics: Through daily practice, review, and application, the K12 curriculum builds a solid early foundation in both facts and concepts. Students will develop a high degree of mathematical literacy and proficiency.

Language Arts: The language arts program, developed and reviewed by nationally renowned experts, focuses on early mastery of decoding skills through a systematic, phonics-based curriculum, complemented by a generous exposure to stories, myths, fables, and poems from many cultures, many of which communicate models of exemplary virtues. The program places a strong emphasis on the basic building blocks of good communication through oral and written skills. Recognizing the primacy of language skills in the early grades, the program places great emphasis on the skills, rewards, and joys of reading and writing and on the importance of meaningful literature.

History, Geography, and Civics: Beginning in the primary grades, we offer a chronological study of History, complemented by integrated lessons in Geography and Civics. This approach is designed to provide students with a coherent and connected sense of the past and our relation to it.

Science: K12's science program (which has been reviewed by a Nobel laureate) balances hands-on investigation and experimentation with a systematic approach to key scientific concepts. Based upon a classroom-tested program, our science curriculum integrates Physical Science, Life Sciences, Earth Sciences, and Investigations and Experimentation each year. Students are introduced to critical and creative thinking through the lens of the scientific method.

Art: The art program offers enriching lessons that focus on doing, looking, and knowing. <u>Doing</u>: Students draw, paint, glue, build, mold with clay, and more to develop artistic technique (and fine motor skills). They also create artwork for the sheer joy of it. <u>Looking</u>: Students

spend time learning to look at art and talk about works of art. Students learn to recognize artistic techniques and elements of design, express informed opinions about specific pieces, and develop an appreciation for great works if art. <u>Knowing</u>: Students are introduced to the biographies and styles of great artists as well as their place within the history of art. Students will learn how to express their own feelings, how to interpret the expressions of others, and how the arts have been developed in various cultures throughout history.

Music: The music program provides a comprehensive array of activities for musical enjoyment and enrichment with an emphasis on singing traditional songs from various cultures, learning basic elements of music, and familiarizing themselves with great works and composers.

Computer and Technology: (Separate from K12) The computer and technology program provides a solid foundation for literacy in computer technology and skills necessary for communication and creation in the information age. Students not only learn how to interact with various software types but are also guided to produce numerous projects which demonstrate the constructive power of these tools.

World Language: (Separate from K12) The founders of ACCS believe that students should be prepared for the rapid communications and work place changes brought about by rapidly changing demographics and political decisions such as NAFTA. Our graduates will seek higher education and employment opportunities where their use of a second language will be advantageous. All students will have opportunities to study a second language beginning in Kindergarten. They will study Spanish, the second most frequently spoken language in the Nation. The learning of languages will be supported by the use of computer technologies, which will assist with hearing and producing accurate speech, provide insight into vocabulary and grammar, and allow opportunities for communication with speakers of other languages in other countries. The world languages program will require students to:

- Communicate with native speakers using grammar and vocabulary correctly in context;
- Develop a sense of syntax and correct speaking methods;
- Read for theme, content and correct meaning, and build working vocabulary;
- Appreciate the diversity and richness of world peoples and cultures;
- Study literature and journalism in the target language and read for complex themes.

Health, Safety, and Physical Education: A flexible physical education program (separate from K12) is designed to ensure that our students develop the coordination, motor skills, and overall fitness necessary to lead healthy and active lives as well as knowledge and awareness of their physical bodies. Included in this knowledge are the benefits and detriments of lifestyle choices.

Methods of Instruction: A Technologically-Infused Learning Experience

Though our delivery of material is unique, our approach to pedagogy is not. To accommodate the diverse learning styles of children, our professionals will employ a variety of strategies, including direct instruction, hands-on exploration, use of manipulatives, practice exercises, and "distributed review" – a method of including previous lesson material in a current lesson for the purpose of reinforcing and reviewing the content.

The curriculum was designed with the needs of the student, teacher, and parent in mind. It includes detailed instructional guides, clear presentation of lessons, a comprehensive on-line help system, technical support, optional challenge problems, secondary lessons, and embedded teaching tips. Parents and students will be able to access each lesson from their home by using the K12 web-based program.

Agora Cyber School will utilize a performance-based accountability system. It has a private sector philosophy toward accountability and will employ rigorous evaluations of performance in all aspects of its operations. All administrators, teachers, service providers, and students will be held to high performance standards. Any service provider that fails to deliver high quality service will be released. Students will be the clear beneficiaries of this shift to performance-based management.

The school will use methods and curricula that are scientifically-based: phonics for reading, an early introduction to basic math facts, "read aloud" and written work for younger children, and programs that emphasize important values. We also embrace proven new approaches and employ the use of multimedia technology (e.g., Flash animation with video and audio plug-ins) in innovative ways. Our general approach is to employ scientifically-based lessons that are fused to a technologically innovative delivery system.

Computer and networking communication technologies are rapidly changing the ways in which people are working, learning and communicating. Agora Cyber recognizes the need for all students to participate in creative and innovative uses of technologies for thinking and learning. All students will develop their technology skills through the use of technology for learning across the curriculum. Students will participate in virtual classes, supported by whiteboard software, and will be taught how to use a wide range of computer-based tools for working with numbers, text, and graphics as a result of this technologically-infused learning experience.

Measuring Student Outcomes

Measurement of student outcomes is fundamental to Agora Cyber. Agora Cyber students will take regular assessments, including lesson assessments, unit assessments, semester assessments, and end-of-year assessments (as well as placement assessments in reading and math).

With the click of a button, the Agora Cyber teacher's can review all screens that provide a variety of information on previously completed lessons, including student assessment results, lesson objectives, and other information about the lesson.

Agora Cyber will provide a multidisciplinary team approach in providing educational programming for students. Teachers and personnel from partner organizations will work with interdisciplinary teams to accommodate the educational needs of the students. The interdisciplinary teams will hold progress assessment conferences for each student as frequently as needed, but not less than once during each 13-week session. Individual Learning Plans (ILP) will be reviewed and revised as required to achieve the desired individual student goals.

In addition, the Agora Cyber students will take the state standardized test.

Evaluating Pupil Performance: Types of Assessment, Methods, and Timelines

Agora Cyber has a rigorous assessment system that measures student achievement in a number of different ways. In addition to the Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA), a standards-based test, and TerraNova, a norm-referenced test, the school will use technology in conjunction with traditional assessment techniques to assess student achievement. No student will be allowed to "slip through the cracks" as a result of this intensive student evaluation.

In all subject areas, student achievement will be assessed through curriculum-embedded lesson assessments, weekly unit assessments, and semester exams.

Our assessments are mastery-based, and our approach is to build a foundation of knowledge and skills from which all of our students can develop higher order thinking and reasoning, (and other) skills – a building block approach.

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

All Agora Cyber students will take the required grade level assessments and content area tests. This assessment will be given annually beginning the first year of operation.

Placement Assessments

Initial placement assessments in reading and math will be offered to determine the child's current level of competence so he or she can begin the curriculum at the appropriate place. The short, offline assessments are designed as diagnostic tests to determine the students' level of ability. The tools will be available immediately upon enrollment, but prior to placement in courses.

Lesson Assessments

In math, science, art, music, and history, every lesson will be followed by a brief assessment. In language arts, there will be assessments after every grammar, usage, mechanics, and composition lesson. These assessments will show whether the student has achieved the objectives of that lesson, or whether a review of some, or all, of the lesson is advisable. Teachers will add these to their repertoire of assessment tools. These assessments will begin in the first year as lessons are completed.

Unit and Semester Assessments

In most subjects, the students will take an assessment at the end of a unit to determine whether or not they have attained key learning objectives for that unit. For each discipline there will be similar assessments in the mid-term and at the end of the unit. Teacher's can use the results of the semester and unit assessments to guide, to review or for additional practice. These assessments will begin in the first year as units are completed.

The aforementioned assessments will be presented in a variety of ways. Some are online questions for the teacher to answer about the student's work; others (for students in grades 3 and up) are questions to be answered directly online by the student. Within these assessment types, the individual items take a variety of forms. In the early grades, many items are short, open-ended questions. The student responds to these questions with a word or number, a phrase, or a sentence or two. Other items require longer responses, and still others entail selected responses. Using multiple-item term formats will allow students to demonstrate what they have learned in a variety of ways.

Surveys

As an additional level of accountability, students, parents, and teachers will be asked to provide feedback on the school's program, its operation, extra-curricular activities, policies, etc. Agora Cyber will strive to improve continually; therefore we will encourage comments and will make program adjustments when necessary in order to meet the needs of our students.

Supporting Low Performing/At Risk Students

As previously stated, no students should "slip through the cracks" as a result of this intensive system of student evaluation and support. We feel confident that we are able to identify in a timely manner, students who are not performing up to standard. Since this is a standard-based system, students will not be promoted until they have demonstrated proficiency in core subjects. Teachers will use pre-assessments to focus on student weaknesses during initial instruction. The instructional methodologies used will address several different learning styles in every lesson. Thus, the student is less likely to miss the objectives. Overall, we believe the K12 curriculum's approaches and options for individualization make this one of the better programs for identifying and addressing low performing and at-risk students.

In addition, we expect to enroll a number of students who will be considered "at-risk" for school failure based on behavioral referrals, slow academic progress, or inconsistent school attendance, Agora Cyber will employ a wide range of strategies to overcome these issues, including:

- Establishing positive relationships with adults (e.g., teachers, counselors, parents, and social workers) including instituting a school schedule that permits time for teacher/student personal interaction;
- Establishing positive relationships with peers through peer mentoring and group interaction in special thematic learning experiences;
- Focusing courses on high interest areas, including job related skills and technology;
- Providing units of academic work that are interesting, motivational, challenging, and achievable at each student's educational level;
- Teaching students and staff conflict resolution and anger management techniques to prevent minor incidents from escalating;
- Supporting the instructional program through technology, individual support, small group collaborations and teacher study teams;

- Promoting student success and individual growth through use of awards and commendations on a consistent basis; and
- Having students complete community/school service projects in order to provide them with the experience of learning while becoming useful members of their school and community, and providing them with a sense of efficacy.

Summary

Agora Cyber's vision is embodied in an education program that includes a heavy emphasis on reading, writing, and computer technology-related skills. The program will be supported by substantial student support services, including developing strategies to deal effectively with the wide variety of issues that hinder each individual's learning ability.

Flexibility afforded through the charter school format will enable us to provide an extended school day, "opening" with all teachers coming on-line at 8:00 am, and "closing" with most teachers signing off by 4:00 pm Monday through Friday. Flexibility of synchronous and asynchronous communication and tech support will permit additional instruction, including self-directed projects and technology courses. A team of full and part-time educators will be committed to curriculum development and student support, in collaboration with our cooperating partner organizations.

The educational program at Agora Cyber is designed to support students in meeting their personal and academic goals through a combination of intensive instruction and technological enhancements, as standard program components. Agora Cyber will provide a stimulating, challenging, and rigorous academic program. Agora Cyber will focus on acquiring real competence in reading, writing, mathematics, listening, and speaking as requisites to be stressed across the curriculum, not merely in specific subjects. Agora Cyber students will be given as many opportunities as possible to learn and to practice these skills, taking into consideration that there are multiple forms of intelligence and many different preferred learning styles.

Supplementing the Curriculum

Community partners will serve the school by participating in the educational program in a variety of ways: as mentors, speakers, instructors, project leaders, program participants, and tour guides of their facilities. Their contributions of both human and financial support will help to amplify the school's success.

The possibilities of enhanced communication between Agora Cyber and students' families are exciting for the school. The home and school will be linked electronically, permitting messages to be transmitted quickly and easily. For instance, email affords teachers, students, and parents opportunities to keep in touch on key school issues such as curriculum updates and innovations, homework assignments, upcoming events, and progress reports. Teachers can also send notes to parents commending students for their progress, jobs well done, and service rendered without the usual difficulty of making time for extra phone calls or handwriting notes to be mailed.

Parenting skills will also be part of the curriculum. Myriam Medrian, founding director of the Parenting Project, a nonprofit organization promoting the teaching of parenting skills to students, points out that childrearing classes can help address the increasingly serious problems of child abuse, violence in the home, indifferent parenting, and lack of family values. She stresses the importance of teaching the "Fourth R - Rearing children." This teaching will be integrated throughout the curriculum. Students develop deeper understanding and appreciation of parenting and the physical and psychological needs of children at various ages.

Character Education

Agora Cyber will also integrate character education into the curriculum and culture of the charter school. Character education, as a national movement, creates schools that instill ethics, responsible, and caring in young people by modeling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values. It is the intentional, proactive effort by schools, districts, and states to instill in their students important core, ethical values such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for self and others.[1]

While the call for character education has become more pronounced in the past decade, character education is not a new idea. As Dr. Thomas Lickona, author of Educating for Character, stated, "Moral education is not a new idea. It is, in fact, as old as education itself. Down through history, in countries all over the world, education has two great goals: to help young people to become smart and to help them to become good." Good character is not formed automatically; it is developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, example, learning, and practice – it is developed through character education. The intentional teaching of good character is particularly important in today's society since our youths face many more opportunities and dangers unknown to earlier generations. They are bombarded with many more negative influences through the media and other external sources prevalent in today's culture. Therefore, it is essential that schools resume a proactive role in assisting families and communities by developing caring and respectful environments where students learn core, ethical values.[2]

The Agora Cyber character education program will include the entire school community and will be infused throughout the curriculum. It will promote core values in all phases of school life and will include proactive strategies and practices to help students to understand core, ethical values, as well as to care about and to act upon them. Agora Cyber will include the following guidelines for providing effective, comprehensive character education[3]:

1. Promote and teach core ethical values
2. Foster a caring school community and culture
3. Offer opportunities for moral action
4. Support academic achievement
5. Develop intrinsic motivation
6. Include whole-staff involvement
7. Require positive leadership of staff and students
8. Involve the active participation of parents and community members

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[1] Definition provided by the Character Education Partnership. www.character.org.
[2] The Character Education Partnership, www.character.org.
[3] Ibid.

9. Assess results and strives to improve

Frequent, public, and consistent commendation of student success relates directly to self-esteem which fosters students' belief in their own self-worth. Building a healthy sense and realistic knowledge of self are continuously emphasized throughout the curriculum. This will be stressed in all subject areas in many ways, especially as part of an intentional study of career options beginning with acquiring skills for setting goals and self-management of time and behavior to achieve them. The curriculum will emphasize developing character and positive self-concept; acquiring the discipline of work, increasing knowledge about various computer-technology related occupations and the skills and competencies necessary to obtain and to retain those positions. The Agora Cyber program will also aim to help students identify with the concept of work as a valued institution, to acquire a sense of independence, and form initial career plans.

Counseling Opportunities:

Agora Cyber will prepare students academically to develop an understanding of careers and learning opportunities that can guide them along their path as they make their way through the educational landscape. Students will also be encouraged to find mentors in occupations they find interesting, either in the local community, or over the Internet, who can help them to make informed decisions regarding their future. Agora Cyber will bring professionals from the local community into the online school environment to meet with students and to chat with them about preparation and selection of institutions of learning. In addition, teachers and administrators will help students to think about higher education as a real possibility.

In order to raise academic achievement and stimulate personal growth, Agora Cyber will integrate counseling opportunities into the curriculum by using a combination of materials and strategies that have demonstrated success. As we progress and grow, we will continually modify the program in light of experience and on-going research into what works and what does not to produce scientifically and technologically sophisticated students. Agora Cyber will offer the following components to support our integrated counseling program:

- Comprehensive individual evaluation and appropriate, intensive instruction in reading, writing, mathematics and problem solving;
- A school day that will allow prolonged, intensive individual and group contact in virtual and physical environments;
- A science and technology program implemented through technology and hands-on participation in science laboratory experiments;
- A solid coherent value system centered on character building, academic accomplishment, life skills, and social skills, integrated throughout the education and support programs;
- A solid coherent behavioral system, emphasizing good conduct and personal responsibility, both in virtual and physical environments;
- Strong personal assistance through individual and group development of effective strategies for dealing with academic issues;
- A school program that will emphasize the need to empower youth to participate in the educational process through their inclusion in current and future plans;

- Time for electives through on-line learning opportunities provided by the charter school and other accredited educational organizations; and
- Flexible, asynchronous learning experiences to provide more time for intensive mathematics, science and technology learning. Agora Cyber will offer three terms of approximately thirteen weeks each, with short inter-session breaks that allow time for self-directed learning opportunities including career exploration and scientific research activities.

Daily Schedule

The proposed school day schedule for all students will approximate the following schedule:

Time of Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:15-8:45	Community Time	Community Time	Community Time	Community Time	Community Time
8:50 - 11:30	Morning Educational Learning Block *Subjects include: Mathematics, English Language Arts, Social Studies (with 20 minute staggered break time)*	Morning Educational Learning Block *Subjects include: Mathematics, English Language Arts, Social Studies (with 20 minute staggered break time)*	Morning Educational Learning Block *Subjects include: Mathematics, English Language Arts, Social Studies (with 20 minute staggered break time)*	Morning Educational Learning Block *Subjects include: Mathematics, English Language Arts, Social Studies (with 20 minute staggered break time)*	Morning Educational Learning Block *Subjects include: Mathematics, English Language Arts, Social Studies (with 20 minute staggered break time)*
11:30-12:30	Technology and Applied Research	Technology and Applied Research	Technology and Applied Research	Technology and Applied Research	Technology and Applied Research
12:30 - 1:15	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
1:15 - 3:30	Science, Arts (Dance, Music, Theater, Visual Arts), Foreign Language	Science, Foreign Language	Science, Physical Education	Science, Arts (Dance, Music, Theater, Visual Arts), Foreign Language	Science, Physical Education
3:45 – 6:00	Tutorial Program	Tutorial Program	Tutorial Program	Tutorial Program	Tutorial Program

A separate, extended class time is provided in the schedule to offer students opportunities to use computers and related technologies to pursue self-directed projects.

B. Describe how your school will meet the educational needs of students with disabilities in accordance with Chapter 711. Provide a projection of the number and type of special education programs that will be operated directly by your charter school or through contracts.

Agora Cyber welcomes the opportunity to serve students with disabilities. The founders believe strongly that all people have strengths and weaknesses that must be recognized and accommodated in order to reach their full potential as a contributing member of society. All students in the school will have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) that will help chart their course for learning and development in social, physical, and academic areas. Students who are identified by the student's district of residence Committee on Special Education (CSE) as disabled and requiring an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) will have their IEP substitute for their ILP. All students with IEPs will be credited for success in the academic program for providing community services and will be eligible to participate in the same activities as regular education students as much as is appropriate. Most students with disabilities are expected to be learning primarily in the mainstream with their fellow classmates. They will be encouraged to participate and to contribute in all activities, including all academic, social, and recreational events initiated by the school.

IEPs developed by the sending district will be review and if appropriate revised to fit the cyber school delivery model.

Special services required by a student's IEP that are not provided by the school will be provided by the local Intermediate Unit or through fee for service programs at local hospitals or other health care facilities. These include, but may not be limited to the following:

- Mobility training
- Adaptive therapy
- Notifications
- Evaluations
- Psychological and counseling services
- Assistive technology devices
- Speech and language services
- Resource room and special classes
- Occupational therapy
- Transportation when required
- Interpreters for deaf or hard of hearing.

Agora Cyber will follow the appropriate team procedures as specified in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Their regular education teacher will be present at the team meetings in order to contribute information or to make clear specifications with regard to treatment and accommodations required for the student. Only individuals with a legitimate educational interest for a specific child will have access to his or her IEP, and those responsible

for that student's education, will understand their role with regard to that IEP's specifications. Each new student with a suspected disability will be evaluated pursuant to applicable Pennsylvania State and Federal laws and regulations. A Teacher Assistance Team will help to identify any other students thought to have special needs.

Record keeping and recording will be done in compliance with IDEA and FERPA.   Parents will be kept informed on a regular basis with regard to their children's progress relative to the goals set forth in the IEP. The students' teachers will inform them formally on a bi-monthly basis about their progress, and more frequently on an informal basis.

All special education teachers working in the school will be certified by the State of Pennsylvania in the area of special education. All special education teachers and services will be overseen by a special education supervisor. The special education supervisor will be responsible for staff development in the area of special education. This supervisor and the CEO will supervise and maintain student records.

The Agora Cyber Charter School is required by the IDEA '97 to provide a free appropriate public education to school age children with disabilities who need special education and related services. School age children with disabilities who need special education and related services are identified as eligible for special education if they need specially designed instruction and have one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities:

Autism/pervasive developmental disorder
Serious emotional disturbance
Neurological impairment
Deafness/hearing impairment
Specific learning disability
Mental retardation
Multihandicap
Other health impairment
Physical disability
Speech and language impairment
Blind/visual impairment

Screening

Each educational agency will establish and implement procedures to locate, identify, and evaluate school age students suspected of being eligible for special education. These procedures include screening activities which include but are not limited to: review of group based data (cumulative records, enrollment records, health records, and report cards); hearing screening (at a minimum of kindergarten., first, second, and third grades); vision screening (every grade level); motor screening; and speech; and speech and language screening.

Except as indicated above or otherwise announced publicly, screening activities take place in an ongoing fashion throughout the school year. If parents need additional information about the

purpose, time and location of screening activities, they should call or write to the Special Education Contact for the Agora Cyber Charter School:

Director of Special Education
5901 Woodbine Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19131

Evaluation

When screening indicates that a student may be eligible for special education, the Agora Cyber Charter School will seek parental consent to conduct an evaluation. "Evaluation" means procedures used in the determination of whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs. The term procedures used selectively with an individual child and does not mean basic tests administered to or procedures used with all children.

This evaluation is called multidisciplinary evaluation (MDE). It will be conducted by a multidisciplinary team (MDT) which includes a teacher, other qualified professionals who work with the child, and the parents. The MDE process will be conducted in accordance with specific timelines and must include protection in evaluation procedures. For example, tests and procedures used as part of the multidisciplinary evaluation may not be racially or culturally biased.

The MDE process will result in a written evaluation report called a Comprehensive Evaluation Report (CER). This report makes recommendations about a student's eligibility for special education based on the presence of a disability and the need for specially designed instruction. Once parental consent for evaluation is obtained, Agora will have timelines and procedures specified by law which it must follow.

Parents who think their child is eligible for special education may request at any time that the Agora Cyber Charter School conduct a multidisciplinary evaluation. Requests for a multidisciplinary evaluation should be made in writing to the Special Education Contact person. If a parent makes an oral request for a multidisciplinary evaluation the Agora Cyber Charter School will provide the parent with a form for that purpose.

Parents also have the right to obtain an independent education evaluation. The Agora Cyber Charter School must provide to parents on request information about where an independent educational evaluation may be obtained. Under certain circumstances, such an independent educational evaluation may be obtained at public expense.

Educational Placement

The determination of whether a student is eligible for special education is made by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. A single test or procedure may not be the sole factor in determining that a child is exceptional. The IEP team must include at least two members in addition to the parent (s). Other required members include at least one regular education teacher of the child (if the child is, or may be participating in the regular education environment), at least one special education teacher, or where appropriate, at least one special education provider, and a representative of the Agora Cyber Charter School. If the student is determined to be eligible for special education, the IEP team develops a written education plan called an IEP. The IEP shall be based on the results of the multidisciplinary evaluation. The IEP team may decide that a student is not eligible for special education. In that instance, recommendations for educational programming in regular education may be developed from the CER.

An IEP describes a student's current educational levels, goals, objectives, and the individualized programs and services which the student will receive. IEPs are reviewed on an annual basis. The IEP team will make decisions about the type of services, the level of services, the level of intervention, and the location of intervention.

Placement must be made in the least restrictive environment in which the student's needs can be met with special education and related services. All students with disabilities must be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with children who are not disabled.

Services for Protected Handicapped Students

Students who are not eligible to receive special education programs and services may qualify as handicapped students and therefore be protected under federal statutes and regulations intended to prevent discrimination (in particular, 34 CFR Part 104 and 28 CFR Part 35). The Agora Cyber Charter School will ensure that qualified handicapped students have equal opportunity to participate in the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate for each individual student. In compliance with federal laws the Agora Cyber Charter School will provide to each protected handicapped student without discrimination or cost to the student of family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities. In order to qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental disability which substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program.

These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" may be distinct from those applicable to eligible or thought to be eligible students. The Agora Cyber Charter School the parent may initiate an evaluation if they believe a student is a protected handicapped student. For further information on the evaluation procedures and provision of services handicapped students, parents should contact the Special Education Contact.

Annual Notice of Rights Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Cyber Charter School protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information regarding its eligible, thought to be eligible, and **protected handicapped students (if not protected by IDEA '97)** in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and implementing regulations as well as IDEA '97 and its implementing regulations.

"Education records" means those records that are directly related to the student, including computer media and videotape, which are maintained by an educational agency or by a party acting for the agency. "Educational agency", for purposes of this notice, means The Agora Cyber Charter School. For all students, the educational agency maintains education records which include but are not limited to:

Personally identifiable information – confidential information that includes but is not limited to the students name, name of parents and other family members, the address of the student or student's family, and personal information or personal characteristics which would make the student's identity easily traceable.

Directory information – information contained in an education record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. It includes but **is not limited to**, the student's name, address, telephone number, electronic mail address, photograph, date and place of birth, major field of study, grade level, enrollment status (e.g., undergraduate or graduate, full-time or part-time), participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees, honors and awards received, and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. They are:

1. Parents have the right to inspect and review a child's education record. The Agora Cyber Charter School will comply with a request to inspect and review education records without unnecessary delay and before any meeting regarding and IEP or any due process hearing, but in no case more than 45 days after the request has been made. Requests should be submitted in writing, indicating the records the parents wish to inspect, to the school principal or other designated school official. Parents have the right to a response from the school to reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records. Parents have the right to request copies of the records. While the Agora Cyber Charter School cannot charge a fee to search for or to retrieve information, it may charge a copying fee as long as it does not effectively prevent the parents from exercising their right to inspect and review the records. Parents have the right to appoint a representative to inspect and review their child's records. If any education record contains information on more than one child, parents have the right only to inspect and review the information relating to their child.

2. If parents think information in an education record is inaccurate, misleading or violates the privacy or other rights of their child, they may request amendment of the record. Requests should be in writing and clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. The Agora Cyber Charter School will decide whether to amend the record and will notify the parents in writing of its decision. If The Cyber Charter School refuses to amend a record, it will notify the parents of their right to a hearing to challenge the disputed information. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parents or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

The Agora Cyber Charter School will inform parents when personally identifiable information is no longer needed to provide educational services to a child. Such information must be destroyed at the request of the parents. Parents have a right to receive a copy of the material to be destroyed. However, a permanent record of a student's name, address, and telephone number, his or her grades, attendance record, classes attended, grade level completed, and year completed may be maintained without the limitation. "Destruction" of records means physical destruction or removal of personal identifiers from information so that the information is no longer personally identifiable.

The school will provide, upon request, a listing of the types and locations of education records maintained, the school officials responsible for these records, and the personnel authorized to see personally identifiable information. Such personnel receive training and instruction regarding confidentiality. The school keeps a record of parties obtaining access to education records, including the name of the party, the date access was given, and the purpose for which the party is authorized to use the records.

3. Parents have the right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. "Consent" means: the parent (s) have been fully informed regarding the activity requiring consent, in their native language or other mode of communication; they understand and agree in writing to the activity; and they understand that consent is voluntary and maybe revoked at any time, information **may** be disclosed without consent to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school, the home school district or the intermediate unit as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); state agency representative, person or company with whom the school has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Directory information may be released without parent consent. Parents have the right to refuse to let an agency designate any or all of the above information as directory information.

Upon written request, Agora Cyber Charter School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

4. Parents have a right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the Agora Cyber Charter School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. Complaints may be filed with the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202-4605.

Mode of Communication

The content of this notice has been written in straight-forward, simple language. If a person does not understand any of this notice, he or she should ask the Special Education Contact for an explanation.

The Agora Cyber Charter School will arrange for an interpreter for parents with limited English proficiency. If a parent is deaf or blind or has no written language, the school district will arrange for communication of this notice in the mode normally used by the parent (e.g., sign language, Braille, or oral communication).

For a more complete description of how our school will work with the special needs of students with disabilities in a cyber school environment, see our attached Policy and Procedures Manual for Special Education in the Appendix B.

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

Agora Cyber will incorporate the following best practices and habits of practice as defined by the PA Department of Education.

BEST PRACTICES
1. Meaningful continuous assessment that is aligned with standards
Agora Cyber CS will have a standards-based accountability system for all students that includes a systematic review of progress by a certified teacher and regular feedback to parents and students regarding progress relative to State standards and benchmarks. Progress of the school and the student will be linked to the Pennsylvania Accountability System goals, and diagnostic test scores will be used by teachers, parents and administrators to make decisions regarding allocation of additional resources and alterations to a student's program to ensure their success in all academic areas.
2. Rigorous and engaging curriculum
The curriculum will provide opportunities for all types of students to achieve high levels and be prepared for challenging careers in mathematics, science, engineering and computer technologies. Using a combination of online coursework and a standards-based scope and sequence from the K12 curriculum (based on Core Knowledge Sequence, an Obie-Porter national demonstration curriculum), students will be provided a variety of learning

	experiences that will be tailored to their particular strengths and interests. Our curriculum will incorporate the many resources of museums and Universities provided on the newly developed Internet2 (www.internet2.edu) to support real-world research and access to high-tech research tools and projects.
3. Innovative, creative and effective instruction	
	Improved student achievement will be the full focus of our instruction, with regular assessments and reviews providing instant feedback to students regarding their progress relative to their goals and the goals of the school. Our school removes the classroom walls as barriers to teaching and learning, and provides students opportunities to learn from a wide range of resources, including their classroom teachers (on-line- synchronously and asynchronously), professional mentors, their parents, other students, museums, libraries, and web-based learning software. Students will be stimulated to think creatively and use higher-order thinking skills by collaborating with others to solve real-world problems (through computer-supported collaborative learning).
4. Artful use of infrastructure	
	Student learning will drive the structure of every school day, as students, their parents, and teachers set goals for student work, chart paths for their learning, set deadlines for completion of the work, and continually assess students' learning progress. Our "classes" will be small, with students organized in collaborative groups of 8 or fewer, who will work on-line with others to generate questions, to collect data and to attempt to solve problems with the guidance of school administrators and teachers who are assigned to each group.
5. Deep partnerships with community organizations, universities, businesses and/or, regional and national organizations	
	Our planning group and administration will collaborate with ReadyMinds, Inc., a company that is a national leader in the provision of online career counseling services to youth and adults, and plans to incorporate many community groups, businesses, museums, universities, and schools from around the world into our group of partners. Because we will be a cyber school, physical location will not hinder our ability to collaborate with partner organizations and experts wherever they may be. We will encourage the exploration of local resources for students, such as the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, and we will also develop partnerships with organizations such as the National Center for Supercomputing Applications in Illinois.
6. Intensive teacher and leadership training	
	Our teachers and administrators will be the main visionaries for connecting students and their parents with the resources and teaching and learning methods that can help them to build on prior knowledge and skills to learn most efficiently and effectively. We will provide our teachers with regular professional development that will be focused on developing skills and knowledge in using tools to assess students' progress and Web-based teaching to help students to meet the goals of the school, the state, and their students.

HABITS OF PRACTICE	
1. Serve students who have traditionally been underserved by the public schools, are considered hard to reach and/or are underrepresented in future career fields	
	Our program will provide particular support for minority students and females who have not been drawn traditionally to these fields. We will recruit heavily from these groups, through radio, newspapers and the Web. An on-line school provides the promise of reducing some

	of the stigma that is often placed on members of these groups when they attempt to study science and technology. We will research the progress of these underserved students and adjust our model to ensure their ultimate success in the school and beyond.
2. Focus on building relationships and trust	
	We will build a strong foundation of relationships and trust by providing open access to our teachers and administrators through email, and chat rooms meetings with students and families. We will provide continual monitoring and feedback regarding student work to parents, students and teachers, creating a bond of mutual responsibility and support for their ultimate success.
3. Build upon education practices proven successful nationally and/or are supported through scientifically based research	
	Computer-based learning has been proven to be successful in helping students to achieve both basic skills and higher-order thinking skills (Papert, 1994, *The Children's Machine: Rethinking School in the Age of the Computer*). Computer-supported collaborative learning, a primary approach that will be used by this school for student learning, has been shown to be highly valuable for teaching and learning both social and academic skills, and is recommended as an educational technique by the US Department of Education (Scardamalia, M., & Bereiter, C. (1994). Computer support for knowledge-building communities. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 3(3), 265-283). Other curricula for the school, such as the Core Knowledge Sequence, have also been proven to improve student achievement (Sam Stringfield, Amanda Datnow, Geoffrey Borman, and Laura Rachuba *(1999) National Evaluation of Core Knowledge Sequence Implementation: Final Report* of the Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University).
4. Foster positive partnerships with their local school district in order to inform each other's practice, share knowledge and leverage resources	
	We plan to contact and form mutually beneficial partnerships with the school districts from which we draw students. We will offer, for example, free web-based training to their teachers who are interested in using those techniques.
5. Commit to participating in networks with colleagues at other Pennsylvania charter schools and charter schools in other states	
	We plan to join the Pennsylvania Coalition of Charter Schools and the Charter Friends National Network. We will also form a partnership with the Colorado Cyberschools Association to share strategies that have been developed by cyberschools in other states.

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

Agora Cyber will operate on a 182-day calendar that will mirror those of local School Districts (e.g., The School District of Philadelphia's calendar). Although the school teachers will operate on a traditional calendar, opportunities for students to learn will exist 24 hours, all year long, through the school's web-based medium.

Agora Cyber School regular hours of operation will be from 8:00 am to 4:00 p.m Eastern Time. The students will be eligible to participate in at least 6.5 hours of instruction from trained teachers each regular school day (1,183 hours of instructional time annually). Secondary students will exceed 30 credit hours of instruction. Therefore, Agora Cyber will exceed the 180 days/900 hours of instruction time requirement set forth in 1715(A) of the Charter School Law.

4. School Accountability:
*School Evaluation***:**

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

Goal:

The goal of the Agora Accountability Methods and Systems evaluation is to ascertain if there is a well functioning accountability system in operation that is capable of determining if a high quality education is being provided to Agora students.

Summary:

Agora assures the delivery of a quality education through both student and staff assessment.

Student Assessment:

Agora's comprehensive accountability structure for student achievement includes daily, weekly, monthly, and tri-semester assessments. These assessments are part of the online component of the academic program. They are designed to determine if the student has understood and retained the objectives of the lessons that have been taught within a specific time period.

Some of these curriculum related assessments are paper "tests," printed from the online curriculum. After these are completed by the student, the parent will compare the child's work with the online answer key and enter the results onto the online system. Other "tests" will require the parent to read questions to the child and enter the child's verbal answers into the system. Parents may also be asked to supply their observations regarding the child's level of understanding.

Data from these assessments will be stored in Agora's secure database and will be used to provide parents, students, and teachers with information about the student's progress. The Chief Executive Officer will also be able to use this data to judge the achievement of the student body as a whole and individual grades and classes in particular.

Students will be expected to demonstrate a minimum of 80% mastery of the content and skills tested on the daily, weekly, monthly, and tri-semester tests. If after three attempts to meet this standard, a student cannot achieve 80%, one of the teachers will re-teach the materials using alternate methods and assessments in order to assist the child in reaching mastery.

Agora will use the Terra Nova test as a pre and post test. In September of the opening year students will be given the Terra Nova test suitable for his/her level. In the spring of the opening year and each spring thereafter, students will be tested using the Terra Nova. These tests will be administered and proctored by representatives of the school at designated hubs.   The results of this testing will enable teachers and administrators to determine the level of achievement of individual students, classes, grades and the student body as a whole.

Students in the stipulated grades will participate in the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). It will be the goal of the school to achieve AYP every year that it is in operation. However, because many students who are new to the school have probably not been taught, it is likely that this goal will not be met in the first year or two of operation.

The results of student testing will help the staff determine which teaching methods work best and which need improvement; which lessons or units are readily understandable to students and which need additional clarification, etc. Analysis of the information gathered will result over time in an improved program and increased student learning.

Staff Assessment:

Agora's staff assessment procedures are designed to improve the performance of the professional staff and to result over time in higher levels of student achievement   . Agora's staff assessment process has been described in the body of this proposal. It is summarized below.

Teachers and administrators at Agora will be evaluated through a combination of self-assessment and performance reviews. Performance reviews will be conducted annually based upon personal portfolios and a published set of performance standards designed by professionals in the PA Department of Education.

The Board will designate the CEO or another qualified person to evaluate the teachers. Upon being hired, teachers will be provided with a detailed set of clearly defined rubrics that will reflect the school's emphasis on teacher professionalism, college preparation, and a rigorous curriculum. These rubrics will act as the basis for the evaluation of individual teachers by the Board's evaluator and for the teacher's own self evaluation.

The evaluator will complete a performance evaluation each time he or she observes a teacher. If the evaluator is someone other than the CEO, then the CEO will also observe each teacher at least once per year and will complete an evaluation. The CEO and the evaluator will then meet with each teacher to review the teacher's self-assessment and their evaluations. The CEO will then give the teacher a rating of "exemplary," "satisfactory," or "unsatisfactory" based on the ratings the teacher received in each of the domains of the performance standards.

Agora's non-teaching staff will also be evaluated by the CEO using published rubrics. The CEO will meet with each non-teaching staff member to review his or her self-assessment and the CEO's evaluation. The CEO will then rate each staff member. The ratings will be "exemplary," "satisfactory," or "unsatisfactory" and will be based upon the performance review

For a further degree of accountability, the CEO will be subject to an annual performance review conducted by the Board of Trustees and will be judged based upon attainment or progress toward the school's stated goals.

Agora Cyber's program is being developed, and will be implemented primarily by Dr. June Brown, whose Laboratory Charter School for Communication and Languages in Philadelphia was chosen as a model No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. The school was selected as one of only six such schools in the State, primarily because Dr. Brown has led the school to achieve extremely high proficiency on the State's PSSA test despite serving predominantly economically disadvantaged students from minority households (The Achiever, Vol. 4, No. 3, February 15, 2003, pp. 1-3). This school will help to ensure similarly high levels of success by focusing on accurately diagnosing and monitoring students' skills, knowledge and areas of weakness on a regular basis, and establishing a pacing plan for each student that tracks their progress toward achievement of all of the school's and students' academic goals.

Agora Cyber Charter School will use a full complement of data sources for self-assessment purposes to ensure that the school is meeting its stated mission and objectives. These sources include, but are not limited to, student performance on standardized tests, attendance rate, parent satisfaction surveys, student satisfaction surveys, community satisfaction surveys, data reported in the annual report, number of students on waiting list, school safety data, school discipline data, etc. The results of these multiple assessments will be used to refine the curriculum in order to ensure that the charter school is meeting its stated mission.

Agora Cyber will also actively seek perceptions of students, staff, parents and community members. Students, parents, and staff will be asked to complete evaluation surveys during the fall and the spring of the school year. The information from these surveys will provide valuable insight into the success and shortcomings of our curriculum and program. This information will be used to refine our curriculum. Students and parents will be apprised of all significant changes, in writing. An annual survey of the community, focusing especially on our community partners, will also be conducted and the results will be used to make any necessary changes to our educational program.

In addition, students, parents, and community members will be able to send emails with questions, feedback or suggestions directly from the school website. These emails will be logged and responded to and used to gauge the effectiveness of the school's procedures. These inputs will enable Agora Cyber staff to determine whether the school is meeting its stated goals and whether the students, parents and community are satisfied by the school's performance.

Agora Cyber's staff and Board of Trustees will use the results of our self-assessment to make changes in the curriculum and policies of the school as needed. The small size of the school and its governance structure will enable the school to adjust its curriculum if performance data indicates an area in need of improvement.

The school will pursue a wide-reaching set of goals that facilitate both the achievement of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) as delineated in the federal No Child Left Behind legislation and

the achievement of a broad range of academic and non-academic skills that address the needs of the whole child. The school will meet or exceed the requirements for AYP as determined by scores on the PSSA tests, student participation in the test, student attendance at the school, technology literacy assessments, equitable student performance, and any other measures the State may impose under the NCLB legislation. ACCS intends to meet or exceed the State's goals for AYP in all academic subjects. During the first year, we will establish a baseline that will be used to calculate eligibility for Safe Harbor, should we have students entering the school at very low academic levels.

While the school definitely subscribes to the State's, and NCLB's, requirements for making AYP, we will also develop the ability to measure our progress through a "value added approach", as described by Paul A. Herdman, Nelson Smith, and Harold Doran (2002) in the CFNN POLICY BRIEF "Value-added Analysis: A Critical Component of Determining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)". The value added system is useful for assessing the overall quality of the school because it shows how a school is doing relative to where their students are starting from, rather than simply where the school's students are performing relative to students in other schools. A value added analysis can help us to pinpoint what aspects of our program are contributing more and what aspects less to moving our students' academic achievement forward.

ACCS will attempt to opt in to the Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS) in order to take advantage of the state's pilot effort at value added analysis. The PVAAS will help us to determine how well our school is progressing with our students from their level of academic skill at their point of entry to the school through their time at NLCS. The PVAAS is currently being administered by the Lancaster-Lebanon IU 13.

What are the Benefits of PVAAS?

- PVAAS methodology follows the progress of individual students over time. Each student is compared to his/her own past performance. By using individual student longitudinal data, each student serves as his or her own 'control,' thereby eliminating the confounding impact of demographic variables, such as economic status or racial/ethnic group. PVAAS provides a unique gauge to measure how much students have grown each year.
- PVAAS empowers all school districts with the benefits of rigorous statistical analyses that produce the results in an easily understood format. Reporting is at the fingertips of users, available in a secure-access web delivery. PVAAS gives the option for looking at growth and growth patterns, rather than static performance of groups of students. The PVAAS methodology can analyze data obtained from various assessment tools. Consequently, results from both the PSSA and other standardized assessments can be analyzed with the PVAAS model.
- Unlike typical achievement reports, which may reveal below-average performance, PVAAS reports growth over time, thereby allowing these districts to see where growth is occurring even though overall achievement rates may be below benchmark performance.

If the PVAAS system is not available to our school, we will work with independent evaluation and assessment consultants to develop our own value-added analysis system.

The school will also keep abreast of changes to the NCLB law and PDE's interpretations and criteria for meeting Adequately Yearly Progress, particularly as it applies to special needs students, as there are currently changes being created for assessing the performance of those students.

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

An integral part of the school's self-assessment and accountability plan is the staff evaluation plan. Teachers and administrators at Agora Cyber will be evaluated through a combination of self-assessment and performance reviews. Performance reviews will be conducted annually based upon personal portfolios and a published set of performance standards designed by professionals in the PA Department of Education (426).

The Board will select the CEO, and approve all other staff. Teachers will be provided with a detailed set of clearly defined rubrics. The rubrics will be distributed to all teachers upon their hiring and will reflect the school's emphasis on teacher professionalism, college preparation, and a rigorous curriculum.

The evaluator will complete a performance evaluation each time that he or she observes a teacher. Teachers will use the same performance evaluation rubrics to complete a self-assessment at the end of the school year. If the evaluator is someone other than the CEO, then the CEO will also observe each teacher at least twice per year and will complete an evaluation. The CEO and the evaluator will then meet with each teacher to review the teacher's self-assessment and the evaluations. The CEO and the teacher will use their evaluation forms as the basis for discussing the teacher's performance for the year. The CEO will then give the teacher a rating of "exemplary," "satisfactory," or "unsatisfactory" based on the teacher's ratings in each of the domains of the performance standards.

All ratings will be considered by the Board in determining retention, assignment, and salary increases. The Board will also determine if the funds are available to provide bonuses to the teachers who attain an "exemplary" rating. The Board will be looking into converting this performance evaluation process into a full performance-based-pay system in the coming years.

An important determinant of the teacher evaluation process will be professional development. All Agora Cyber teachers will participate in professional development on how to integrate technology into the curriculum and how to harness the power of technology to advance their teaching practices. All teachers will also attend professional development tailored to the curriculum. Beyond these professional development programs, teachers and administrators will be given the flexibility to pursue the kinds of professional development activities that best suit their individual needs.

The Agora Cyber's founders believe that "teachers tend to know where their areas of strength and relative weakness lie and are keen to bring all areas of their practice to higher levels. If provided with a safe and respectful environment, most teachers will choose to concentrate their

efforts at professional growth in those areas in which they have the greatest need" (Danielson 2000, p. 25). As a result, teachers will be encouraged to engage in a wide range of professional development activities. These professional development endeavors will be recorded and will positively impact the teacher's annual performance review.

If a teacher receives a low rating in a particular category of the performance standards, that teacher will be expected to remediate his or her relative weaknesses with an approved professional development course within six months of the evaluation. Failure to do so may result in the teacher being placed on probation, as determined by the Board. Any teacher receiving an overall "unsatisfactory" rating will be required to remediate his or her areas of weakness through approved professional development. The teacher will create a remediation plan for him or herself, specifying the professional development that he or she will pursue, and will submit the plan to the CEO. The CEO and the teacher will both sign the agreed upon course of action. This signed agreement will serve as a commitment by the teacher to address his or her weaknesses. Failure to complete the agreement will constitute grounds for teacher termination, as determined by the Board.

Agora Cyber non-teaching staff will also be evaluated by the CEO using published rubrics. The CEO will meet with each non-teaching staff member to review his or her self-assessment and the CEO's evaluation. The CEO will then rate each staff member. The ratings will be "exemplary," "satisfactory," or "unsatisfactory" and will be based upon the performance review. The review process for administrators will be the same as described above for teachers. In addition, non-teaching staff who receive "exemplary" ratings will be eligible for any bonuses granted by the Board. Teachers and non-teaching staff will be allowed to appeal any "unsatisfactory" ratings to the Board of Trustees.

For a further degree of accountability, the CEO will be subject to an annual performance review conducted by the Board of Trustees and will be judged based upon attainment or progress toward the school's stated goals.

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

As a charter school, Agora Cyber is ultimately accountable for its performance to those who are outside of the school staff and Board. In order to survive, our school must satisfy the needs of students and parents and continue to attract new enrollees. The school is also accountable to the State for meeting the goals and terms promised in this application, and ultimately to the taxpayers in the Commonwealth and the United States who fund this program. The school will make available to parents information on all of the following:

- School site visit by a team of trained personnel
- A report on the evaluator's visit, noting strengths, areas of concern, and strategies for immediate and long-term improvements
- Development of and Corrective Action Plans
- Follow up visits

- Independent monitoring by an Accountability Review Council
- Monitoring of student performance goals as per No Child Left Behind
- Standardized test scores

Agora Cyber's founders and staff will view all parents as their customers. As a school of choice, Agora Cyber will be directly accountable to the parents. If their needs are not met, Agora Cyber will assist parents in finding another appropriate placement for their children.

The school will strive to serve its parent-customers through a variety of systems and activities. These include the following: (a) Providing Information, (b) Establishing Dialogue, and (c) Sharing Governance.

Providing Information

Parents will receive report cards that will list the students' goals as indicated in their Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for the year, and will indicate their progress toward these goals, illustrated with examples. Report cards will be distributed to parents or guardians through the regular mail and they will be available to parents and students online at any time. Report card review and planning sessions will be held through teleconferencing at the beginning of the year and at the end of each quarter. The participants will review the student's progress with regard to his/her and the school's learning goals, and create and revise plans to be included in the student's ILP. The sessions will involve the generation of ideas of how parent, teacher, and student can work together to meet the individual and school standards.

In addition to the quarterly reports, teachers will send, through email, bimonthly updates on a student's progress with regard to his or her ILP when necessary, with opportunities for parents to respond to the teacher on a return sheet. The staff will also offer workshops that parents can attend in person or online. These workshops will focus on helping the parent to improve their skills in assisting their children with their learning goals.

The school's Annual Report will be developed each year for submission to the school districts in which the students reside and to State Department of Education. Copies of this Annual Report will be provided to parents through the school's main office, and will be made available through the school's website. The report will provide details for parents regarding the school's staff, budget, academic achievements, and future plans.

Establishing Dialogue

Agora Cyber staff and Board of Trustees will work directly with our parents to create a dialogue that invites and discusses ideas, addresses criticism and develops creative solutions for helping their children to meet high standards. Our first contact with parents interested in enrolling their students in the school will likely be at community meetings that will be held in conjunction with community organizations throughout the area. We will also hold a series of open houses where parents and students can come to meet the staff, Board members and administrators. Through our website and electronic mail, we will also establish an electronic forum for the discussion and

involvement of parents in sharing ideas and developing solutions. Parents on the Board of Trustees will be directly involved in communicating with the staff and other Board members regarding the services being provided to their children. Parents will have access to all board meetings which will be well publicized, in accordance with Pennsylvania State Law.

Sharing Governance

Including parents in the decision-making process for meeting students' learning needs is a central goal of the school. Parents will be directly involved in decision-making at the school, both formally and informally. Parents and students, by participating in the development of Individual Learning Plans, completion of forms regarding the schools' performance, parent training programs, and through the development of the discipline code, will help to set goals for student achievement and student behavior.

Parents will be able to participate formally in the decision-making process of the school by becoming involved in the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC will work closely with the school CEO to develop programs for students, and to help bring their expertise to bear on school problems.

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

- The charter school does not intend to contract with an external management company, however it does intend to contract out for payroll preparation, therapeutic services, and technical support, and auditing.

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

Agora Cyber's founders understand that, under FERPA, schools must generally afford parents:
- Access to their children's education records
- An opportunity to seek to have the records amended
- 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 or her education records.

Access to Education Records

To comply with FERPA, Agora Cyber will provide parents with the following access to their children's education records:

- An opportunity to inspect and review his or her child's education records within 45 days of the receipt of a request

- Copies of education records, or otherwise make the records available to the parent if the parent, for instance, lives outside of commuting distance of the school
- Redacted names and other personally identifiable information about other students that may be included in the child's education records.

Amendment of Education Records

To comply with FERPA, Agora Cyber will:
- Consider a request from a parent to amend inaccurate or misleading information in the child's education records;
- Offer the parent a hearing on the matter if it decides not to amend the records in accordance with the request;
- Offer the parent a right to place a statement to be kept and disclosed with the record if as a result of the hearing the school still decides not to amend the record.

A school is not required to consider requests for amendment under FERPA that:
- Seek to change a grade or disciplinary decision;
- Seek to change the opinions or reflections of a school official or other person reflected in an education record;
- Seek to change a determination with respect to a child's status under special education programs.

Disclosure of Education Records

To comply with FERPA, Agora Cyber will:
- Have a parent's consent prior to the disclosure of education records;
- Ensure that the consent is signed and dated and states the purpose of the disclosure.

However, Agora Cyber *may* disclose education records without consent when:
- The disclosure is to school officials who have been determined to have legitimate educational interests as set forth in the school district's annual notification of rights to parents;
- The student is seeking or intending to enroll in another school;
- The disclosure is to state or local educational authorities auditing or evaluating Federal or State supported education programs or enforcing Federal laws which relate to those programs;
- The disclosure is pursuant to a lawfully issued court order or subpoena; and
- The information disclosed has been appropriately designated as directory information by the school.

Annual Notification

Each year, Agora Cyber will notify parents (of enrolled students) that the school must allow parents to:
- Inspect and review their children's education records;

- Seek amendment of inaccurate or misleading information in their children's education records;
- Consent to most disclosures of personally identifiable information from education records.

The annual notice will also include:
- Information for a parent to file a complaint of an alleged violation with the FPCO;
- A description of a school official and what is considered to be a legitimate educational interest so that information may be shared with that person;
- Information about contacts to seek access or amendment of education records.

This notification to parents will be posted in the Student Handbook and will be available on the school's website.

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

Agora Cyber recognizes that charter school funding is based on enrollment and that, an accurate child count is necessary. The school will develop a system 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 (including, but not limited to, PDE-4059CS Instructional Time Summary, PDE-40262C Annual Attendance Membership Report, PDE-4002CS Summary Report of Aggregate Days Membership).

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. This basic data includes:

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

Agora Cyber also intends to use a student information software system, such as Administrators Plus or PowerSchool, to track enrollment data to make-sure that enrollment figures are always up-to-date and reflect new students and any withdrawals.

A. Describe plans to evaluate student performance.

Agora Cyber's staff and Board will continually evaluate student's performance, assessing their progress through annually administered standardized assessments, including Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA).

Pennsylvania System of State Assessment   (PSSA) Testing

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA)) will be given according to the following schedule, with additional assessments administered as they become available.

Spring:
- 5th and 8th Grade Writing Test;

Spring:
- 3rd, 5th, 8th, and 11th Grade Math & Reading Operational Test
- 4th and 7th grade Science, Technology, Environment, and Ecology field test

Student assessment information that is obtained and documented on student performance will be archived digitally and kept in a relational database on a secure server in the school and in password-protected files located in homerooms.
Teachers assigned by grade level will assess students' work using rubrics developed by teachers, and through assessments developed by K12.com, and Power-glide. Students will also maintain electronic portfolios that will document their progress in all subjects in the school.

For students with significant disabilities, Agora Cyber will administer the Pennsylvania Alternative System of Assessment in Reading, Writing and Mathematics as indicated by their IEP.

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

Agora Cyber's many academic goals will be assessed regularly to determine whether the school is accomplishing its mission of preparing students to be knowledgeable and proficient in all subject areas. The school's overall learning goals will be assessed according to the table below. Additional assessments may be developed and added to this table as the school grows and begins to understand the needs of our students better. Feedback from these assessments will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the school is devoting sufficient resources to achieving all of its goals.

Academic Goals	Indicators	Estimated Baseline	Targets 2005-2009
Goal 1. Students will achieve proficiency in Mathematics	PSSA	Average from area Elementary Schools	Improve Percentage at Proficient Level from Baseline by 5% per year
Goal 2. Students will achieve proficiency in	PSSA	Average from area Elementary Schools	Improve Percentage at Proficient Level from

Reading and Listening			Baseline by 5% per year
Goal 3. Students will achieve proficiency in Writing and Oral Communication	PSSA	Average from area Elementary Schools	Improve Percentage at Proficient Level from Baseline by 5% per year
Goal 4. Students will achieve proficiency in a Foreign language	Portfolios Performances	Assessed at school opening, 2005	Improve average end of year rubric scores on a 4 point scale by .2 points annually (e.g., moving students from Basic to Proficient in 5 years)
Goal 5. Students will achieve proficiency in Social studies	Portfolios	Average from area Elementary Schools	Improve Percentage at Proficient Level from Baseline by 5% per year
Goal 6. Students will achieve proficiency in Science	PSSA	Average from area Elementary Schools	Improve Percentage at Proficient Level from Baseline by 5% per year
Goal 7. Students will achieve competency in Visual and Performing Arts	Portfolios Performances	Assessed at school opening, 2005	Improve average end of year rubric scores on a 4 point scale by .2 points annually (e.g., moving students from Basic to Proficient in 5 years)
Goal 8. Students will achieve competency in using Technology	Portfolios Performances Microsoft Certification	Assessed at school opening, 2005	Improve average end of year rubric scores on a 4 point scale by .2 points annually (e.g., moving students from Basic to Proficient in 5 years)
Goal 9. Students will demonstrate high levels of Media Literacy	Portfolios Performances	Assessed at school opening, 2005	Improve average end of year rubric scores on a 4 point scale by .2 points annually (e.g., moving students from Basic to Proficient in 5 years)
Goal 10. Students will demonstrate critical and higher order thinking skills	Teacher Evaluations of Student Performance, Parent Feedback	Assessed at school opening, 2005	Cornell Critical Thinking Test, Level X
Goal 11. Students will demonstrate skills associated with self-directed learning	Review of Student Work	Assessed at school opening, 2005	Improve average end of year rubric scores on a 4 point scale by .2 points annually (e.g., moving

			students from Basic to Proficient in 5 years)

About Agora Cyber Rubrics

A rubric is a guide for assessing students' knowledge or skill when presented in the form of a performance or project (Rubrics and Scoring, *SRI Center for Technology in Learnin*g, 2002; see: http://pals.sri.com/guide/scoringdetail.html). Although teachers will be encouraged to develop their own rubrics for student performances, essays and projects, and to share them with their students, the school will provide teachers with a set of standard guidelines for developing those rubrics.

Most rubrics today are developed on a four-point scale, with the scale approximating the following:

- Unacceptable demonstration of knowledge and/or skill in the area
- Marginally acceptable demonstration of knowledge and/or skill in the area, may require additional proof of understanding
- Acceptable demonstration of knowledge and/or skill in the area
- Goes beyond the expected in demonstration of knowledge and/or skill in the area

A common organization of rubrics is demonstrated in the following general rubric:

Advanced: Distinguished in the content area. Academic achievement is beyond mastery. Test score provides evidence of in-depth understanding in the academic content area tested.

Proficient: Competent in the content area. Academic achievement includes mastery of the important knowledge and skills. Test score provides evidence of skills necessary for progress in the academic content area tested.

Basic: Somewhat competent in the content area. Academic achievement includes mastery of most of the important knowledge and skills. Test score shows evidence of at least one major flaw in understanding the academic content area tested.
Minimal: Limited achievement in the content area. Test score shows evidence of major misconceptions or gaps in knowledge and skills tested in the academic content area.

Rubrics at Agora Cyber will possess the following characteristics:
- Continuous
- Parallel
- Coherent
- Highly Descriptive
- Valid
- Reliable

The following sample rubric for scoring English essays will serve as an example of the type of assessment that will be used at Agora Cyber to examine students' work and to provide feedback regarding their performances and projects (from Moskal, Barbara M. Scoring rubrics: what, when and how? *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 7(3), 2000).

Rubric Example

-3-
Meets Expectations for a first Draft of a Professional Report
The document can be easily followed. A combination of the following are apparent in the document:
   ✓ Effective transitions are used throughout.
   ✓ A professional format is used.
   ✓ The graphics are descriptive and clearly support the document's purpose.
The document is clear and concise and appropriate grammar is used throughout.

-2-
Adequate
The document can be easily followed. A combination of the following are apparent in the document:
   ✓ Basic transitions are used.
   ✓ A structured format is used.
   ✓ Some supporting graphics are provided, but are not clearly explained.
The document contains minimal distractions that appear in a combination of the following forms:
   ✓ Flow in thought
   ✓ Graphical presentation
   ✓ Grammar/mechanics

-1-
Needs Improvement
Organization of document is difficult to follow due to a combination of following:
   ✓ Inadequate transitions
   ✓ Rambling format
   ✓ Insufficient or irrelevant information
   ✓ Ambiguous graphics
The document contains numerous distractions that appear in the a combination of the following forms:
   ✓ Flow in thought
   ✓ Graphical presentations
   ✓ Grammar/mechanics

-0- *Inadequate* There appears to be no organization of the document's contents. Sentences are difficult to read and understand.

C. Describe how student evaluation will be used to improve student achievement and attain the stated learning objectives.
Explanation: Describe your commitment to high academic standards for all students; well-developed evaluation program for either school-developed or standardized testing; use of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA)) or the PA Alternate School Assessment (PASA); and an analysis of assessment results to improve student performance.

The Board of Trustees will meet regularly and receive reports from the school's CEO at each meeting regarding student progress toward the school's learning goals, as measured by standardized tests, student test scores from grade level rubrics, and evidence from student portfolios and projects. In addition, the Board of Trustees will conduct an Annual Review of student achievements relative to the goals and objectives of the school each year. The results of this Review will be made public in an Annual Report, and a copy will be submitted to the School District and to the PA Department of Education by August 1 each year. An outside evaluator will be solicited within the first three years of operation to examine student performance relative to the school's operations and to provide feedback on whether the school's emphasis and resources are most effectively organized.

Results from the Pennsylvania System of State Assessment (PSSA) in its respective grades will be particularly scrutinized, as they provide information on proficiency and reference points to other students in their age group. Results of these tests will be reviewed thoroughly by the Board of Trustees, by the CEO and by the teachers within two months of their receipt. Information from the school-wide tests will be included in the Annual Report.

Results from these tests will be used by teachers and other staff members in professional development sessions to review the school's progress toward meeting its high academic standards. These sessions will identify areas where student performance is particularly weak, and enable teachers and other staff to develop corrective action plans to improve the focus and direction of the school.

5. School Community:
A. Describe the relationship of your school with the surrounding community.

The Agora Cyber CS planning group considers that involvement of the community and the general public, particularly parents and students, in the development of the design for the school is essential to our ultimate success. We will take a spiraling approach to community involvement, beginning by identifying a core of founding organizations and individuals who are committed to our mission of providing an alternative learning experience based on a cyber-education format. For example, we will begin by contacting the Franklin Institute, the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Wagner Free Institute for Science Education, Black Alliance for Educational Options, and other forward-thinking organizations that would be interested in our mission.

We will maintain a database of interested organizations from which we will develop partnerships, particularly for the enhancement of the science and technology education aspects of our program.

We will develop a website to inform the larger community regarding our mission and vision, and to keep in touch with our students, parents, and community partners (www.cybercharter.com).

We will continue to hold a series of community meetings in a variety of physical locations in the State throughout the application process to share our ideas with the community, gather feedback, and to recruit parents and students to the school. The initial meetings will be held in Philadelphia, and Delaware counties and then adjacent counties as need and interest expand.

The founders of Agora Cyber Charter School followed a comprehensive plan for involving the community in the development of the school's design and educational program. During this program, the founders involved the community in the following ways:

1. Assessed community interest in the CCS
   - Contacted community groups to discuss the possibilities for forming a new charter school.
   - Held informational meetings for the community to discuss the activities and opportunities surrounding the founding of the CCS.
   - Conducted a survey of potential parents for the charter school

2. Informed the local community about the founding of the CCS
   - Established an interim Administrative/School Information Office (eg, office equipment and telephone in donated space).
   - Contacted community organizations to discuss plans for the CCS.
   - Contacted local newspapers to alert them to the development of the new school.
   - Developed and posted flyers and brochure regarding the CCS and contact information.
   - Held informational meetings for students, parents, and older community members about the school to obtain their input, online and in community centers.
   - Created a website describing the mission and vision for the school, and inviting feedback on our model.
3. Built a coalition of interested community members
   - Developed a database of interested community members
   - Recruited individuals to serve on the Board of Trustees for the school.
   - Circulated petitions in support of the school to the community.
   - Recruited local organizations to serve as partners for the school.
4. Recruited local students and parents to participate in the school
   - Developed application forms for students
   - Held focus groups for prospective students and parents

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

Parents are part of the community, too. Therefore, parents will have a great role to play in the school:

- Parents are working professionals who will have something to share with students;
- Parents will naturally market the viability and credibility of Agora Cyber;
- Parents may have educational experiences of their own when they partake in such activities as accompanying their child on field trips and special programs when they report for standardized testing.

Finally, through participation in governance activities (from the Parent Advisory Council to the participation on the Board of Trustees), parents will play a strategic role in implementing and safeguarding Agora Cyber's mission.

C. Describe procedures established to review complaints of parents regarding operation of the charter school.
Explanation: Describe expectations of family members (or guardians) to be active participants in their children's education and the integration plan of the school to collaborate with other community organizations.

Agora Cyber will maintain an open-door policy with its parents and, thus, will provide a variety of avenues for parents to register complaints or concerns and to ask questions about the school's progress toward its goals. These avenues include the following: (a) talking with a teacher and/or administrator, (b) sending a comment via the school's website, (c) addressing a concern among the Parent's Advisory Council, requesting the parent representative on the Board of Trustees to raise the issue at the next board meeting, (d) and entering a comment during the public comment period of the monthly board meeting. All grievances will be handled expeditiously and diplomatically with the intention of bringing those involved in the conflict to a consensus and a resolution.

In matters concerning special needs students (i.e., those with Individualized Education Plans), due process proceeding will be followed in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws.

6. Technology Support:
A. Describe how you will improve student achievement through effective uses of technology.

Agora Cyber's educational program will use computer technologies to provide a world class education to elementary, middle level and secondary students wherever they live in Pennsylvania. We will create a program that draws on the particular strength of computers for planning and managing the learning process, for facilitating communication between teachers, parents and students, and delivering high quality, multimedia content to students. Each student's learning program is designed and managed by an assigned teacher with expertise in teaching students of their skill level. The student's parent or guardian serves as a monitor and guide overseeing the student's work and assisting with planning and assessment. The student and parent use a school-supplied computer and Internet access to download the majority of their lessons from the school's website.

The school's academic program is built primarily around the K12.com curriculum, which has been developed from the award-winning Core Knowledge Sequence. While the Core Knowledge Foundation provides curricular guidelines, K12 goes much further by providing a fully developed and comprehensive curriculum, including complete lesson plans and assessments for a 180-day school year, online lessons with teaching aids, and a comprehensive array of offline materials.. The program includes detailed instructional guides, clear presentation of lessons, a comprehensive on-line help system, technical support, optional challenge problems, secondary lessons, and embedded teaching tips. K12's Planning, Progress, and Attendance tools facilitate developing a schedule and generating lesson plans for each student, and monitoring their progress.

The K12 curriculum lessons include:
- Clearly defined learning objectives.
- Step-by-step, easy-to-follow procedures for hands-on activities.
- Creative ideas for alternative teaching approaches.
- Materials to prepare and gather.
- Keyword definitions and tips and strategies for pronunciation.
- Suggestions for optional activities and readings beyond the lesson.

The teacher uses the K12 planning tools to provide a recommended schedule for lessons. These include a Daily Plan, Weekly Plan, Lesson List and Materials List. The Progress tool gives teachers, students and parents a look at both completion of lessons and mastery of lessons that have assessments. There are two ways to look at progress: a complete lesson overview and a detailed view. In the latter, one can view lessons by status, get information about the assessments, view lesson objectives, or go directly to the lesson. The Attendance tool allows one to record the amount of time the student spends in school. The number of minutes for each subject are recorded, and the Attendance tool automatically calculates the total number of hours and minutes for each day, year to date, and the total of number of days in school.

In addition to the online lessons, multimedia content, and planning and monitoring tools, the K12 curriculum includes a large number of more traditional tools, such as History textbooks and mathematics manipulatives. Students are expected to spend less than 50% of their learning time learning directly at the computer. K12 lessons are delivered via the Internet. Generally, children in grades K-5 do about 20 percent to 30 percent of the work online. They do most of the work offline-they read books, solve math problems on paper, draw, and conduct science experiments. As children get older and their reading skills improve, instruction and activities will involve increased independence and computer use. However, offline work will always be essential.

Parents/guardians will be given comprehensive training in how to make the most of the on-line planning tools and curriculum materials for their child. In addition, our school will facilitate the collective outings of groups of parents and students for important socialization activities. Students may participate in school outings (e.g., to historical sites, museums, zoos), picnics, and other social events throughout the school year. Local clusters of students and parents will be encouraged to get together on a regular informal basis in their areas. Student and parent

interaction and communication will be supported through our website, with a particular focus on how to become experts in the use of our curriculum for teaching and learning.

Assessments are managed through the online K12 system. They involve gathering information about student progress, strengths, and weaknesses in order to provide the best possible education for each child. ACCS will employ the following assessments, evaluations, and tests as part of its educational program:

Placement assessments. In math and reading, these assessments place students into the appropriate point in the curriculum.

Lesson assessments. These are designed to assess mastery of lesson objectives and determine whether students should go on to the next lesson or receive additional instruction. Generally, these contain several short items, depending on the lesson.

Unit assessments. These are designed to assess mastery of the lessons in a unit (such as "Fractions" or "Ancient Egypt") and determine whether a student should receive additional instruction on content covered in a unit. They are usually comprised of about 20 questions.

Semester evaluations. End-of-course evaluations provide information on what has been accomplished during the semester.

Teacher conferences and informal reviews. On a regular basis, teachers check in with students and parents to review progress and determine ways to boost student performance.

PSSA. The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a standardized test used to measure a student's attainment of the state's academic standards in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, and to assist schools in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their academic programs. Every Pennsylvania student is assessed in reading and math in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11, and in writing in grades 6, 9, and 11. Additional assessments will be administered as required by the State of PA and the federal NCLB Law.

Standardized exams. ACCS will utilize standardized exams to help the school evaluate student performance.

Each semester, students will be issued a report card, reflecting their completed work, their progress towards stated goals, and results from quantitative assessments.

B. Describe the technical support that will be provided to students and parents.

Agora Cyber will use a multi faceted approach to provide technical support to students and parents including, but not limited to the following:
- In-depth student and parent training sessions with expert technicians and educators. Training sessions will be held during each enrollment period with regularly scheduled sessions during the remainder of the school year.
- Curriculum-related technical support online and email support
- School staff assistance online during regular school hours

In accordance with 24 P.S. § 17-1747-A(9), every effort will be made to ensure that both students and parents have access to the technical support required to maximize achievement and student productivity while online. Tech support for the computer hardware will be provided to parents and students by hardware companies' hotlines (e.g., by Hewlett Packard for provided HP printers). Penn Systems Group, Inc. will be contracted to walk parents through various steps to help troubleshoot and repair problems, give loaner computers, and make any needed repairs. Tech support for software will be provided to students by those software companies that Agora uses. Technical support for the curriculum will be provided by the school and by K12.com through a telephone "hotline" with a toll free number 12 hours a day, 5 days a week, 52 weeks a year; and/ or through email and online chat support. The hours of available support and types of support provided to parents and students will be adjusted based on the demand for such support, and feedback obtained from those parents and students during regular surveys.

C. Describe the policy for ensuring the privacy and security measures that will guarantee the confidentiality of data gathered online.

A registration ID, username, and password will be given to each student that is admitted to ACCS. The K12 curriculum is also password protected. In addition, the school base server that houses student data will be protected by a firewall, which will only allow for needed and specified connections. This will protect against outside attacks and close possible security holes. The Agora Cyber Technology Director will be responsible for maintaining and assigning passwords and access to electronic records for the school's staff. The Special Education Supervisor and CEO are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the student records. For additional information see Appendix B - Policy and Procedures Manual.

D. Describe the methods to ensure authenticity of student work submitted and proctoring of exams.

Placement tests, semester assessments, and all standardized tests will be done in person. School staff will be responsible for the scheduling and proctoring of all assessments. Parents may also request that their children be assessed in-person at a hub regardless of the format.

E. Describe equipment such as hardware, software, and Internet connections to be provided to students.

Agora Cyber students will access our school's website and the K12 online curriculum using personal computers, printers, software and related technologies loaned to the families by the school. Families will have the option to use the Internet connection of their choice, although a high speed connection will be recommended. The school will reimburse families for the cost of their Internet service.

Enrolled students will be provided with a computer system (including computer, printer, software, and Internet reimbursement program) to support the learning process. These computer

systems and materials are the property of the school and must be returned when the student leaves. The school will arrange for technical support and troubleshooting for these systems (See section I.7.E. above). Computers will follow these technical specs, at minimum:

- Processor Speed: 500 MHz or better
- RAM: 128MB (minimum)
- Disk space: 10 GB or more
- CDROM: 16X
- Monitor: 15-inch display
- Video: SVGA (800 X 600 pixel resolution)
- Audio: 16-bit sound card
- Modem: 56 kbps (minimum), Ethernet
- Microphone and speakers
- Operating system: Windows 2000 or XP
- Microsoft® Internet Explorer
- Adobe® Acrobat® Reader® 6
- Real Player® (Version 7)
- Macromedia Flash™
- QuickTime®
- Whiteboard software
- Word processing and spreadsheet software

Additionally, the school will acquire the following equipment for staff use in the delivery of educational services:

Computers
Dual Xeon Servers
Networking Switches
Stand Alone Printers
Group Printers
Productivity Software
Scanners
Peripheral Hardware
Server Software

II. NEEDS ASSESSMENT
1. Statement of Need:
A. Why is there a need for this type of school?

The number of parents choosing to educate their children primarily at home or in small learning environments has grown tremendously over the past decade, as part of a larger movement of parents taking advantage of new educational options for their children. Many parents are choosing to educate their children in alternative ways from their traditional neighborhood public schools with the hope that that education can better prepare their child for a rapidly changing future (Smith, June 9, 2003, Number of black children taught at home growing,

Washington Times B4). However, in many cases, parents making those choices must sacrifice some of the advantages of a larger school system in order to achieve a more personalized experience for their child. As the demands of a high tech, science-driven world become increasingly pressing, many students are suffering from a lack of meaningful, focused, consistent education in science and digital technologies (ZUNIGA and RODRIGUES, Oct. 31, 2003, Schools boosting tech skills, but reports show minorities lack computers at home), The Houston Chronicle. Across the State of Pennsylvania, some students are being exposed to a science and technology education that will make them leaders in the field. But, those opportunities are inconsistent, are not available to many students, and are scarce in charter schools because of limited resources.

As the numbers of poor students and minority students grow in our State, and more science and technology jobs are contracted out to other States and other countries, it is becoming increasingly important that learners are provided an opportunities to learn a higher level of science and technology and other important academic skills that will ensure them a job in their increasingly tech-dependent world. Opportunities are being developed for students in many districts, such as the new high tech school Microsoft is developing with the School District of Philadelphia. However, this school will be limited in scope, will not open until at least 2006, and will be limited to a few students of high school age. We contend that a cyber school with web-based learning focused on intense hands-on science and technological skills is needed to provide the full advantage of fast-developing new research and learning technologies to children, beginning in the first years of elementary school.

B. Explain why the charter school model is an appropriate vehicle to address this need.
Explanation: Provide recognition of potential opportunities to improve service and expand choices for students and parents.
The Charter School, with its greater autonomy, is free to design a curriculum. The Charter School will exhibit the elements of an effective school – strong leadership, adequate resources at the school level, a high-caliber faculty, an attractive setting, a proven curriculum and pedagogy, an orderly, friendly environment, parental involvement, and a distinctive mission and culture. Furthermore, because of its flexibility in curriculum design and its tailored teaching methodologies, the charter school is better suited for inclusion and LEP and special needs students. Moreover, the medium of instruction deliver through the cyber web is attractive and suitable to parents who prefer an alternative to the traditional school building and tradition curriculum.

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 entry and the age of beginners entry? How many students are expected to be in each grade or grouping?

In its first year of operation, the Agora Cyber will serve 900 students in grades K-8. The school will add 300 students and one additional grade annually until the school reaches a projected student population of 2,100 in Year 5, when the school will become a K-12 institution. After the initial five years of operation, the curriculum and the school's reputation will be sufficiently

established to make it a vehicle for recruiting and marketing. It is anticipated that the school population will increase to meet enrollment demands. In order to enter the Kindergarten class, students must be four years, five months old by September 1 of the enrollment year and beginners must be five years five months old.

A breakdown of the students by grade and year of operation is provided in the table below.

	K	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	Total Enrollment
Year 1 K-8	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	NA	NA	NA	NA	900
Year 2 K-9	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	NA	NA	NA	1200
Year 3 K-10	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	130	130	130	130	NA	NA	1500
Year 4 K-11	160	160	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	150	140	140	NA	1800
Year 5 K-12	170	170	170	170	170	160	160	160	160	160	150	150	150	2100

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

ACCS operations will be located throughout the state of Pennsylvania. The school will serve students from all socio economic levels. For many of the children who live in these communities, the following grim statistics are a descriptive of their daily existence and have far-reaching consequences for their future adult lives:

- 46% of the population lives below the federal poverty level.
- At least 33% of the population is unemployed or under-employed. This number would be much higher were it to include those part-time workers seeking full-time and potential workers who have given up hope and no longer seek employment.
- 24% of the houses in the community are abandoned. Some families and even senior citizens reside in homes that are the only inhabited dwellings on their block. The vacant structures are often used by drug dealers and others for criminal activity. Some abandoned houses are used by the drug and alcohol-addicted homeless for shelter.
- 58% of the area's school students drop-out of high school.
- 50-70% of the area's adolescents reside in homes with absent parents, (or only custodial grandparents), or homes with a strictly matriarchal structure lacking any positive male role models, a particularly difficult situation for maturing young black men and women.
- Many youth who live in this part of the city confront the reality of making "easy money" by dealing drugs and larceny. The enterprising young men who make it to work-age have difficulties finding and/ or retain a job. Many are conflicted upon seeing vast profits accrue by those who are willing to deal drugs and to participate in other illegal activities.
- Young women in this area face severely heightened chances of early pregnancy for which they are unprepared. More than 50% of the homes in the neighborhood are headed by single women; the overwhelming majority of whom are under the age of 23 and live below the poverty level.

- The children in the community's schools are among the most disadvantaged in their counties and have the highest truancy and drop-out rates.

The challenge for ACCS is to motivate these families to want an education and to prepare them socially and academically to become self-sufficient ready to enter the world of work or college.

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

Agora Cyber will focus on areas that have high minority and special needs populations, a population that has struggled to cross the expanding digital divide. As the numbers of poor students and minority students grow in our State, and more science and technology jobs are contracted out to other States and other countries, it is becoming increasingly important that everyone be provided an opportunity to learn a higher level of science and technology and other important academic skills that will ensure them a job in their increasingly tech-dependent world. Such skill development and preparation must begin in the early grades.

D. Describe any unique demographic characteristics of the student population to be served, including primary languages spoken.
Explanation: Provide a description of the students to be served and the community in which the school will be located.

The student group targeted for the Agora Cyber program will be ethnically diverse. English will be the dominant tongue (although not required to take advantage of the K12 curriculum.) The Power-glide curriculum will provide transitional bilingual education in order to accelerate English Language Learners' transition to reading, writing and speaking in English. The school will target low-income students from urban areas, although we will be open to serving all K-12 students across the State. The main school building will be located in West Philadelphia.

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?

Agora Cyber Co-founders have notified the School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, the area around Chester Upland School District, Delaware County, some areas in Chester County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania of the possibility of creating a cyber charter school. Additionally, the Founding Coalition sent a letter to the Superintendents around the State of Pennsylvania formally indicating our plans to apply for a cyber charter to open in fall 2005.

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.*

In the letter referenced above, the Founding Coalition indicated its desire to maintain a collaborative relationship with the School Districts in Philadelphia, Delaware, and Chester County.

Furthermore, the Founding Coalition recognizes that communication between the school and the District is crucial to maintaining a positive relationship. Therefore, the charter school plans to provide the district with accurate enrollment data, to cooperate with district administrators wishing to visit the school, or to collect data from the school, and to maintain open lines of communication between the school and the local school districts.

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.
Explanation: Document efforts to foster open communications with local school districts; evidence that the founders inspire the confidence of their targeted community; evidence that the program provides an attractive educational alternative to students and parents; and evidence that the breadth of community support extends beyond the core group of founders.

Agora's Founding Coalition believes that the key to a successful charter school is community support. However, this support must be stronger than individuals merely agreeing to sign a petition in support of the school. This support must be sustainable. In other words, a successful school requires individuals and community organizations willing to invest in the school. This investment includes parents who intend to enroll their children in the school, community members interested in volunteering in the school, and community groups interested in partnering with the school financially, programmatically, or otherwise.

Agora has launched a campaign to cultivate sustainable community support for our charter school plan. The Agora Cyber Charter School has developed close alliances with a number of prominent organizations and schools throughout the City of Philadelphia and the metropolitan region. These relationships are intended to benefit the charter school and its partners. In addition, the partnerships are designed to strengthen and to help the school to meet its mission and address all stated goals (See Appendix C) .

The following schools, institutions, and community groups have expressed interest in establishing a working relationship with the Charter School. The Honorable Donna Reed-Miller, Council Person for the 8th District in Philadelphia, has also been generous in her support. Many of the following supporters have attended meetings to show their interest and support for ACCS. A review of our records has shown that no documentation was requested; however some documents of support and volunteer services have been given to the founders of the cyber charter school from some of the following groups and persons:

- Cornell Smith, National Automotive Group
- Julian Phelps Chalker
- Meghan Allshouse
- Betty Elliot
- Marcia Waller
- Mark Williams
- Beverly Collquitt, RN
- Ernestine J. Rouse
- Mira Jackson
- Beverly White
- Lisa Rios
- Gayle Daniels, TLRC Group
- Kathryn K. Makar
- Joan Regina Woods
- Courteney Knight
- Helen Hoffner, Holy Family College
- Whymon Simmons, Pastor
- Thomas Fields
- The Pen and Pencil Arts Group
- Dorothy Thomas
- Ira S. Davis, Sr., Ira Davis Storage Company Inc.
- Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, Darby, Pa
- Citizens Bank
- Rosalind Lewis, Lewis and Bryd Public Relations, Ltd.
- Malik Sherrod
- Zion Baptist Church
- Delta Associates
- Chase J. Evans, Chase Mentors LLC
- Mt. Carmel Baptist Church
- Kappa Legal Services
- Antonia McJett
- Lori Dixon, CRNP
- Arnita Dacres
- Robin A. Conboy, Young Scholars Charter School

The following individuals have submitted letters of support:

- Christopher R. Cabungcal, Motorola
- Tiffani Cunningham
- Myra Corbin
- Jimmy Diggs
- Regina Jones
- Shirley Ormes
- Norma Robinson

- <u>Andrew Delgado</u>
- <u>Arnita Medley</u>
- <u>Anthony Smoot</u>
- <u>KathleenP. Suloff</u>
- <u>Judy Munz</u>
- <u>Sherri Derr</u>
- <u>William M. McLaughlin</u>
- <u>Rubye E. Lawhon</u>
- <u>Lula Waller</u>
- <u>Ronald White</u>
- <u>Jean R. Pharaud</u>
- <u>Vonetta W. Harris</u>
- <u>Mariya Zaychik</u>
- <u>Deborah King</u>
- <u>Deana Levy</u>

<u>Services include certified medical staff who have agreed to provide medical evaluations, such as auditory, visual, and other medical evaluations, real estate developers who have agreed to help us find locations for testing throughout the state of Pennsylvania, educators who will monitor evaluations, professionals who can provide staff development in the area of technology, planning, various content areas, and parent conferences, tutoring, and curriculum development, computer professionals who will help troubleshoot problems, train, and make repairs, individuals who will recruit staff and students, assist in fund raising projects, and conduct marketing for the school, writers that will assist in grant writing, and individuals that will provide family law counseling.</u>

<u>We have attained an additional 700 signatures, 1500 in total, of individuals that support the implementation of the Agora Cyber Charter School.</u>

Ongoing efforts are being made to establish partnerships with schools that exist within close proximity of the potential site.

Copies of the letters of support are attached to this application as Appendix C.

III. GOVERNANCE
1. Profile of Founding Coalition:
A. Describe the make-up 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.

Dorothy June Brown, Ed.D.

The leader of the founding coalition, Dr. Dorothy June Brown, has served in the field of education for over thirty years. While she is currently the Executive Director of Main Line Academy, Dr. Brown's previous professional experiences include teaching and supervisory positions in elementary, secondary, and higher education. On an administrative level, Dr. Brown has served as the principal of an elementary school and a school for alternative education. Additionally, she has held the position of Director of Dissemination and Diffusion, a research based program designed to assist educators in developing model educational programs and disseminating them to schools and agencies. Dr. Brown is a certified educator, special educator, school administrator and school psychologist. In addition to her work with children, Dr. Brown has participated in the Rockefeller Foundation School Superintendent's Training Program, taught at Antioch Graduate School, served as a consultant to the Lippincott Publishing Company and worked as Director of Human Resources at Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Dr. Brown's wide-ranging responsibilities have provided her with experience in the selection, training and supervision of staff. They have also honed her skills as a professional communicator. In the course of her career, she has designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated programs, developed budgets and disseminated information through television appearances, radio talk shows, national educational conferences and other public forums.

In addition to her job related activities, Dr. Brown devotes many volunteer hours to causes, which aid the disabled. In 1977, she was appointed as a Pennsylvania Hearing Officer with the responsibility of mediating cases related to the appropriate programming and placement of exceptional children. Her civic mindedness and willingness to serve have been recognized with appointments to the boards of numerous agencies that serve the people of the Philadelphia area. These include: 1) Camden County Mental Health Board, 1965; 2) Zoological Society of Philadelphia, 1977; 3) Temple University Health Science Center/Hospital and medically related professional schools, 1978; 4) Fairmount Park Commission, 1977; 5) Philadelphia Art Commission, 1988; and 6) Pennsylvania College of Podiatric Medicine, 1987. President George Bush appointed her to a five-year term on the National Advisory Panel on Education in 1990. This panel determines policy, standards, curriculum and methodology for special education schools on government installations.

Dr. Brown's grants and awards include the Rockefeller Foundation School Superintendent's Training Award, ($40,000. and the Kellogg Award, from Yale University, ($15,000.). In May of 1976, she was honored by the Philadelphia Daily News for exemplary service to the education of Philadelphia's school age children.

She is currently the CEO of the Laboratory Charter School of Communication and Languages. The Laboratory Charter School recently received the 2004 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Award. Dr. Brown was also one of five school administrators in the United States to receive the Bell Award in 2004.

William H. Brown, III Esq.

William Brown is an attorney with over forty years in private practice. In addition to his work as an attorney, he has had direct involvement with the development of a school, Main Line Academy, having served both as Vice President and President of its Board of Directors. Additionally, he has served as President of the National Black child Development Institute.

Joan Woods Chalker, Ed.D.

Dr. Chalker received her doctorate in the area of Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Pennsylvania and is certified as a teacher and school principal. She has been involved in education on both a professional and volunteer basis for more than twenty-five years and has most recently been employed as an administrator for a private school. In addition to her work as a teacher, supervisor, and administrator, Dr. Chalker has participated in writing and implementing curriculum on the K - 12 level. She has also developed and implemented vocational training programs for use by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in preparing adults with disabilities for employment. These programs have been licensed by the Commonwealth's Department of Labor. Her volunteer activities have involved her in the preparation of newsletters, and the oversight of parenting courses and drug and alcohol abuse prevention programs.

Courteney Knight

Mr. Knight came to teaching after a long career in the business world where he worked in various supervisory positions, as well as budgeting and auditing positions. Mr. Knight has a Master of Science Degree in Transportation Planning and Engineering, an MBA in Finance, and is presently completing the dissertation requirements for a PHD in Education Research and Supervision. He has taught at both the high school and elementary school levels.

John Goulding

Mr. Goulding received his Bachelor's Degree from Millersville University. After graduating from Millersville, he started his teaching career as a 5th grade teacher in Trenton, NJ. While serving as an elementary teacher, he attended Rowan University and was awarded a Master's Degree and became certified as a Reading Teacher/Specialist. In addition, he attended Rider University and earned degrees and certifications in the field of school administration. As a result of his graduate work at Rider University, Mr. Goulding is additionally certified as a school supervisor and elementary/secondary principal.

His training and certifications in the field of reading enabled him to earn a position as a Title 1 Reading Specialist. As a result of his involvement in the Title 1 Reading Programs, Mr.

Goulding was given a promotion to Supervisor of Reading for the Trenton Public Schools. In this central administrative capacity, Mr. Goulding provided direction to the district's reading and mathematics programs as Supervisor and Director of Title 1. He was the primary proposal writer and budget manager for all state and federally funded programs.   His central office accomplishments included the writing and implementation of the first Title 1 School-wide Project in the State of New Jersey, and the creation of the district's original curriculum based instructional guides.

During school year 1992, he was promoted to principal at Joyce Kilmer Elementary, again, in Trenton, NJ.   During his 9-year tenure in this school, Mr. Goulding instituted a Title 1 School-wide Program, which enabled the school to reduce pupil/teacher ratios during reading instruction for all students. This school became widely acclaimed as the first 200 day, year-round program in the northeast.   As an advocate of the K-8 school structure, he was instrumental in addressing the community desire to change Kilmer from a Pre-K to 5 schools into a Pre-K - 8 magnet school.   Joyce Kilmer was a school that consistently met or exceeded New Jersey Department of Education mandated levels of academic achievement and became known for its high academic expectations.

Mr. Goulding retired from the Trenton Public Schools in July of 2000 after 33 years of service. He spent the following year working as a consultant to several schools in Trenton and the test development company known as the American Institute for Research (A.I.R.). In addition, he was recruited by the College of New Jersey to serve as an instructor (Adjunct Professor) to a cluster of student teachers. As a Cluster Supervisor, his duties included evaluating student progress and teaching a seminar on effective instructional strategies.

During the 2001-2004 School Year, Mr. Goulding as served as a Site Director for the Laboratory Charter School of Communication and Languages. Over the course of his career, he has been a presenter at many international conferences including the International Reading Association and Year-round Education Association.

Alex Schuh, Ph.D.

Dr. Schuh holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied policy research and evaluation, collaborative learning, and the use of computer media for learning. He received his Baccalaureate from Yale University in Cultural Anthropology. His expertise is in multiple areas of youth development, including organizational development, education policy, quantitative and qualitative research methods, and computer-based learning. He has been a teacher in both Middle and High Schools. Since 1992, he has helped to design and establish more than 23 charter schools across the country, including a charter school based on the ideas of emotional intelligence and a virtual charter school for distance learning.

Dr. Schuh is committed to designing the school's learning plan, academic accountability plan, and curriculum. He is currently the President of FRONTIER21 Education Solutions (www.frontier21.net).

Lisa Cabungcal, M.Ed.

Lisa Cabungcal is the current Technology Coordinator of the Laboratory Charter School of Communication and Languages in Philadelphia and of Main Line Academy in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania. She received her Master of Education in Instructional Technology from American Intercontinental University and began her career in education in 1996 after receiving her Baccalaureate from Temple University in the areas of Elementary and Early Childhood Education. In the School District of Philadelphia, she taught Kindergarten for two years where she gained valuable insight into the education of young children. She continued her teaching career in a catholic school where she taught in a self-contained eighth grade classroom and later educated students in grades kindergarten through eight in basic computer skills.

Upon completion of various computer networking courses at Villanova University, Lisa started to explore technology and its benefits as they related to educating children. From there, she has focused her energy in the instruction, research, and implementation of instructional technology.
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Stanley Bobowski

Currently, the Special Projects Coordinator at the Laboratory Charter School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Stan coordinates the assessment needs of incoming students and students requiring remediation, organizes and supervises after-school programs, mentors new teachers and evaluates existing classroom practices and procedures, and, ultimately, ensures that teachers are meeting the overall standards, goals, and mission of the Laboratory Charter School.

Mr. Bobowski is committed to ensuring that all teachers acquire the appropriate resources and materials to facilitate successful instruction. Mr. Bobowski provides guidance and assistance to each student to achieve academically at the Laboratory Charter School.

Thomas Kim

Mr. Thomas Kim has worked both as a math and computer instructor for students K-12 for the past half dozen years. He has taught a variety of students including those considered minorities, economically disadvantaged, and special needs. He has had other experience working with children in nonacademic education for a dozen years as a youth pastor, teacher and counselor. In addition to traditional materials and methods of teaching, he has utilized the internet and other presentational and instructional software in the classroom with individual interaction or in a group setting.

Mr. Kim has also worked as an instructor to teachers in the use of computers for personal productivity and for facilitation in the classroom. Topics spanned basic skills to advanced usage of numerous software titles and types.

In addition to teaching, he troubleshoots for several schools and their computer resources which include installation, setup, and fixing of computers, networks, various software, etc. He has been involved in researching operational, administrative, and educational software for schools as well purchasing hardware components from CPU's to peripheral equipment.

Mr. Kim also produces publications and does layout for school magazines and brochures while capturing and editing digital photographs as well as writing articles. He also leads his school's chess club in which elementary and junior high students learn everything from the fundamentals of chess to the end-game and opening strategies. He also has enjoyed being a Martial Arts instructor as he holds a black belt in Tae Kwon Do.

Mr. Kim's education includes computer programming at Harvard and Cornell as well as electrical engineering. He holds degrees in Philosophies of Religion and Theology.

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.

The idea was conceived by the Founders in late 2002 as a way to contribute to the existing educational system structure by encouraging high scholastic achievement, building firm foundations for our children which are rooted in strong ethical values, and emphasizing the global importance of mathematics, science, and technology.

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

The Founding Coalition hopes that as the charter application process continues – as more community meetings are held and more partner organizations sought – more individuals will join the Founding Coalition and bring with them varied experience in education and community/public relations.

D. Provide information on the manner in which community groups are involved in the charter school planning process.
Explanation: Describe a group that is composed of people with a range of professional skills capable of the organizational, financial, pedagogical, legal and other skills required to operate a functioning public school.

In addition to the community organizations represented in the membership of the Founding Coalition and the Advisory Committee, Agora Cyber will seek the advice, expertise, and involvement of families, local citizens, and community organizations. This support will reinforce its educational mission at home and throughout the community.

 In the upcoming months, the Founding Coalition is planning on conducting a major community outreach effort with the following goals:

- To identify community organizations that support our charter school, that wish to participate in the planning of the school, and/or that want to enter into partnerships with Agora Cyber.

- To identify individuals (especially parents and teachers) who wish to play an active role in the planning process.

- To identify parents who are interested in enrolling their children in the school and students who are interested in attending the charter school.

A primary forum for involving the community in the planning process will be a series of community meetings. During these meetings, the Founding Coalition will gather input from

attendees regarding the plans for the school and the needs that those attending would like to see addressed.

2. Governance
A. Describe the proposed management organization of the school, including the following requirement:

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 students or staff on Sundays, Fourth of July, Memorial Day or Christmas)*
* *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 school, the Agora Cyber will ultimately be responsible to the PA State School Board and the Department of Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A Board of Trustees will govern all operations of the school, delegating day-to-day management functions to the administrative staff and establishing a reporting relationship between the Board and the administrative staff. The board will be responsible for ensuring that the school operates 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 Agora Cyber Board of Trustees will be required to take action on the above-listed items.

B. How will the Board of Trustees be selected?

In its first year of operation, Agora Cyber's Board of Trustees will be comprised of seven members chosen by a consensus of the Founding Coalition. Subsequently, the following provisions will govern the selection of the Board of Trustees:

* Board of Trustees members will be selected in June every two years.

- The Board will consist of 7 members, including at least one attorney, one individual skilled in finance, one in education, one in marketing, and one community member.
- The CEO will be a voting, ex-officio member of the Board.
- A faculty representative to the Board, to be elected by the teaching staff, will attend Board meetings in a nonvoting capacity.
- The Board of trustees will elect officers from within its membership.
- All members of the Board of Trustees will serve two-year terms and will be eligible for re-elections.

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

The founders believe that the key to maintaining long-term continuity between their vision and the Board of Trustees lies in board development and orientation. Specifically, the Board will have a Board Development Committee, whose function will be to manage the Board recruitment process and convey the school's mission and the individual expectations for Board members to all candidates, so that newly recruited Board members enter with a firm understanding of the school's mission, the Founding Coalition's vision, and their role within the Board. A formal orientation program at the beginning of each new term will also serve as a forum for founders to articulate their vision to the Board while allowing an opportunity for new and old Board members to merge into an effective team.

The Board will also develop a strategic plan after its first year of operation to set forth goals and define the Board's course of action. In addition to providing more organization for the Board, the strategic plan will allow for greater continuity as Board members leave and new Board members are added.

D. Describe the roles and responsibilities of the Board.

Agora's founders understand that the Board of Trustees must maintain ultimate authority to manage and to control the charter school, including, but not limited to its educational philosophy, budgeting, curriculum, staffing, and operating procedures.

Among the broader roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees are:
- Determining the charter school's mission and purpose
- Selecting the charter school administrator
- Supporting the charter school administrator and reviewing his or her performance
- Ensuring effective organizational planning
- Ensuring adequate resources
- Managing resources effectively
- Determining and monitoring the charter school's programs and services

- Enhancing the charter school's public image
- Assessing its own performance

Specifically, responsibilities of the Board of Trustees include, but are not limited to:

- Setting the school calendar
- Adopting textbooks
- Appointing or dismissing charter school administrators
- Adopting the annual budget
- Purchasing or selling land
- Locating new buildings or changing locations
- Creating or increasing any indebtedness
- Adopting or eliminating courses of study
- Designating depositories for school funds
- Entering into contracts of any kind where the amount involved exceeds $200
- Establishing salaries or compensation for administrators, teachers, or other Agora Cyber employees
- Entering into contracts with and making appropriations to an intermediate unit, school district, or Area Vocational/Technical School for Agora Cyber's share of the cost for services provided by the entity to the charter school.

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

The small size of Agora will facilitate close working relationships between administrators and teachers. The CEO will hold weekly staff meetings to discuss such topics as goals and objectives, professional development, curriculum development, performance appraisal, and other matters of relevance to the school.

Furthermore, teachers will be guaranteed a voice in the decision-making process, as each year the teaching staff will elect one teacher to 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 Agora hinges on the active participation of all its members in the decision-making process. Therefore, Agora endeavors to provide a variety of avenues for parents and students to offer input on issues concerning the charter school. A Parent Advisory Committee will be formed to hold regular meetings to review the school's progress and to offer advice on operational matters. All Agora parents will be notified of Parent Advisory Meetings and encouraged to participate through the technology provided for the meetings.

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 duties as outlined in the Charter School Law. No Board member shall as a private person 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.*

H. Submit Board members' names, addresses, phone numbers and resumes.
Explanation: Describe the effective governance model; consistency with the mission; clearly defined roles of the Board of Trustees; teacher, student and parent input in school decision-making; and the well-developed, viable management structure.

IV. FINANCE AND FACILITY
1. Financing:
A. Develop a preliminary startup and operating budget. Use the attached Pennsylvania Department of Education budget templates; draft a preliminary operating budget covering all projected sources of revenue, both public and private, and planned expenditures.

Copies of Agora's startup and operating budget are attached to this application as Appendix G. Included in these forms are:

- General Assumptions to the Operating Model (5-year)
- Operating Budget for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2005
- Operating Budget for Fiscal Years Ended 2005-2009
- Year 1 Cash Flow Projection: 2005-05
- Employee Worksheet
- Employee Benefit Worksheet 2005-2005

B. 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.

See Appendix for the ACCS purchasing procedure that details a competitive way to purchase goods and services.

C. What fund raising efforts have occurred and/or are planned to generate capital or to supplement the per pupil allocations?
To date, no fundraising has occurred. When the charter is approved, the administrators will apply for funding through grants and from organizations and foundations.

D. Describe the implementation of the following required financial procedures:

The treasurer of the Agora Cyber Charter School 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 Agora's 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 the Agora Cyber 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 or 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 school treasurer shall settle his accounts annually with the Board of School Directors for each school year. An annual school audit shall be conducted according to the requirements of Article 24 of the School Code of 1949. Charter School Boards of Trustees shall follow requirement set forth for school Boards in this section.

Agora Cyber agrees to implement the following policies and procedures defined above.

Specifically, the following are examples of the proposed financial procedures the charter school will follow:

Budgets

No later than 90 days prior to the beginning of each fiscal year (July 1), the school administration and business manager will prepare and submit to the Board of Directors 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 will be received, 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's view of the most economical, reasonable methods of operating and maintaining the School during the years to which that Proposed Operating Budget relates.

After reviewing and analyzing the Proposed Operating Budget, the Board of Directors, will communicate to the school administration any changes, additions or deletions it believes should be made in such Proposed Operating Budget. After making such changes the Board of Directors will then approve the Proposed Operating Budget.

It is understood, however, that each operating budget will be an estimate only and that unforeseen circumstance 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 Directors and school administration will meet promptly to determine if an adjustment to the operating budget is necessary.

Financial Statements
Agora's Board of Directors and the school's administration (the CEO and other designated staff) 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 Directors and school administration in making decisions that ensure the school's financial viability while meeting the School's mission.

Audit
The CEO will engage, on behalf of the Agora, 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 audit is to be completed 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 the requirements set forth for school boards.

Operating Account
The CEO will establish, on an agency basis for the School, one or more bank accounts, with mutually acceptable financial institutions (the "Operating Accounts"). The CEO will cause all

gross revenues to be deposited into the Operating Accounts, and cause all operating expenses (including, without limitation, payments of operating expenses, payroll, and payroll taxes) to be paid out of the Operating Accounts for and on behalf of the School. The Operating Accounts shall be used exclusively in connection with the operation of the school.

IV.2. Facility:
A. Provide descriptions of and addresses for the physical facilities under consideration.
5901 Woodbine Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa 19131. It is a single story facility, recently renovated and is in good condition. The building consists of approximately 15,000 square feet. On-street parking is available along one side of the street. Public transportation provided by Septa stops in front of the building. The building is owned by Ellen and Oluwole Amudipe. They conduct business from 90 Norristown Road, Blue Bell, Pa 19422.

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 facility was recently renovated and already complies with city building codes. It has an adequate number of toilets, good heating, air conditioning, and ventilation. The building provides for individuals with disabilities.

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

The school will hire a custodian/maintenance person to maintain the facility on a daily basis.

The responsibility of the long-term facility maintenance of the building will be dually held with the building owner being responsible for the general maintenance (i.e. heating, ventilating, lighting, sanitary conditions, water supply, exterior and roof maintenance, etc.) and the charter school being responsible for the daily operational maintenance (i.e. fixtures, light bulbs, interior painting, etc.).

Any additional required renovations will be listed in the lease.

D. Discuss any progress, partnership developments or other future steps towards acquisition of a facility/land.
Note: All purchased land and facilities, unless specifically exempted by written agreement and or/contract with the donor, become the property of the charter school. Upon revocation or non-renewal of the charter, all property, buildings, equipment and supplies of the school become the property of the school entity that has granted the charter.

A lease agreement has been signed with the owners of the property. This agreement is included in Appendix E.

E. Describe facility financing plans.

Explanation: Describe progress towards identifying and acquiring a school facility, with a back-up plan considering alternative facilities.

A facility has already been identified, and a lease agreement has been signed (a copy is included in the appendix E). The lease costs can easily be covered through student per pupil reimbursements, even at enrollment projections of 80%. Because the school will be a cyber school, there is no need for a large school building with associated high lease costs.

3. Liability and Insurance
A. Describe your school's insurance coverage plans, including health, general liability (including school operation, extra-curricular activities and parent volunteer activities), property, and Director and Officer's liability coverage (see Section 1727-A of the charter school legislation). *Explanation: Provide evidence of insurability in all areas identified above.*

The charter school will provide appropriate medical and dental coverage to all full-time employees. Coverage shall be, at minimum, comparable to coverage provided to employees of the School District of Philadelphia.

The school will secure general liability insurance (including coverage for after-school and field trip activities), errors and omissions coverage, Directors and Officer's Liability, employee liability, property insurance and Workman's Compensation.

All coverage will be provided by an insurance company that has a rating of "A" or better and a financial size category of "VII" or better, according to A.M. Best Co. Copies of appropriate certificates of insurance will be provided to the Commonwealth prior to the opening of the school.

The following chart provides a more detailed view of the types of insurance and limits the charter school will secure:

Type of Insurance	Limit
Business Personal Property	550,000
General Liability	3,000,000 general aggregate
Products – completed operations	Included
Personal Injury	1,000,000 per occurrence
Advertising Injury	1,000,000 per occurrence
Damage to Premises Rented	100,000 per occurrence
Medical Expense	5,000 per occurrence
Sexual Abuse Occurrence Limit	1,000,000
Defense Expense – Each Sexual Abuse Occurrence	1,000,000
Defense Expense – Aggregate Limit	3,000,000
Employee Theft	100,000

Commercial Automobile (School buses)	1,000,000
Workers Compensation Insurance and Employers Liability	Per Law
Student Accident	25,000 per person
Accidental Death, Dismemberment, or Loss of Sight	20,000 per person
School Leaders Errors and Omissions	2,000,000
Umbrella-Excess Liability Coverage	1,000,000

4. Child Accounting
A. Describe your school enrollment and attendance procedures.
Note: State child accounting procedures must be followed. (24 PS 13-1332)
Explanation: Charter school funding is based on enrollment; therefore, a totally accurate child count is necessary to meet audit standards

Students will be required to follow the school calendar, which will include a minimum of 180 days of instruction. Students must log on at a designated time each day. At the end of each day, the responsible individual fills out an attendance log that includes all work completed (both online and offline) and time spent on task. Additionally, teachers contact the responsible adult on a regular basis, and will verify their log of student work. Records are maintained at the school office. Teachers and school administrators review attendance logs on a regular basis to determine that students are on track to complete the 900 hours (for elementary grades) and 990 hours (for secondary grades) and at least 180 days of instruction. The assigned staff must be provided with a satisfactory written explanation for any absence from the regular school calendar day. Justifiable absences include those due to illness of the student, death in the family, medical or dental appointment, observance of a religious holiday, or other reasons acceptable to the principal. Students must attend 8 hours per day for the 180 days which are listed on school calendar approved by the School Board. Failure to attend will result in charges of truancy or unexcused absence which can ultimately result in dismissal. In such cases, the student is offered the opportunity to appeal the decision. If the student prevails in the due process procedure, the school will reinstate him or her. Students who do not attend for 3 days in a row without excused absences will be reported as truant to the child's home school district via email and U.S. mail.

 Enrollment
As mentioned previously in our response to question 4.F. of the School Design section of this application, Agora Cyber will implement a system for maintaining student enrollment information as required under 1748-A of the Charter School Law (Act 22 of 1997). 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). Additionally, the charter school will use a student information software system, such as PowerSchool, to track enrollment data to make-sure that our enrollment figures are always up-to-date, reflecting new students and any withdrawals.

Attendance

Students will be expected to log onto the K12 website each day during a specific time frame designated by the school administrator unless otherwise directed by the teacher or as a result of other programmatic experiences underway. If a child does not log on without prior notice, every attempt will be made to contact that child's parent or guardian to seek an explanation. The school will follow the "attendance" guidelines set forth in 24 P.S. § 13-1333 regarding unexcused absences.

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

School absence policy guidelines are as follows:

1. The school must be notified by the student's parent or guardian when the student is absent. The parent must indicate the reason for the absence and indicate how long the student will be unable to attend lessons. A doctor's note will be required for 3 or more consecutive illness-related absences.
2. School absences are excused for the following reasons:
    - Illness as indicated by the parent or guardian
    - Illness as indicated by a physician including hospital stays
    - Health-related appointments
    - Serious illness or death in the family
    - Quarantine of the home
    - Observation of religious holidays
    - Required court appearances
    - Other emergencies approved by the school administrator

Truancy

The student will be considered truant after 3 consecutive days, 7 non-consecutive days per month, or 15 school days in a school year of no contact between the student's parent or guardian and the school. The school will make every attempt through email and phone calls to make contact with the child's parent or guardian for a lawful excuse as indicated in accordance with Section 13-1332 of the Public School Code. The school will notify the student via telephone or email to indicate the violation and further actions that may result. The student's sending school district will be contacted via email and U.S. mail to indicate the student's truancy in compliance with 24 P.S. § 13-1333.

Withdrawal from School

Any student may withdraw by following these procedures:
1. Notify the school of the decision to withdraw and request a Withdrawal Form.
2. The parent or guardian must fill out and return the Withdrawal Form.
3. Upon receipt of a signed request by the parent or guardian to send the student's records, the school will release records to the school to which the student is transferring notify the sending district of the student's withdrawal.

4. All equipment and materials must be packaged and returned to the school within one week of withdrawal.

V. ADMINISTRATION
1. Recruiting and Marketing Plan:
A. Demonstrate how you will publicize the school to attract a sufficient pool of eligible applicants.

In order to attract a sufficient pool of applicants, Agora Cyber will conduct a variety of outreach activities to potential students and their families. These outreach activities are detailed below in our response to Question 1.B.

Specifically, the charter school will publicize the school using a variety of media, including fliers, community newsletters and bulletins, newspapers, and the Internet. Upon charter approval, letters will be sent to all individuals who indicated support for and/or intent to enroll their child in the charter school during the application process stating that the school is planning on opening and explaining the admission process. The charter school will also alert groups that maintain a list of charter schools for parents of its plans to open (i.e. Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Charter School Resource Center of Pennsylvania) to ensure that the school and its contact information are included on these lists. Furthermore, the school plans to develop relationship with local media outlets (newspapers, television, and radio) through meetings and/or press releases, and we hope that coverage by these media will help to attract applicants to our charter school.

B. What type of outreach will be made to potential students and their families?
Explanation: Develop a solid plan to attract sufficient students to operate a school; publicize the school; and ensure a match between the school program and applicants' educational and personal needs.

As mentioned above, Agora Cyber will use a variety of media to reach out to potential students and families, including informational handouts, direct mailers, brochures, community outreach presentations, and a school website, all of which will contain a clear description of the school's mission, vision, goals, and services. This material will provide specific and accurate information about the school in its infancy stages and throughout its development, completion, and enrollment processes.

In an effort to inform the local community as well as to solicit interest and support, the Founding Coalition is exploring the possibility of developing a direct mail piece (questionnaire) that will be mailed in the target area to all households with school-aged children.

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

In the admission of students, Agora Cyber will comply with § 17-1723-A of the Charter School Law. Specifically, the charter school will be open to all resident children in the Commonwealth

of Pennsylvania. If more students apply to the charter school than the number of attendance slots available, then students will be selected on a random basis (a lottery) from a pool of qualified applicants meeting the established eligibility criteria and submitting an application by the our deadline. However, enrollment preference will be given to a child of a parent who has actively participated in the development of the charter school and to siblings of students presently enrolled in the charter school.

The admissions "application" will be two-part:

1. A traditional application form that contains basic student data (name, parent and/or guardian, contact information, current school attending if any, etc.) as well as a place for parents to indicate if they have another child enrolled in the charter school, too.

2. <u>A form that parents or guardians must sign indicating that they have attended an informational group session and that they have read the educational vision and method of the school.</u>

The Founding Coalition believes that the two-part application process is necessary to ensure the families have a firm understanding of the Agora Cyber program and are able to ask questions to ensure that our school is the right fit for their children. Students will only be considered for admission if both parts of the "application" are completed by the stated deadline. The school will schedule at least three informational group sessions (two on weeknights and one on a weekend-day) to accommodate a broad range of parent schedules. If a parent or guardian cannot attend one of these sessions, then he/she can schedule a one-on-one meeting with a member or charter school staff.

If the number of completed applications exceeds the slots available in each grade, a lottery will be conducted to determine who will be admitted to the school and, if they are not admitted, what spot they occupy on the waiting list. Anyone who applies after the lottery has been conducted will be added at the end of the waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis.

Furthermore, to comply with laws pertaining to special education – and because our school is truly committed to providing an outstanding educational program to all students – the school will only conduct special education screening or request current IEP's for students <u>after</u> students have been enrolled in the charter school.

Students with disabilities will be treated as they would be in a traditional school. Those with physical disabilities will take their assessments at locations that are handicapped accessible. Parents of all students thought to be disabled will be given a copy of the appropriate guidelines and will be assigned to an instructional support team (IST) which will include the parent and will provide the appropriate evaluations, arrange the meetings which can be held on-line or face to face. Changes in the IEP will take place as needed, evaluation will be current and services and programs will be provided as dictated in the IEP.

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.

Agora Cyber will use the following timetable for admitting students:

January through April 15	Application forms available at the school and on the school's website.
April 15	Deadline for parents to notify the school if a child currently enrolled in the Charter School if their child will be returning next year.
Second week of May	Admissions lottery conducted (if necessary)
Third week of May	Admissions notification sent to all parents who applied and enrollment packets sent to those parents of children who have been accepted.
By June 1	Completed enrollment packets returned to the charter school

In the first year of operation, due to the timing of the State's application approval process, the timetable will be as follows:

July 1 through September 7	Application forms available at the school and on the school's website.
July 15	Admissions lottery conducted, if necessary
July 29	Admissions notification sent to all parents who applied and enrollment packets sent to those parents of children who have been accepted.
By August 19	Completed enrollment packets returned to the charter school

This timetable may need to be amended during the charter school's first year of operation, depending on the date that the Commonwealth releases decisions on the charter applications.

C. Explain how these policies further the mission of the school in a nondiscriminatory fashion.
Explanation: Establish consistency with the mission of the school and the non-discriminatory policies for timely and realistic procedures for admitting students in accordance with charter school law (Section 1723-A).

In accordance with § 17-1723-A of the Charter School Law, the Agora Cyber will not discriminate in its admissions 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. Also, the school will not discriminate in its admissions policies on the basis of race, sex, color, national

origin, ethnic origin, religious beliefs, or political affiliation. The Agora Cyber Charter School program is an ideal vehicle for the education of children who live in remote rural areas. The K12 program, that Agora has contracted to use, is capable of standing alone, i.e. it does not require Internet access. Therefore, if any child enrolls in Agora who does not have Internet access, the school will supply all necessary software and hardware, as well as hard copies of all materials, so that the program can operate independently of the Internet. Any Agora student can easily follow the curriculum if he/she has access to a computer and to the CDs that contain the relevant courses. Through telephone connections, the student can keep in touch with his/her teachers via daily or weekly telephone calls. Agora may also contract with local schools or agencies to supply those services that cannot be provided through K12's stand alone program.   If necessary, a local teacher can be hired on a part time basis to visit the Agora student several times a week in much the same way that teachers visit home bound students throughout the state.

Legal counsel for the charter school has reviewed all outstanding orders and requirements concerning desegregation and has advised the applicant that the admissions policy required in Act 22 (i.e. a lottery) will not violate any desegregation order or exacerbate segregation given the racial diversity of the likely student population.

3. Human Resource Information:
A. Describe the standards to be used in the hiring process of teachers, administrators, and other school staff.

The school will be staffed by credentialed professionals and otherwise qualified workers, recruited primarily from local colleges and schools of education. Staff members will have experience working with diverse learners and/or economically disadvantaged students. Staff members will also have experience and coursework in use of educational technologies, and will have high degrees of technology literacy as measured against the NETS Standards for Teachers (International Society for Technology in Education, 2002)

Since the CEO serves as the manager and spokesperson, primary curriculum leader and spokesperson for the school, it is essential to recruit an extremely talented individual early in the school development process to help to bring the school from vision to reality. The school's founders will use national education networks such as the Charter Friends National Network to recruit candidates. The CEO candidates will be recruited through April 2005 and hired in May 2005. The CEO will be expected to start working for the school by June 2005.

Once the CEO is hired and has begun working for the school, he or she will begin recruiting and interviewing candidates for recommendation to the school's Board for hiring. The staff hiring decisions will be made by July 2005 and all staff members will be working at the school by August, 2005.

B. What is the targeted staff size and teacher/student ratio?

The ratio of classroom teachers to students in the school will be at least 1:50. For special education, the ratio will be 1:35. The targeted size of the full-time staff for the first year of operation (K-8th Grade) will be 31.5.

The number of full time staff members by the position they will hold is provided below.

Position	Number
Classroom Teachers	18
Special Education Teachers	2.57
Administrative Aides	2
Chief Executive Officer	1
Principal	1
Curriculum Coordinator	1
Business Manager	1
Counselor	1
Technology Coordinator	1
Webmaster	1
Secretary	1
Maintenance	1
TOTAL	31.57

C. What professional development opportunities will be available to teachers and other staff?

Agora Cyber will focus on providing students the skills, knowledge, and discipline they will need to achieve proficiency or mastery in mathematics, science and technology. In order to accomplish this, Agora Cyber teachers and staff will need to provide every opportunity for students to make connections to those areas throughout the school building, the school day, and throughout the curriculum. Agora Cyber must also assure that students are receiving consistent education that builds on concepts and skills from one year to the next, and tailors learning to each individual student. These unique aspects of the school will require that teachers and staff engage in intense and on-going professional development that helps the school to meet its mission and vision.

There will be a five-day retreat for all school staff during each summer to focus on developing the skills required to implement the curriculum fully. In addition, during the school year there will be another five full days of professional development to follow up on issues that are identified as needing more attention to provide the best possible opportunities for learning to students.

Professional technical assistance providers will be contracted to educate our staff, including publishers of the curriculum and testing materials used by the school, such as Prentice Hall's and Lawrence Hall of Science's (FOSS) curriculum trainers. Because Agora Cyber will utilize a comprehensive approach to development, where every staff member is responsible for assisting

students in meeting their goals, all staff members, including cafeteria staff and "non-teaching" assistants, will participate in most professional development activities.

Each staff member, like each student, will develop an Individual Learning Plan, and will be responsible for identifying professional development opportunities that will satisfy those goals. Money will be made available to staff members to attend conferences that are in concert with each staff member's ILP, and to assist with courses at local colleges that help them to meet their learning goals, provided they are consistent with the goals of the school.

Agora Cyber will make a major effort to ensure that all full-time teaching staff are certified to teach in their respective area within two years of starting work at Agora Cyber. The school will provide flexibility, some money, and connections with major local universities to help our staff to fulfill certification requirements.

High quality professional development will achieve the following standards:
- Address the State's academic standards;
- Promote an equitable learning environment;
- Use a broad array of pedagogical and assessment approaches;
- Build learning communities among school staff, families and other stakeholders;
- Use the methods it promotes and assume a variety of forms, based on knowledge of human development;
- Be research based, data driven and contribute to measurable increases in student achievement, including an evaluation process that is on-going and has multiple sources of information;
- Include an evaluation process that is ongoing and has multiple sources of information;
- Provide sufficient support and resources over time to enable individuals to master new content; and
- Be the mechanism for achieving continuous improvement.

Some of the topics to be addressed by professional development programs will include:
- Using assessments for diagnosis
- Using assessments for curriculum improvement
- Individualizing instruction
- Implementing and developing IEPs
- Using the Internet for Teaching and Learning
- Careers in Technology, Mathematics and Science

As per Act 48 Professional Education Plan Guidelines, Agora Cyber will submit a three-year professional development plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education by August 1 of the end of our first school year.

D. Describe your human resource policies governing salaries, contracts, hiring and dismissal, sick and other leave, and benefits.

Upon receipt of a charter, the Agora's Board of Trustees will convene to adopt the human resource policies for the school. These policies will be compiled in an "Employee Handbook" that will be distributed to and discussed with each employee during orientation. The Employee Handbook will be on file in the Main Office of the school.

Tentatively, the Founding Coalition has developed the following human resource policies:

Equal Employment Opportunity:

The Agora Cyber will always maintain strong policies designed to keep our school free from any form of discrimination.

We will consider individuals for employment and advancement only on the basis of their qualifications and without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, ancestry, national origin, handicap, disability, or veteran's status.

The Board of Trustees shall entrust in the Chief Executive Officer the overall authority for the implementation of the school's equal employment policy.

All administrators, supervisors and managers shall be made aware of this policy and shall fulfill their responsibilities in a manner that reflects and fosters the school's equal employment policy. All other employees are expected to conduct themselves at work in a way consistent with this policy. All employees are expected to deal fairly and courteously with one another to ensure a work environment free of intimidation and harassment. Ethnic, racist, or sexist slurs or other personal derogation not related to legitimate factors concerning work are offensive and unacceptable employee behavior. Sexual harassment is also a form of unlawful and unacceptable sex discrimination and includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Any employee who violates this policy commits misconduct for which appropriate discipline may be imposed, up to and including termination. Any employee who believes he/she has been subjected to unlawful discrimination or harassment should make a complaint to his/her immediate supervisor or, if appropriate, the Chief Executive Officer in writing. Employees are encouraged to contact the Chief Executive Officer for information on making complaints.

Hiring & Contracts:

In its dedication to excellence in education, the Agora Cyber is committed to the employment of the most qualified staff.

Upon recommendation of the Chief Executive Officer and the Personnel Committee of the Board of Trustees, the Board shall approve the employment and determine the responsibilities for each employee.

Appointment of personnel shall be made on merit without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, or membership in an employee organization. An employee's deliberate misstatement of fact essential to qualifications for employment or determination of salary shall be considered as grounds for dismissal.

All prospective employees must provide the Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Trustees' Personnel Committee:

- State of Pennsylvania certification where such certification is required;
- Completed PA State Police Request for Criminal Record;
- Completed PA Child Abuse History Clearance.

Additionally, all employees who have not had a complete medical evaluation prior to employment will be required to undergo a complete medical and tuberculosis examination conducted by a licensed physician.

The first ninety (90) days of employment with the Agora Cyber is regarded as an employee's introductory period. The ninety-day introductory period will start with the employee's hire (or re-hire) date and is designed to determine whether an employee's interests and talents are compatible with the school's educational and organizational objectives. During this introductory period, the employee will receive feedback from his/her supervisor as needed to evaluate his/her total job performance. The supervisor will offer the new employee counsel in areas of concern if necessary.

At the conclusion of the ninety-day introductory period, the new employee will be formally reviewed by his/her supervisor. Any noted areas of weakness may be serious enough to warrant disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Salaries:

The Agora Cyber will base employee salaries on a combination of factors, including experience, education, certification (if applicable), local marketplace salary conditions, and the employment position.

The Agora Cyber will determine salary increases as a result of job performance and the school's ability to pay. Salary increases are not automatic. In most cases, salary increases will be merit-based, coinciding with the employee performance review process. Promotional increases may be granted at any time or in combination with annual merit increases.

Discipline & Dismissal:

The Agora Cyber believes that its staff sets the tone for the educational environment. Therefore, all staff will be held to the highest level of professionalism. The following behaviors or situations are considered unacceptable and will result in disciplinary action up to an including dismissal (this list is for informational purposes only and is not meant to be inclusive):

- Use of corporal punishment or any inappropriate touching of a child or;
- Unprofessional or abusive behavior toward parents, co-workers and/or supervisors;
- Horseplay and practical jokes that could endanger children, co-workers or company property;
- Any conviction, past or present, of child abuse, child molestation, child neglect or sexual offenses;
- Falsifying company records, including but not limited to, job application, personnel records or punching/signing another employee's time card, and/or falsifying hours worked;
- Deterioration of work performance;
- Substandard or inefficient performance of job duties;
- Chronic absenteeism or tardiness;
- Insubordination (failure to follow appropriate directions);
- Disclosure of confidential information to unauthorized persons;
- Conduct or acts that adversely affect the goodwill of the public toward the Agora Cyber;
- Failure to adhere to company rules;
- Leaving the job without permission and/or proper notification;
- Abusive or foul language;
- Sleeping on the job;
- Misuse of work time, the telephone, computer system, or company property;
- Reporting to work while being under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- Sale, purchase, use or possession of alcohol, drugs, or any illegal substance on school property;
- Any arrest or charge of a felony or any harmful act that may not be in the best interest of the charter school;
- Theft;
- Gambling on school property;
- Sexual harassment;
- Failure to comply with safety or security rules;
- Neglect of duty;
- Repeated violation of the no-smoking policy or dress code;
- Gross misconduct of any kind.

Disciplinary action may include an informal warning, a formal warning, a final warning, or, in some cases, discharge. The Agora Cyber will determine what discipline is appropriate in each situation, and may discharge an employee at any time, with or without cause and without following any of the disciplinary steps described below:

- **Informal Warning:** This consists of an initial, oral warning from an employee's supervisor to inform him/her of a potential problem and what corrective actions are expected to be taken.

- **Formal Warning:** This consists of a written warning of a problem or situation from an employee's supervisor. The formal warning will state the specific reason for the warning, a plan of action to correct the problem, a reasonable time limit to correct the

problem, the consequences of the warning, what will happen if the problem remains; and references to previous warnings (formal or informal) that relate to the current situation.

- **Final Warning:** This consists of a written warning from an employee's supervisor notifying the employee that he/she may be terminated if his/her performance does not improve or if misconduct reoccurs. The final warning should state the same points as noted in the Formal Warning.

- **Discharge:** The Agora Cyber reserves the right to terminate an employee without issuing any previous warnings. If discharge becomes necessary, the Chief Executive Officer will make a recommendation to dismiss the employee to the Board of Trustees, which will retain the final authority to dismiss any employee.

- **Suspension:** Depending upon the circumstance of the disciplinary action to be taken, an employee's supervisor, with consultation from the Chief Executive Officer, may decide to suspend an employee from work, with or without pay, pending investigation of the situation.

Vacation & Leave of Absence:

The Agora Cyber recognizes that situations occasionally arise which make it difficult or impossible for employees to either report to work or to fulfill their required job duties. Additionally, we believe that it is necessary for full-time, year-round employees to take a break from their jobs. Therefore, we will make provisions for a full complement of vacation and various types of time off, including:

- Vacation;
- Sick/Emergency Leave;
- State Disability;
- Personal Leave;
- Family & Medical Leave;
- Funeral Leave;
- Jury Duty;
- Witness Duty;
- Military Leave;
- Professional Day.

Vacation:

Paid vacation will be provided to full-time, non-teaching employees to allow time away from work each year. The policies governing vacation are as follows:

- The amount of vacation employees will receive is dependent upon their length of service as well as their position with the organization.

- Earned vacation time may be used for personal time off as well as sick time with approval from a supervisor.

- Carrying vacation days into the next vacation cycle will not be permitted. Any unused available balances will be forfeited if not used by the end of the current vacation cycle.

- If an employee's employment status changes from full-time to part-time, any unused vacation will remain available for his/her use until the end of the current vacation cycle.

- If an employee's status changes from part-time to full-time he/she will be eligible to receive vacation time determined by his/her new full-time hire date. Any service requirements to earn vacation time will be based on this new full-time hire date.

- If an employee is promoted into a position where a separate vacation schedule exists, he/she will receive his/her current level of vacation for the balance of the vacation year. At the beginning of the new vacation year, his/her benefit will be reduced based on the benefit schedule for his/her new position.

- If an employee leaves the company voluntarily with completion of a two-week notice period, he/she will be entitled to all current unused vacation to be paid out in a lump sum with his/her final paycheck.

Sick/Emergency Leave:

The Agora Cyber will provide sick/emergency leave to all full-time employees to be used exclusively for legitimate health-related absences for employees and close family members. Any other modifications for the use of this time off will require prior approval by an employee's supervisor.

Unused sick time off will be forfeited upon an employee's termination from the school and he/she will not be compensated for any unused sick days. In addition, an employee cannot use sick time off in lieu of vacation.

It is the employee's responsibility to utilize sick time in a responsible manner. Abuse of the sick time benefit can result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. If an employee is sick for two or more consecutive days, he/she will be required to bring in a doctor's note upon return to work in order to be compensated. Pay for sick days will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Personal Leave:

The school may grant a personal leave of absence without pay for compelling personal reasons at any time. If an employee needs to request a personal leave, he/she should submit his/her request in writing stating the nature and duration of his/her personal leave to his/her supervisor with as much "lead time" as possible. The duration of an employee's leave is determined at the discretion of his/her supervisor based on the employee's needs as well as the needs of the school/department. Personal leave will be limited to a maximum of six months during any 24-month period.

If personal leave is for medical reasons, a physician's note is required stating the reasons for the leave as well as specific dates of absence. At the conclusion of an employee's leave, he/she will also be required to submit a physician's note certifying that he/she is able to return to work.

Upon an employee's return to work from a personal leave, Agora Cyber reserves the right to reinstate him/her to the position he/she held prior to his/her leave or to a similar/equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits and terms/conditions of employment.

If personal leave is approved an employee will be required to use all available vacation/sick time at the start of his/her leave. Health insurance benefits may be continued during personal leave at 100 percent employee cost.

Family & Medical Leave Act Policy:

The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 allows employees to take unpaid leave for up to a total of 12 work weeks during a twelve-month period for one or more of the following:

- The birth of a child and in order to care for the newborn;
- The adoption or placement of a child for foster care;
- To care for a child, spouse, or parent with a serious health condition;
- Because of an employee's own serious health condition that makes him/her unable to perform the essential functions of his/her job.

To be eligible for Family Leave, an employee must be employed for at least 12 months and have worked a minimum of 1,250 hours in the 12-month period prior to the start of the leave. Employees should make a request for Family Leave in writing to their supervisors at least 30 days in advance of their leave dates, or provide as much advance notice as possible.

Employees are encouraged to request a "consecutive" rather than an "intermittent" leave of absence whenever possible. If an intermittent or reduced work schedule is required due to medical reasons, Agora Cyber may require that the employee transfer to an available alternative job (with equivalent pay and benefits), which better accommodates recurring periods of leave.

The Family Leave law requires that employees take all unused sick, personal, and vacation days at the start of their approved leave.

When Family Leave is taken due to a serious health condition (an employee's or an employee's family member), employees must submit a medical certificate stating:

- The date when the serious health condition started;
- The probable duration of the condition;
- The medical facts of the condition from the employee's physician,
- That he/she is unable to perform the essential job functions (if the serious health condition is the employee's);
- That the employee is needed to provide care for an estimated amount of time (if the serious health condition is another family member's).

Agora Cyber may obtain the medical opinion of a second health care provider at the company's expense.

Employee benefits will continue during their leave and employees will be responsible to pay their co-payments as directed by the school.

When employees return from a Family Leave they are entitled to their former job or a position with equivalent pay, benefits and conditions of employment. If their leave is for medical reasons, they must provide a physician's note releasing them to return to work.

Funeral Leave:

The Agora Cyber grants up to three days leave of absence with pay if a death occurs in an employee's immediate family, defined as:

- Spouse;
- Child and/or step-child;
- Parent and/or step-parent;
- Mother-in-Law and/or Father-in-Law;
- Sister and/or brother.

One-day leave of absence with pay will be granted if a death occurs to other members of an employee's immediate family, defined as:

- Grandparents;

- Aunts/Uncles.

Employees should contact their supervisor to request and receive permission for Funeral Leave. Extensions of Funeral Leave may be granted at the discretion of the school if reasonable and necessary.

Jury Duty:

Employees will be granted a leave of absence to fulfill a Jury Duty summons. Employees will receive regular pay for a maximum of five days in any one calendar year. The employee's pay will be based on his/her regularly scheduled hours for any day(s) absent.

Agora Cyber requires that any payment employees receive from the court for jury service be endorsed and forwarded to their supervisor with their record of attendance form from the court. If an employee is dismissed early from jury service, prior to the end of his/her regular workday, the employee is expected to contact his/her supervisor to discuss his/her work schedule.

Witness Duty:

Additionally, if an employee is required by law to appear in court or at another legal proceeding, he/she will be granted Witness Leave without pay. A copy of the employee's summons or subpoena should accompany his/her request and ID required to receive compensation for that day.

Military Leave:

If an employee is a member of the U.S. Armed Forces Reserve or National Guard called to active or inactive duty training, he/she will be granted a leave of absence, without pay, for the duration of the training. In the event that an employee is actually activated for duty, a leave of absence without pay will be granted for the duration of the active duty.

Professional Day:

Employees are permitted one Professional Day per year with pay to attend a seminar, workshop, etc. to assist them in attaining new ideas for their jobs. Employees must present an outline to their supervisors detailing what they intend to gain from the day and how the company will benefit from their training experience.

Benefits:
Salary is only part of the total compensation package for employees of Agora Cyber. Agora Cyber will maintain a benefit program that provides ways for employees to protect themselves and their family as well as add to their income. The following employee benefits will be provided to full-time employees of the Agora Cyber:

- Medical Insurance;
- Dental Insurance;
- COBRA;
- PSERS Retirement Plan;
- Worker's Compensation.

Medical Insurance:

Agora Cyber will provide health care benefits to employees equal to those provided by our charter school district.

The charter will provide medical insurance to employees on the first day of the month following ninety (90) days of full-time employment. Eligible dependents will include employee's spouses, unmarried children under the age of 19, and unmarried children who are full-time students under the age of 21. Medical insurance coverage will be an HMO, PPO or traditional indemnity plan based upon the employee's place of residence. Agora Cyber will require that employees pay a portion of the cost of this benefit.

At the time of hire, employees will receive an information packet, including a complete description of the benefits offered, an enrollment application and a deadline for its completion, and the current co-payment contribution rates.

Dental Insurance:

Dental insurance will be available as part of the health plan policy. Employees will be eligible to receive dental insurance at the same time that they become eligible for health insurance, and it will be available to employees and their dependents as defined above.

COBRA:

Under federal legislation entitled the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA), employees, their spouses, and dependent children are eligible to continue company provided medical and/or dental coverage for up to 18 additional months if they lose coverage as a result of a "qualifying event." A "qualifying event" is defined as termination of employment (either voluntary or involuntary), the employee's death, the employee's enrollment in the Medicare program, or an employee's dependent child becoming ineligible for coverage under a provision of the company's group health plan.

An employee's medical/dental coverage will continue until the end of the month of the qualifying event. At that time he/she will receive a notice and an election form sent via certified mail to his/her home explaining COBRA benefits and the monthly cost. The full cost of the

monthly premium will be the employee's responsibility. He/she will have 60 days to elect continuation of coverage.

Continuing medical/dental coverage will terminate if the employee elects to cancel coverage, fails to pay the monthly premium, becomes covered under another employer's group plan, or if the continuing coverage time period expires.

PSERS Retirement Coverage:

All employees of the Agora Cyber will be enrolled in the Public School Employee's Retirement System (PSERS) in the same manner set fort in the Public School Code unless an employee is enrolled in another retirement program. Agora Cyber will make payments by employers and payments on account of Social Security at the same rate as our charter school district.

Workers' Compensation:

Employees injured while on the job are protected by the Workers' Compensation Act of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This fully company-paid benefit applies to all employees beginning on the first day of employment.

Employee benefits under Workers' Compensation include:

- Payment of medical and rehabilitation expenses, including hospital costs, doctor's fees, drug costs, and rehabilitation therapy.

- A percentage of income replacement for a period that extends for several years depending upon state laws if the employee is temporarily disabled.

- Replacement of a percentage of the employee's income for many years and in many states, for the balance of the employee's life if his/her injuries result in permanent total disability.

- Lump sum payments for certain injuries that result in an employee's permanent partial disability.

- Income replacement benefits for an employee's survivors if he/she dies from a job-related reason.

Under the rights and benefits as established in the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act, if an employee is injured on company property during normal operational hours, he/she (or someone acting on the employee's behalf) must report the incident immediately to his/her

supervisor, no matter how minor the injury may appear. The supervisor will complete an Incident Report and submit it to the appropriate person within 24 hours of the accident. If an employee fails to report an incident as it occurs, he/she may cause serious delays in benefit payments or the employee may not be eligible to receive any benefits.

For the first 30 days of a work-related injury, Agora Cyber will be permitted by law to specify where employees will go for treatment.

It is Agora Cyber's intent to provide all possible assistance to employees in the event of their injury at work. We will investigate all claims submitted and pay all valid claims under the terms of the Workers' Compensation Act.

E. Identify the proposed faculty.

The school will be staffed by credentialed professionals and otherwise qualified workers, recruited primarily from local colleges and schools of education. Staff members will have experience working with diverse learners and/or economically disadvantaged students and will demonstrate a deep respect for the environment and for local history and cultures.
The required qualifications for the school CEO and other school staff members are provided below.

CEO Qualifications
Educational and Experiential Requirements
The position will require a Masters degree in Education or a related field, though a Doctorate would be preferred. Instructional and management experience in public or private schools, good public relations skills, team management techniques, experience and the desire to serve whole families. The CEO must have demonstrated experience working with educational and community organizations outside of schools, and must have experience implementing civics education programs outside of schools.

The CEO must be capable of:
- Managing instructional affairs;
- Operating the day-to-day administration of the school;
- Serving as liaison between parents, community, state, government, higher education institutions and students;
- Supervising and evaluating the faculty;
- Scheduling;
- Hiring;
- Coordinating and determining needs for professional development;
- Ensuring that resources are adequate to meet student needs;
- Keeping the school on track to meet achievement goals; and

- Overseeing planning, budget, finances, fund development, public relations, administration, reporting, evaluations, board relations, plant management, staff supervision and student activities.

Supervisor of Special Education Qualifications
Educational and Experiential Requirements
The Supervisor of Special Education teacher must be PA State certified in special education, a graduate of an accredited college or university and hold a Postgraduate Professional License with an endorsement as a supervisor and/or administrator. This person must be knowledgeable of best practice in special education instruction, teaching methodology, behavior management of students with disabilities and general education curriculum for students, ages 3-21. Knowledge of special education laws and regulations is required.

The Special Education Supervisor must be capable of:
- Assisting in the operation of the total special education program with emphasis on curriculum and instruction.
- Maintaining compliance with federal and state special education regulations;
- Working with other staff members to assure appropriate services for identified students;
- Assisting special education teachers in the implementation of the instructional objectives of students;
- Developing, reviewing, and evaluating Special Education programs and services within the school;
- Participating in special education Eligibility or pre-referral processes, IEP meetings, and Manifestation Determinations as the situation demands;
- Assessing special education and related services to identified special education students through monitoring each student's IEP;
- Maintaining student data and confidentiality of IEPs;
- Locating and contracting with service providers throughout the state;
- Coordinating the setup and delivery of IEP-mandated direct services to students;
- Overseeing transition programs.

Principal Qualifications
Educational and Experiential Requirements:
The Principal must have at least a Master's Degree in Education and attended an accredited college or university with an emphasis in school leadership/administration. He or she must hold a valid or be eligible for a Pennsylvania State Principal certification/license.

The Principal must be capable of:
- Administering and supervising the total school program and providing educational leadership for the students and staff members consistent with the educational goals of the school;
- Planning and coordinating programs;
- Decision-making;
- Supervising, directing, and evaluating staff;
- Identifying staff training needs;

- Analyzing, sharing, and using school and student achievement data to develop and implement school improvement plans;
- Ensuring that Agora's policies and procedures, as well as state and federal laws are followed;
- Working collaboratively with teachers, parents, supervisors, and instructional support teams (IST) to ensure appropriate programming for all students;
- Assisting in the development and administration of educational programs for students with disabilities.

Community/Curriculum Coordinator Qualifications

Educational and Experiential Requirements:
The CCC must have at least a Master's Degree in Education. He or she must have experience with developing and implementing curricula, experience with implementing assessments, and experience working with educational agencies and organizations outside of schools.

The CCC must be capable of:
- Developing innovative curricula in the Social Sciences
- Providing staff development regarding curricula and assessment
- Developing educational opportunities for students with outside agencies and institutions,
- Identifying projects for students with organizations that wish to provide learning opportunities for students, and organizations and neighborhoods that need help from students in order to improve,
- Introducing new applications of technology for education and communication, and
- Fostering dialogue among diverse groups of parents and community organizations.

Technology Coordinator Qualifications

Educational and Experiential Requirements:
The Technology Coordinator must have at least a Bachelor's Degree in Education and hold a teaching certificate from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He or she must have at least one year of experience with working computers and at least 20 hours of technology training.

The Technology Coordinator must be capable of:
- Overseeing the overall operation of the Technology Department;
- Assuring that technological equipment is in working order;
- Providing preventive maintenance;
- Maintaining an inventory of all computers and related equipment;
- Arranging for immediate repair of any broken or damaged equipment;
- Troubleshooting any malfunctions in the system;
- Identifying, introducing, and demonstrating the effectiveness of software and hardware that supports and/or enhances instruction;
- Assisting staff members as needed with the use of technology;
- Maintaining the integrity of the electronic student record system;
- Monitoring software use for copyright compliance.

Webmaster Qualifications

Educational and Experiential Requirements:

The Webmaster must have a undergraduate degree, a diploma or certification or equivalent experience as a network engineer or TCP/IP specialist including expertise in the operating systems with MAC, Windows, and UNIX is required.

The Webmaster must be capable of:
- Designing, developing, and maintaining websites;
- Maintaining the content, databases, and all forms of data hosted on the websites;
- Supporting the web-based applications of the staff and faculty;
- Analyzing, designing, and implementing technical solutions via the school's or department's web resources;
- Communicating with the faculty and staff to determine and define website needs and functionality;
- Maintaining and modifying the school's or department's website including content, graphical and multimedia displays and communications;
- Reviewing and recommending hardware and software for website development;
- Testing, maintaining, and ensuring functionality of links;

Teacher Qualifications

Educational and Experiential Requirements:

Minimum educational preparation a B.A. or B.S. degree plus state certification in an appropriate field of Education (e.g., Elementary Education, Bilingual Education, Science Education) or emergency certification with written commitment to become fully state certified.

Teachers must be capable of:
- Participating in the design and implementation of curriculum
- Providing classroom instruction and individual tutoring during school hours
- Supervising extracurricular activities during school hours
- Taking initiative in program improvement and school governance
- Advising students
- Informing families, administrators, and fellow teachers of student progress
- Introducing technology into students' daily learning
- Teaching multiple subjects
- Designing performance based assessment tools
- Communicating regularly with parents
- Maintaining active and accurate documentation on individual students
- Participating in regular professional development programs
- Being involved in team meetings, and
- Participating in the curriculum development process.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Educational and Experiential Requirements:

Minimum educational preparation a B.A. or B.S. degree plus PA state certification in special education.

Special Education Teachers must be capable of:
- Planning and implementing curriculum and educational programs for children, adolescents, or adults with specific disabilities;
- Assessing students' abilities;
- Prepares appropriate documentation and reports on programs and on student progress;
- Developing individualized educational plans(IEP) consistent with treatment goals;
- Planning special courses of study to meet the needs of students;
- Developing and adapting curriculum to be relevant for students with disabilities;
- Coordinating programs for therapeutic purposes;
- Integrating overall developmental goals into the academic setting;
- Discussing with parents their student's goals, development, and education program as a whole;
- Interacting with and participating in consultations with specialists as appropriate in order to plan and prepare each child's individualized educational program in accordance with goals;
- Providing the least restrictive environment for their students;

Nurse Qualifications
Educational and Experiential Requirements:
The school will hire a part-time school nurse through a contracted agreement with the visiting Nurse's Association or a similar agency. The nurse must have a bachelor's degree or a degree from a hospital program, be certified as a school nurse, and have at least two years experience working with children and families. Duties include reviewing students' medical records, maintaining required data, conferencing with parents, conduction hearing and vision tests, and relating with appropriate medical personnel across the state.

School Counselor/Social Worker Qualifications
Educational and Experiential Requirements:

The School Counselor must have an understanding of developmental psychology and a Master's in education or psychology.

Counselors must be capable of:
- Screening students for evidence of learning disabilities,
- Working with a school-based team to develop IEP's for designated special education students,
- Developing a plan for engendering psychological health among students and staff,

- Counseling students and staff regarding psychological issues interfering with academic progress,
- Providing crisis training for handling school crises, and
- Working with mentors and volunteer counselors to prepare students for learning

School Business Manager Qualifications

Educational and Experiential Requirements:

The school will not employ an outside educational management organization. The Business Manager will be hired through normal hiring procedures. He or she will have at minimum a college degree in accounting or related financial field, will hold a certificate in School Accounting and at least two years of experience.

The Business Manager must be capable of:
- Utilizing a system for bookkeeping that tracks revenues, expenditures, receivables, payables, and makes comparisons to the projected budget,
- Anticipating funding and budget requirements and making arrangements for revenue changes,
- Keeping the CEO informed about the school accounts on a day-to-day basis.

Office Staff Qualifications

Educational and Experiential Requirements:

The School Secretaries will have at a minimum a high school diploma, with at least two years experience serving as a secretary or administrative assistant in a school or similar setting where maintaining accurate records, communicating clearly in person and on the telephone, and providing support to an administrator are necessary.

The Secretaries must be capable of:
- Performing the duties of a receptionist, office manager, and administrative assistant to the CEO and teaching staff;
- Coordinating transportation and food services program;
- Keeping records, maintaining archives and performing light bookkeeping functions
- Assisting the CEO with recruitment of students and parents, and
- Establishing a recruiting and contact database.

Administrative Assistant Qualifications

Educational and Experiential Requirements

Classroom Aides will be at a minimum high school graduates with at least one year of experience working with young children in educational settings.

Administrative Assistant must be capable of:

- Willing to enroll in college courses in the area of child care
- Working directly with students and teachers
- Helping to keep students focused on work in their classrooms,
- Participating in professional development sessions, and
- Assisting the teachers with carrying out their lessons.

F. Attach a report of criminal history record, pursuant to Section 111 of the Public School Code for all individuals seeking the charter who shall have contact with students.

Prior to reporting for duty, all employees that will have contact with children must submit to the business office a Background Check for Employment in Schools or an official document from the Department of Public Welfare as required by 23 Pa. C.S. Chapter 63 subchapter C. 2. The administration shall require each applicant to submit an official clearance statement obtained from the department within the immediately preceding year as to whether the applicant is named as the perpetrator of an indicated or a founded report or is named as the individual responsible for injury or abuse in an indicated report for school employee or a founded report for school employee.

- The official clearance statement under paragraph one shall not be required for an applicant who:
- transfers from one position as a school employee to another position as a school employee of the same school district or of the same organization; and
- has, prior to the transfer, already obtained the official clearance statement under paragraph one.

Grounds for denying employment: Except as provided in section 6356 (relating to exceptions), an administrator shall not hire an applicant if the department verifies that the applicant is named as the perpetrator of a founded report or is named as the individual responsible for injury or abuse in a founded report for school employee. No individual who is a school employee on the effective date of this subchapter shall be required to obtain an official clearance statement under subsection (a) (1) as a condition of continued employment.

No employee will be hired or students enrolled in ACCS until the Pa Department of Education approves the charter application and issues a contract for service. Therefore, no employee child abuse clearance or criminal history forms are included in this proposal.

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.
Explanation: Establish high professional standards for teachers and other staff; commitment to professional development of staff; and working conditions and compensation packages that will attract and retain quality staff as per compliance with labor laws.

No employee will be hired or students enrolled in ACCS until the Pa Department of Education approves the charter application and issues a contract for service. Therefore, no employee child abuse clearance or criminal history forms are included in this proposal. See statement F above detailing requirements.

4. Code of Conduct:
A. Discuss any rules or guidelines governing student behavior.

The Founding Coalition with support from Agora Cyber's legal counsel will develop a proposed Code of Conduct that will be adopted by the Board of Trustees upon receipt of a charter. The Board, the CEO, and CCC will expand this code of conduct into a student handbook. All parents and students will receive a copy of the Student Handbook and will have to sign a statement indicating that they have read the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct will be designed with the mission of the school in mind, and, as such will be based on the belief that all students have the right to be physically safe, emotionally secure, and be taught effectively in a positive, focused learning environment.

The CEO or his or her designee will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Code of Conduct. The Board of Trustees, with feedback from the CEO, Parent Advisory Committee, and faculty will continually review the Code of Conduct and make changes as necessary.

The Code of Conduct will include the following rules and guidelines governing student behavior:
- Students will attend school daily;
- Behavior will be directed to supporting an atmosphere of learning, sharing and cooperating;
- Behavior will be directed at supporting the school's mission and programs;
- Behavior and language will be civil at all times;
- Students will be free of illegal drugs and alcohol;
- Conduct will be respectful of all property, including school property, public property and that of staff and other students.

B. Describe your school's policies regarding student expulsion and suspension, including students with disabilities.

Agora Cyber's Board of Trustees will define and publish the types of offenses that would lead to exclusion from school. The offenses shall include, but not be limited, to the following areas:

Alcohol
Attendance
Disrespect of teachers

Disobedience
Disruption of educational process

Drug-related activities
Harassment
Physical assaults/fighting
Theft
Vandalism of school property
Weapons

IF AN INCIDENT OCCURS

1. Documentation of the offense will be brought to the attention of the CEO or administrator in charge.
2. CEO will inform the student of the complaint against him or her.
3. The student will be given an opportunity to respond with his side of the situation.
4. If a suspension is warranted, a written notice of suspension will be prepared for the parents and given to the student. The notice will contain reasons for the suspension.

SUSPENSION

The following constitutes Agora Cyber proposed policies for the suspension of students:

Suspensions for 1 to 3 days
A student may be suspended for a maximum of three days without a hearing. A written notice of suspension will be prepared for the parents and given to the student. The notice will contain reasons for the suspension. A conference with the parent will be scheduled before the student can return to school.

Suspensions for 4 to 10 days
For suspensions of 4 to 10 days, the student and parent will have the right to an <u>informal hearing</u> with the CEO. The following requirements will govern the informal hearing:

- The informal hearing is meant to encourage the student's parents/guardian to meet with the principal to discuss ways by which future offenses can be avoided. This can occur through the most appropriate means of technology that will ascertain that both parent and student are participating.

- The steps below will be followed to ensure due process:
    1. The student and the parent/guardian will be notified in writing of the reasons for the suspension.
    2. They will be provided with sufficient notice of the time and place or arrangement of the informal hearing.
    3. A student will have the right to question any witnesses present at the informal hearing, and has the right to speak and produce witnesses on his/her own behalf.
    4. An informal hearing will be held within the first 5 days of the suspension.

For all suspensions, students shall 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.

EXPULSION

The following constitutes Agora Cyber's proposed policies for the expulsion of students:

- A Board decision is required to expel a student.

    1. Expulsion is exclusion from participating in the school activities for more than 10 days. All expulsions require a prior <u>formal hearing</u>.
    2. During the period prior to the hearing and decision of the Board of Trustees in an expulsion case, the student, unless on suspension, shall be placed in his normal class except:
        - ✓ If it is determined after an informal hearing that a student's presence in his normal class would constitute a threat to the health, safety, morals or welfare of others; <u>and</u>
        - ✓ If 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, if the formal hearing is not unreasonably delayed.

- Notification of the charges will be sent to the student's parents/guardian by certified mail.

- Parents will be provided with sufficient notice of the time/place of the hearing.

- The hearing will be held in private unless the student or parent requests a public hearing.

- The student will have the right to be represented by counsel.

- The student will have the right to be notified of the names of the witnesses against the student, and copies of the statements and affidavits, if any, of those witnesses.

- The student will have the right to request that any such witnesses appear in person and answer questions or be cross-examined.

- The student will have the right to testify and present witnesses on his own behalf.

- A record will be kept of the hearing, either by stenographer or by tape recorder.

- The proceeding will be held with all reasonable speed.

- In the event the student is dissatisfied with the results of the hearing, an appeal may be filed in accordance with the Local Agency Law to the Court of Common Pleas within

thirty (30) days of receipt of that Adjudication. If it is alleged that a constitutional issue is involved, the student may be able to file a claim for relief in the Federal District Court. Student and their parents/guardians will be apprised of these rights.

All due process requirements will be respectively followed for regular and special education students. All attempts to rectify problems will be made before the implementation of sanctions.

C. Describe your school's mandatory student attendance plan and its fit with the code of conduct.

Students are required to attend and to participate constructively in all education activities and to log in to the school system to fulfill their required educational hours on each scheduled school day. Students shall be considered "excused" for absence due to illness, family emergency or other such events as deemed appropriate in accordance with the school's code of conduct. Students must submit, in writing, from their parent or guardian, a clear explanation outlining the date, and reason for the absence. Students who fail to provide written documentation of absence will be subject to discipline as outlined in the school's code of conduct. See Attendance Policies on page 74.

5. Transportation:
A. Describe your transportation program, including transportation for Special Education students and suggestions for improvement

Transportation will not be necessary for a majority of the students. However, bus transportation will be provided for any students taking classes in the school. Agora Cyber will either use NEIU 20 services for special education students (those who require special busing for acute mental or physical handicaps) or will contract out elsewhere.

B. What arrangements will be made to transport students, if you plan to implement an extended-day or extended-year program that requires transportation beyond that which the district provides?

Transportation will not be necessary for a majority of the students. However, bus transportation will be provided for any students taking classes in the school.

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? Nonresident students shall be provided transportation under section 1361 of the Public School Code. The school district of student residence must provide transportation to a charter school up to ten miles from its border.
Explanation: Establish workable arrangements for safely transporting students to and from school.

Transportation will not be necessary for a majority of the students. However, bus transportation will be provided for any students taking classes in the school.

6. Food Service:
A. Describe the food service plan of the school.

Students will not require food service.

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).
Explanation: Develop plans for the provision or accommodations of a mid-day meal.

A food service plan will be provided for any students taking classes in the school. However, most students will not require food service.

7. Timetable:
Provide a detailed timetable of projected steps and dates leading to the opening of a charter school.
Explanation: Establish a well-developed, realistic plan of action for opening a charter school.

Date	*Event*
October 1, 2004	Deadline for submitting completed charter school application to the Commonwealth.
October-	Hold planning meeting/informational sessions for parents.
October-	Contact community groups for involvement in planning process.
By December 30	Public hearing
January 2005	Select Board of Trustees.
	Address preliminary staffing concerns: ▪ Develop hiring policies and procedures ▪ Develop contractual arrangements ▪ Design benefit packages, including retirement ▪ Advertise CEO position
February	Identify CEO, who will be officially hired upon charter approval.
February	Develop admissions procedures/forms.
February to August	Hold meetings on Agora Cyber for interested families, detailing admissions procedures.
February	Receive comments on the application from PDE.
April-May	Revise application and re-submit to PDE
March	Apply for start-up grant monies from Pennsylvania Department of Education
July	Receive conditional charter from PDE
July	Satisfy all reporting requirements including:

	- Official charter signed by the authorizing board - Completed charter school application addressing the 5 elements of design - The application fact sheet containing projected enrollment, mission statement, and federal EIN. - Completed PDE-2028 Budget Form - Completed wire transfer form (ACH form) - Charter School Application Addendum (Federal Requirement) - Assurances (Federal Requirement) - Master Agreement Assurances (PA requirement)
July	Conclude real estate arrangements and begin facility renovation.
July, August	Interview and hire teachers and staff
July	Establish temporary school offices, telephone numbers
July	Set up school web site
July	Begin admissions process: - Conduct lottery - Send admissions letters - Establish a waiting list if necessary
June- August	Solidify partnerships with community organizations and educational institutions.
July - August	Meet with contractor to review status of facility progress, including all permanent utilities (Electric/gas/water/telephone).
July	Establish payroll.
July	Checking account, petty cash, and depository accounts opened. - Identify check signers - Develop signature policies - Appoint a treasurer
July - August	Set up Special Education Services: - Identify students with IEP - Acquire records - Develop alternative IEPs - Get parent approvals - Define service requirements for all Special Education students - Hire/Contract with providers
July	CEO begins.
July - August	Order and receive: - Curriculum materials - Furniture - Fixtures - Equipment - Telephone Service - Internet Service (T-1)
August	Send PDE an enrollment report.
August	Confirm acceptances and request student records.
August 15	Site is finalized (obtain certificate of occupancy and all related inspections).
September 1	Receive student records, including PENNSYLVANIA SYSTEM OF

	STATE ASSESSMENT (PSSA) scores, existing IEPs, etc.
August	Satisfy all conditions of the conditional charter for final approved charter.
August	Review health and safety of students: • Acquire medical forms • Identify doctor/nurse resources • Staff first aid training
July - August	Request bids for contracted services: • Security (monitoring) • Exterminator • Elevator maintenance
September 1	Have special education services in place. • Review existing IEPs. • Begin special education evaluations.
August	New staff orientation and professional development.
August 19	Parent and student orientation.
August 26 -30	Teachers set up classrooms, develop lesson plans, etc.
September 7	School regular session begins.

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.

9. School Health Services
A. Describe your plan for providing school health services as required under Article XIV of the public school code.
The charter school will adopt a plan for providing school health services that complies with Article XIV of the Public School Code. Nursing services will be contracted to be available when students are on school sites.

B. Describe how school nursing services, including administration of medication, will be delivered.
Through a contracted agreement with the visiting Nurse's Association or a similar agency, nursing services will be contracted to be available when students are on school sites.

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA CHARTER
to operate a public school known as

_____
(insert school name)

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Board of School Directors of _____
under the Public School Code of 1949, as amended, and Act 22 of the PA School Code, the
Board of Trustees of the _____ is hereby granted a Charter to operate a
public charter school located at 5901 Woodbine Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19131, for the period
commencing on July 1, 2005 and ending on July 1, 2010. The grant of this charter was approved
by vote of the Board of School Directors at a public meeting held on _____
It is specifically understood and agreed between the signatories hereto that:
1) the Board of Trustees shall operate the charter school in accordance with the provisions of Act
22, any amendments thereto enacted during the term of this charter and any regulations or
standards applicable to charter schools;
2) the granting of this charter is specifically contingent upon operation of the charter school in
strict adherence to the terms of the Application submitted by the Board of Trustees and approved
by the Board of School Directors or the State Charter School Appeal Board. Said Application is
attached hereto as **Appendix A** and is incorporated herein by reference as if fully set forth;
3) this Charter and the Appendix hereto constitute a legally binding agreement for the term set
forth above and the terms of said agreement cannot be changed absent a written amendment to
this charter;
4) this charter may be renewed for additional periods of five (5) years duration and upon any
such renewal, a new charter shall be executed by the parties; and
5) this charter can only be terminated in accordance with the provisions of
applicable law.

WHEREFORE, the undersigned, intending to be legally bound hereby set their hands this
_____ of 2005.
For the Board of School Directors of: _____
Board President/Vice President _____
Board Secretary _____
For the Board of Trustees of _____
Board President/Vice President _____
Board Secretary _____