



Star Charter School

1901 Fleischer Drive
Austin, Texas 78728
Phone: (512) 989-2672
Fax: (512) 989-3150

Star Charter School

Mission Statement:

- To provide an educational environment which exceeds the standards for public education, and to foster a desire for advancement and achievement among all of our students and teachers.

Vision and Goals

Star Charter School recognizes that our students are distinct individuals who often learn in different ways and at different rates. Our classrooms provide students with educational opportunities that allow them to reach beyond their current potential and remain excited about learning, the world, and their own possibilities.

Our learning settings are varied in many ways, e.g. moving students to different locations, bringing in teaching specialists and community members, and blending multiage classrooms. The learning atmosphere is one of mutual trust, respect, and commitment to self-improvement. The climate encourages thinking, questioning, and respect for individual differences. The environment is both safe and stimulating and helps the students achieve a balance between small and large groups and independent activities. The teacher serves as a facilitator of learning rather than a dispenser of information while maintaining a focus on the quality of the learning experience.

Star Charter School eventually will be a school with an enrollment of 360 students. The student/teacher ratio will be limited to 15:1 within each grade track to maximize individualized attention.

Our enrollment growth is determined by the governing board and is influenced by a combination of available space, course offerings, and faculty availability.

It is our goal to provide students, parents and faculty with the opportunity to:

- Participate in differentiated curricula which focus on the students' individual advancement rather than the traditional grade levels objectives for public school students
- Practice highly effective life-coping skills such as goal setting, time management, critical decision making, and physical activity
- Participate in parent organization meetings that will be held regarding the school's progress, units of study, and other topics
- Participate in field trips, which will be taken on a regular basis to extend our units of study.
- Participate daily in hands-on, individualized learning events in which they come to recognize that skills and concepts are transferable and related to "life-long learning" behaviors



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We must overcome the notion that we must be regular.... it robs you of the chance to be extraordinary and leads you to do the mediocre.

Uta Hagen

Teaching Philosophy

At Star Charter School we believe that every child is extraordinary and it is our philosophical belief that we must help each one to discover this in him/herself. This, of course, requires that we employ the following ten teaching philosophies:

- Each teacher must be a productive leader for the work and mission of the school. We should never shrink from the responsibility of serving the welfare of students. Without doubt, we must guide, coach, mentor, and show the way. This means being models as well as helping students choose actions that will lead to their growth and development.
- We must have the utmost regard for our students as people and learners.
- We must have a proactive concern about the quality of life in our classroom and school. It is essential that we make a daily habit of revealing concern for others and that we take action to promote the growth of all who are connected with the school.
- We must be able to see the good and the potential in our students and bring out the best in them. We should help all of our students to “fly” as high as they can.
- We must give credit to all of our students. We may need to look for a reason to give credit: in fact, we may even have to search for one.
- We view errors as a part of the learning and growing process. It is our responsibility to help our students to overcome obstacles, and bring out the best in them.
- We must demonstrate that we think before we act. It is important that our students realize we care enough to take time and exert mental energy to measure the impact of our words.
- We should be entrepreneurs – willing to look for new and better ways to teach. We need to take personal risks. This risk taking should be well thought out and based upon principle and knowledge. This allows us to move to higher levels of performance not experienced before.
- We must have empathy for and sensitivity to the life situations and needs of our students.
- We must be a resource. It is essential that we provide information and contribute to the attitudes and skills our students use to learn, grow, and make more intelligent decisions.

Education is more than academic: we must look at the whole child; developing the child’s intellectual abilities does the child no good if s/he can not survive emotionally and physically. We must guide students to be extraordinary in all areas.



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Educational Program

Our educational program uses the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as its starting and is geared toward the creative development of thinking skills.

Recognizing that all of our students are distinct individuals, the curriculum is differentiated in three ways:

1. Each student will participate in learning activities that are designed to meet his/her academic development needs.
2. Each student will participate in thematic, interdisciplinary units of instruction that incorporate appropriate challenges.
3. Each student will experience learning events that are authentic and contextually relevant to his/her interest.

Our program prepares students to be competitive both as applicants to highly respected colleges and universities and as adults in the community. The academic program is, first and foremost, a preparatory program: preparing young students for the challenges of middle school, preparing middle schoolers for the rigors of a challenging and comprehensive upper school curriculum, preparing upper schoolers for entrance and transition to the collegiate environment.

Instructional Methods

In addition to the familiar classroom model with clear student centered lectures and discussion, students of Star Charter School will participate in a differentiated curriculum that provides them with a positive learning experience.

Curriculum Compacting-achieved with individual students or with groups of students who demonstrate above average ability in any academic, artistic or vocational area. Compacting involves determining the goals and objectives of the regular curriculum, assessing whether or

not students have previous mastery of these goals, and substituting more challenging and appropriate work for the student as indicated.

Contracts-may be used in all subject areas and are developed collaboratively between the teacher, student(s), and parents. Contracts set individualized learning or behavioral goals as well as specifying materials and resources to be used and due dates for the students.

Independent Study-requires the student to develop a plan stating the subject of the study, list goals and objectives, plan activities to achieve his/her goals, and complete a final product. Independent study may also be fulfilled by distance learning programs, such as the University of Texas and Texas Tech University projects, for fulfillment of essential core and elective subjects.

Cooperative Learning and Activities-students work together as a team of learners to build on their foundation of educational concepts and skills. Simulations, games, projects, and various activities are used to individualize the groups' learning.

Behavior Modeling-instructors model successful behaviors and thought processes proven beneficial to all learners in acquiring new skills and concepts.

Co-curricular Activities

Star Charter School approaches clubs and teams from a co-curricular standpoint. SCS will sponsor clubs/teams which reflect the interests of our students and the needs of an ever expanding curriculum. Current co-curricular activities include Newspaper, Yearbook, Drama, Dance, Student Government, Service Learning, Botany and French.



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Attendance

By creating a safe, stimulating and motivating learning environment, students will be excited to attend class every scheduled day and are required to do so. However, we believe that life experiences are an integral part of a student's education and Star Charter School will accommodate to the extent allowable extracurricular activities that contribute to the overall emotional, physical and intellectual development of the individual student. The school expects, however, that students will be in attendance for classes with regularity and consistency. Failure to communicate with the school or a continuous record of absences may result in revocation of enrollment.

Tardies

Because we believe in the necessity of productive use of all classroom time, Star Charter School maintains a record of all students arriving late for classwork. The nature of the compacted curriculum requires a great deal of focus which should not be wasted on refocusing in response to classroom interruptions. We encourage our students to be in class on time every time, not only as a matter of personal responsibility, but also as a matter of courtesy to other students and to the instructors.

Parental Involvement

We believe the involvement of parents to be critical to the success of this charter school. In fact, a commitment of parental involvement is a requirement for student admission to the school. The areas where parents can be especially helpful include:

- a source of expertise to supplement the teaching staff in areas of study
- providing volunteer help with administrative tasks, supervision of extracurricular activities, assisting teachers in the classroom etc.
- fund raising
- input on the success of the program

Upper School Graduation

Star Charter School abides by the TEC and TEA requirements for graduation from accredited public schools in the state of Texas.

The four year upper school program allows for students to achieve a minimum of 24 unit credits toward graduation. The out-of-school physical education requirement is mandatory to meet minimum graduation requirements (but may be satisfied by the Dance elective at SCS). A minimum of 25 unit credits must be earned in the following areas:

- ◆ English Language Arts (4 unit credits)
- ◆ Mathematics (3 unit credits to include Algebra I)
- ◆ Science (3 unit credits)
- ◆ History, Government, and Economics (4 unit credits)
- ◆ Health and Speech (½unit credit each)
- ◆ Technology Studies (1 unit credit)
- ◆ Foreign Language Studies (2 unit credits)
- ◆ Physical Education (1 ½unit credits, fulfilled outside of Star Charter)
- ◆ Fine Arts (1 unit credit)
- ◆ Electives (4 ½unit credits)

Additional unit credits may be earned through approved correspondence course programs (such as the Texas Tech University and University of Texas Distance Learning programs). Fees or costs associated with independent courses must be incurred by the student and/or student's family.

All requirements and course offerings are subject to change depending upon appropriate Texas education laws and the policies of Star Charter School. Some courses may not be offered in consecutive years (please call if you have any questions about particular course offerings).



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