

Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

November 13, 2024



Agenda Item: Charter School Contract Amendment Request: Quest Forward Des Moines

State Board Priority: State Board of Education Goals (2 – 4)

State Board Role/Authority: Per Iowa Code 256E, the State Board shall approve or deny charter school applications, and a contract be executed between the founding group and the state board. This includes revisions to the signed contract.

Presenter(s): Deborah Elder
Chief Operating Officer

Barbara Ohlund, Executive Officer
Division of PK-12 Learning

Attachment(s): Two

Recommendation: It is recommended that the State Board approve the contract amendment request.

Background: Quest Forward Charter School Des Moines' original application and signed contract does not indicate a waiver request for Iowa Code section 256.11 (offer and teach) requirements. This amendment is a request for a waiver prior to opening in August 2025, to accommodate a 4-year phase-in model of adding grade levels, and therefore courses, starting August 2025 with 6th grade, and ending in 2028-2029 with 6-12th grade and related programming.

Iowa Charter School Amendment Request Form

Exhibit 1

The ***Iowa Charter School Amendment Request Form*** is completed by an authorized Charter School that requests consideration of a proposed contract amendment to the State Board of Education. To submit this document, make a copy and submit the completed form to charters@iowa.gov labeled: **Amendment Request Form_2024_ Quest Forward Charter School, Des Moines**

1. Requested Amendment

A. Cite existing contract language to be amended.	B. Provide specific proposed amended language.
<p>27.1. Does the independent founding group wish to request a waiver of one or more of the following requirements from which the charter is not already exempt according to Iowa Administrative Code chapter 19.11 (2); Iowa Code section 256.7(21) and the educational standards of Iowa Code section 256.11 and/or the minimum requirements for instructional hours or days?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (continue to 27.2) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (skip to assurances and conditions)</p> <p>27.2. Select each statute and/or administrative rule with which the charter school does not intend to comply (Mark all that apply).</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Requirements of Iowa Code section 256.7, subsection 21 and the educational standards of Iowa Code section 256.11. <input type="checkbox"/> Provision of instruction for at least the number of days or hours required by Iowa Code section 279.10, subsection 1.</p>	<p>27.1. Does the independent founding group wish to request a waiver of one or more of the following requirements from which the charter is not already exempt according to Iowa Administrative Code chapter 19.11 (2); Iowa Code section 256.7(21) and the educational standards of Iowa Code section 256.11 and/or the minimum requirements for instructional hours or days?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (continue to 27.2) <input type="checkbox"/> No (skip to assurances and conditions)</p> <p>27.2. Select each statute and/or administrative rule with which the charter school does not intend to comply (Mark all that apply).</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Requirements of Iowa Code section 256.7, subsection 21 and the educational standards of Iowa Code section 256.11. <input type="checkbox"/> Provision of instruction for at least the number of days or hours required by Iowa Code section 279.10, subsection 1.</p>

2. Rationale Describe the rationale for the language revision from 1A to 1B. Provide sufficient detail to explain the need for the amendment.

Quest Forward Charter School, Des Moines (a.k.a. “Des Moines Prep”) has been authorized to serve students 6-12 grade beginning in the 2025-2026 school year per Section 3 of our Charter Contract. As described in Section 4.1 of our Charter Application, we will not immediately serve all middle school and high school grade levels in our first few years of operation. Instead, we will incrementally add grade level(s) to our student body each school year to systematically grow our enrollment and programming.

Knowing that we will not have a full middle school (6-8), nor a full high school (9-12) population in the immediate future requires that we be exempt from the full “Offer and Teach” course programming outlined within Iowa Code section 256.11 subsections 3-5. The wide-array of courses/disciplines listed in subsection 3-5 was intended for fully enrolled/staffed middle schools and high schools.

We fully acknowledge that not requesting this waiver during our application process was an oversight. The plan has always been to assess community needs, secure a viable facility, and determine the best phasing of grade levels for our school. Moving forward, we intend to add additional grade level(s) to our school each school year until we’ve reached a full student body (target 2028-2029). During this

incremental phasing, we will also be adding courses/programming in an effort to meet the requirements outlined in Iowa Code, as well accommodating student interests and pathways. Once we are enrolling as a full middle school (6-8) and/or high school (9-12), we aim to re-evaluate the need for an amendment related to the course offerings and educational standards outlined in Iowa Code section 256.11 subsections 3-5.

3. **Desired Outcome** Describe the desired outcome of the amendment.

Local authority to offer and teach courses that align to the grade levels we will serve, rather than be required to offer and teach all courses/standards outlined in subsections 3-5, which is intended to guide a full enrolled middle school (6-8) and high school (9-12) institution.

4. **Best Practices** Describe how previous practices that led to the established contract language (1A) will change to support the current amended language (1B). How will the charter ensure effective implementation of the proposed amendment?

Our practices are adjusted due to the practical application of designing programming, building a schedule, and hiring staff to meet the needs of our inaugural class. Our course offerings and standards will meet the needs of our identified students and the specific grade-level requirements outlined in Iowa Code section 256.11 subsection 3-5 for the appropriate grade-level of students.

To execute this plan, we will follow a 4-year plan of phased-in programming to meet the needs of our students and are fully committed to yearly hiring of highly qualified teachers to ensure that we have the necessary personnel to offer and teach all of the requirements outlines in Iowa Code section 256.11 subsection 3-5 for the grade-level of students we serve.

5. **Documentation**

- a. The amendment is approved by the charter school governing board (meeting agenda and minutes reflecting approval of the amendment request - attachment labeled **GBAmendment Approval**)
- b. A public meeting with stakeholders addressing the proposed change/s to the charter contract (attachment labeled **PMAmendment**). Note that a designated public comment specific to the amendment on the governing board agenda may fulfill the public meeting requirement. Include names and roles of each individual that participated in public comment and a summary of their input.

Approval of the amendment by our school's current governing board is listed below as "GBAmendment Approval" as well as linked [here](#).

9/11/2024

Charter School Team
Division of PK-12 Learning
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

ATTN: Dr. Barbara Ohlund, Tom Bredfield

Re: GBAmendment Approval

Dear Dr. Ohlund and Mr. Bredfield,

As Board President of Quest Forward Charter School Des Moines, I hereby approve all of the changes listed on the ["Iowa Charter School Amendment Request Form: Exhibit 1"](#) for Quest Forward Charter School, Des Moines.

It is imperative that the contract language within sections 27.1-27.2 of our Charter Application be amended to allow exclusion from the requirements of Iowa Code section 256.7, subsection 21 and the educational standards of Iowa Code section 256.11 based on the rationale outlined in sections 2-4 within said amendment.

Sincerely,

Manuel Mattke

Board President
Quest Forward Charter School, Des Moines dba Des Moines Prep