

Tapestry Public



Charter School



Charter Petition

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I. Executive Summary

Charter School Name: Tapestry Public Charter School

Type: Start-Up

Approved by: DeKalb County Board of Education on _____

Grade Levels Served: 6-12 (opens with grades 6-8 and grows one grade per year)

Ages Served: approximately 10-19 years of age

Proposed Opening/Renewal Date: August 4, 2014

Proposed Charter Term: 5 Years

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Yr 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	32	32	0	0	0	0	96
Yr 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	32	32	32	0	0	0	128
Yr 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	32	32	32	32	0	0	160
Yr 4	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	32	32	32	32	32	0	192
Yr 5	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	224
Yr 6	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	224*
Yr 7	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	224*
Yr 8	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	224*
Yr 9	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	224*
Yr 10	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	224*

*Due to the target population served, it is anticipated a significant percentage of 12th graders may require a 5th year to graduate and the capacity of the school in years 6 and beyond will include repeating 12th graders for up to 250 total students.

Mission

The mission of Tapestry Public Charter School (Tapestry) is to offer an inclusive, individualized learning environment that is academically engaging, both for neurotypical students and those on the autism spectrum, and to create a positive school culture that empowers all students to take possession of their innate talents and become creative builders of their own future.

Tapestry was founded with the vision to provide a charter school model that will facilitate an accommodating, encouraging, and responsive environment with a broad base of support and best practices that increase student achievement for all, including those students who are on the autism spectrum. An inclusive school designed for those who will benefit from a student-driven, experiential, sensory-based learning environment, Tapestry will utilize small, multi-age classrooms with flexible groupings and authentic hands-on learning experiences. This curricular design will allow all children to thrive, but it will be particularly engaging for students diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD), who may not reach their potential in traditional middle and high school environments.

Academic Program

Tapestry promotes the legislative intent to increase student achievement through academic and organizational innovation by providing an authentic inclusion environment that embeds strategies for students on the autism spectrum into an innovative, highly supportive school model that will engender superior student outcomes from all students. Through a strong partnership with the DeKalb County School District (DCSD) and a learning environment that is based on the practices of the Coalition of Essential Schools, Tapestry will provide a unique, innovative school

model for students throughout DCSD that includes, but is not limited to, the following academic innovations:

- Low student-teacher ratio; small class and overall school size
- Student-driven content used to reach standards' mastery
- Interdisciplinary blocks and cross-curricular approaches to themes and content
- Authentic co-teaching model
- Expeditionary/investigative approach to learning and extending ideas
- Project-based and holistic approaches to instruction and assessment
- Data-driven flexible grouping in all coursework and content areas (including mixed-age)
- Theater/drama programming for all students
- Technology-based techbooks that provide students and teachers extensive access to the most current multimedia resources, learning materials, and lexiled readings (in lieu of traditional textbooks)
- Daily physical activity and “sensory breaks” for all students throughout each day
- Increased instructional time

Organization

Tapestry will not be managed by an Education Management Organization (EMO) or an Education Service Provider (ESP): Tapestry incorporates all board and advisory council members in a more authentic way to create a truly community-run school. Through its robust partnerships and intensive community outreach, which will continue throughout the operation of the school, Tapestry has created a school borne of the community it seeks to serve that will effectively leverage stakeholder expertise and interest to benefit students and the entire school community. Some of the organizational innovations at Tapestry include the following:

- Small, supportive advisory cohorts that build relationships and social thinking for success
- Professional development and coaching provided by local universities and partners
- Integration of community professionals and services into students' services
- Lean administrative model that ensures all staff have shared accountability for organizational health

The need for an inclusion model school in DCSD has been well-demonstrated through the overwhelmingly positive response from the community. To date the school has hundreds of followers on social networking sites, more than 250 signatures on a petition of support, more than 200 prospective parents on the mailing list, over \$100,000 in private donations from more than 250 individual supporters, and generous pro bono support and in-kind services provided by the advisory council, other petition supporters, and confirmed partners. (See Appendices G, K, L, and M.)

This response is underscored by the need demonstrated through most recent statistics: 1,916 students with autism were served in Georgia public schools in 2000; by 2011, the number was 11,638—a **507%** increase¹. DCSD academic performance data reinforce the need to establish programs that provide academically rigorous curricula for students with autism in an inclusion setting. In 2011, 62.7% of students with disabilities in DCSD (just under the goal of 65%) were served in an inclusion setting, but the number drops to 41.2% for children with an ASD.

¹ www.ideadata.org.> Accessed February 15, 2013.

II. Statement of Intent

1. Describe the charter school's mission.

The mission of Tapestry Public Charter School is to offer an inclusive, individualized learning environment that is academically engaging, both for neurotypical students and those on the autism spectrum, and to create a positive school culture that empowers all students to take possession of their innate talents and become creative builders of their own future.

2. Provide a description of how the proposed charter school promotes the legislative intent of the charter schools program to “increase student achievement through academic and organizational innovation,” in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2061.

As detailed in the executive summary above, the need for a school that embeds strategies to support students on the autism spectrum in an engaging, supportive classroom that will also engender success in neurotypical peers is well demonstrated. Beyond the robust support Tapestry has enjoyed from parents and other community stakeholders throughout the planning process, the available data point to an under-served population whose needs and size are growing exponentially. The 507% increase in students with autism served in Georgia public schools in only eleven years, coupled with the very low inclusion rates for students with autism, point to the need for an innovative approach to inclusion that works for both special education and general education students. By creating a highly engaging and supportive model of education that is research-and practice-proven to meet the needs of diverse learners, Tapestry is creating a learning environment that will facilitate inclusion as the foundation of the school model-- with the needs of the students as a premise -- rather than as an after-thought or revision to a model.

DCSD has demonstrated progress in the academic achievement of students with disabilities (SWDs) but has not consistently met state targets of achievement for this subgroup. For example, in 2011, DCSD did not meet the state target for CRCT mathematics proficiency for grades 3-8, with only 50.2% of SWDs meeting or exceeding standards. For SWDs taking the Enhanced GHSGT Mathematics test, 48.0% met or exceeded standards (this was above the state target of 45%). The state goal for ELA was also not met, with only 61.2% of SWDs meeting or exceeding standards on the CRCT. For SWDs taking the Enhanced GHSGT RELA test, 60.6% met or exceeded standards (below the state target of 63%). Tapestry will build on the progress DCSD has made, thus increasing student achievement through academic and organizational innovations currently unavailable to students elsewhere in the district.

Academic Innovation

Small Class Sizes/School

Tapestry will open with a maximum of 96 students and grow to 224 students in year five. This small school environment ensures every student has a close working relationship with staff members and small group and individualized support are provided frequently. Students will benefit from co-teachers in every academic classroom, with additional staff (such as learning specialists, therapists, and other educational service providers) afforded through partnerships with universities and training programs, further reducing student-teacher ratios and providing the means for flexibly grouping on demand. Because of the small class and school size, each teacher has greater ownership of each individual student's growth and can work closely with other staff

and students' families to fashion a seamless support network. A recent study at the City College of New York confirmed that smaller class sizes have proven a key lever for improved student outcomes in students on the autism spectrum.²

Co-Teaching Model in Academic Classes

Every content area class at each grade level will be co-taught by two teachers (at least one of whom will be special education certified) using Dr. Marilyn Friend's model for effective co-teaching. This ensures the co-teaching structure operates most effectively, maximizing impact. Unlike many co-teacher models (or a model that incorporates a paraprofessional), both teachers will be actively engaged in some element of instruction and will co-plan lessons, collaborate, and lead data team meetings for their students. This provides greater flexibility to effectively adjust curriculum to data. Moreover, it provides consistency for students and seamless instruction in the case of a teacher's absence. See Question 4 for more information about this strategy.

Theater/Drama for Every Student

Although a number of arts offerings will be provided at Tapestry, the theater/drama program will be a key component of the school model. At Tapestry, all students in the middle grades will take theater/drama every year, and all students in high school will have robust access to drama programming if they choose to continue pursuing theater for high school elective credit in addition to the other elective/enrichment offerings annually. See Question 3 for more information about this curriculum and how it will be afforded to all students.

Constructivist-Based Expeditionary Learning Strategies

Tapestry is founded on a constructivist approach to pedagogy, which posits that learning happens as students actively engage in a process of meaning and knowledge construction, rather than passively receiving information. A constructivist approach has been demonstrated in research and practice to foster critical thinking and create motivated and independent learners. Decades of research illustrate the benefits of inquiry-based and cooperative learning to help students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in a rapidly changing world. "There is strong evidence to show that inquiry-based, collaborative approaches to learning benefit both individual and collective knowledge growth. Students engaged in inquiry-based learning develop content knowledge and learn increasingly important twenty-first century skills, such as the ability to work in teams, solve complex problems, and to apply knowledge gained through one lesson or task to other circumstances."³ See Question 4 for more information about specific strategies within this approach that will be implemented.

Advisory/Conscious Discipline Framework

Every student will be assigned to an advisory cohort that is comprised of a small group of students and one certified teacher. Researchers assert, "advisory groups, even in large schools, create the conditions for improving student achievement and behavior and enrich the lives of students and teachers through personalization of the learning experience. Research demonstrates that personalization of the learning environment... leads to improved student outcomes in

² <http://www1.cuny.edu/advancement/pr/CHILDREN-WITH-AUTISM-NEED-TO-BE-TAUGHT-IN-SMALLER-GROUPS-PILOT-STUDY-CONFIRMS.cfm>. January 19, 2013.

³ Darling-Hammond, L., Foundation, G. L. E., Barron, B., & Pearson, P. D. (2009). *Powerful learning, what we know about teaching for understanding*. Jossey-Bass Inc Pub.

school.”⁴ Explicit curriculum, homework support, announcements, and community-building will all be a part of the advisory period, which will meet daily. Organized within a strengths-building approach, the curriculum delivered will be aligned to the needs of the specific students in the advisory, with topics like active listening, choosing a college/career path, self-regulatory skills, and self-awareness and advocacy. Much of this curriculum will come from the Conscious Discipline tools and resources, described in greater detail in Question 29. The advisory structure is outlined in greater detail in Question 3.

Organizational Innovation

School Model Integrates Best Practices for Students on the Spectrum

Charter schools throughout the country struggle both to enroll and fully serve the needs of special education students, especially those who are on the autism spectrum. Because Tapestry has been designed as a school that will meet the needs of special education students on the autism spectrum in an inclusion model, it begins with best practices that support exponential growth in all students and will benefit special education students seamlessly.

Robust Partnerships to Provide In-Kind Services/Support

As outlined in Appendix K, a significant component of developing the school model has been focused on and has benefited from the interest and expertise of a vast array of partners. Some of these partnerships are manifest in individuals participating on the advisory council and leveraging their affiliations (Appendix G), others have served as support and counsel through the development of the petition (Appendix L), and many entities have pledged their support of the school through its charter term with specific offerings for students and teachers. These partnerships offset budgetary strain and build capacity not only through the networks and expertise they provide, but also through staff, professional development, curriculum, materials, and programmatic operations. All of the partners below have committed to providing services and supports; many more partnerships not listed herein are still being developed.

1. Alliance Theater

- Assist with development of drama curriculum
- Provide a Teaching Artist to work on site to support Tapestry teachers in the classroom
- Assist with extracurricular drama programs and camps
- Offer professional development for Tapestry staff
- Work collaboratively with Tapestry to present at least one theatrical performance to the public per academic year

2. Birdie Grants

- Provide grant prospecting, writing, and reporting/compliance
- Support board development committee with relationship-building, annual fundraising campaigns, and other development planning and execution

3. Brenau University

- Provide staffing through Master’s level OT practitioners
- Provide OT curriculum and materials for students

⁴ Lee, V., Smith, J., & Croninger, R. (1995). Another look at high school restructuring. *Issues in Restructuring Schools*. (Report #9). Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

- Offer professional development for Tapestry staff
- 4. Center for Leadership in Disability (Georgia State University)**
 - Offer workshops, training, and support on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
 - Collaboratively coordinate internships for mission-aligned graduate students working with the CLD and GSU (to provide tutoring, co-teaching, mentoring)
 - Offer development and oversight of vocational and transition programs for high-school-aged students
 - Provide other professional development and support as appropriate
- 5. Fountainhead Design & Consulting**
 - Provide audiovisual and other technology related consulting services to Tapestry
- 6. Freespace**
 - Provide support in evaluating and selecting appropriate facilities and/or sites
 - Design remodeling/renovations plans on selected facility
- 7. Shuli L. Greene, Esq.**
 - Provide legal support, HR review, and legal counsel
- 8. Kennesaw State University (Department of Inclusive Education)**
 - Provide workshops, training, and support on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and co-planning with staff to integrate best practices
 - Place co-teachers, tutors, and mentors through KSU interns
 - Assist with curriculum and goals/assessment development
- 9. New Normal Society**
 - Provide professional development, training and education
 - Offer student mentoring, support, peer education programming (direct services to students)
 - Contribute to advisory curriculum
 - Organize and lead parent/family education series
- 10. Razorfish**
 - Design, develop, and maintain website (including all related tools—email server, electronic mailings, web-based fundraising, etc.)
 - Offer branding and marketing support
 - Support curriculum in digital marketing and internship opportunities for students
- 11. Running MATES**
 - Offer curriculum and support to create a Running MATES program at Tapestry
- 12. SENSE Theater/Vanderbilt University**
 - Provide curriculum and materials for theater programming
 - Provide professional development and student seminars/instructional blocks
 - Offer oversight of culminating performances and support with planning, materials
- 13. University of West Georgia**
 - Provide graduate speech-language pathology students
 - Support Tapestry staff with supervised graduate student speech-language pathology services during the academic semester
 - Lead Camp Writing Inspiring Language and Literacy Development (WILLD) after school and summer programming focused on literacy building
 - Provide a licensed audiologist for student screenings and referrals

- Provide professional development, co-planning, and support for ESOL screening and programming
- Supply English Language (EL) tutors, mentors, and coaches

14. Zero Return and Southern Green

- Offer audio recording and production instruction, via access to production studio
- Provide programming and curricular enhancement related to energy and alternative fuels
- Offer internship opportunities at either entity for high school students

Coalition of Essential Schools Affiliate

Founders have aligned the model herein to the common principles and benchmarks of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) and will join the network as an affiliate. The CES is a network of schools and affiliated centers that create and sustain personalized, equitable, and intellectually challenging schools. Guided by a set of common principles, essential schools are places of powerful student learning where all students have the chance to reach their full potential. Essential schools focus on helping all students use their minds well through standards-aligned interdisciplinary studies, community-based “real-world” learning, and performance-based assessment. More information about CES is included in Question 4.

High Levels of Parent Engagement

A cornerstone of the Tapestry model is parent engagement. Unlike many charter schools that are founded by educational organizations, community leaders, businesses, or charter management organizations, Tapestry was founded by parents of students in DCSD. The founding team is largely comprised of educational experts and service providers, most of whom are parents as well. This parent-driven start to the school ensures that parent engagement is not a separate, subordinate goal of the operation, but the very premise upon which the school is established. At every turn of developing the petition, parents of potential Tapestry students and parents whose students will continue to attend other schools have worked together to ensure parent engagement will be an ongoing strength of the school program. From parent representation on the board and hiring committees to frequent parent communication protocols, the high levels of parent engagement at Tapestry position the school to effect superior student outcomes.

III. Description of the Educational Program

3. Describe the focus of the curriculum.

In all core content classrooms, curriculum will be aligned to the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). Each course at each grade level will utilize a collaborative teacher-created scope and sequence that groups standards and guides unit planning. The common foundation for coursework from year to year will be the standards around which each course is organized, and the scopes and sequences will reflect a minimum of skills to be built upon for each content area. The content used to transmit these standards may be comprised of different interdisciplinary curricular materials and/or may change from year to year based on student interest. Prior to the beginning of the academic year, all new students and their families will complete an Interest Inventory so that Tapestry staff may gain information about the students’ interests, talents, and hobbies. In pre-planning, teachers will read the inventories, specifically looking for shared interests from which they can develop interdisciplinary educational modules

to be taught during the school year. This same approach to collaborative planning will occur throughout the year as additional student interests emerge to ensure content is relevant and builds on student capacities and interests. See Appendix H for a sample educational module that illustrates the student-driven, interdisciplinary approach to planning that will characterize the curriculum at Tapestry. See Appendix I for the CCGPS, which will be used as the core curriculum for all grade levels and core content areas.

In addition to CCGPS as the foundation for coursework, the guiding principles for instruction and curriculum come from Tapestry's alignment to and participation in the Coalition for Essential Schools (CES). As a CES school (which includes hundreds of schools and more than two dozen CES Affiliate Centers across the country), Tapestry is anchored in a community of schools with a shared philosophy that informs instructional and organizational decisions. More information about CES is included in Question 4.

The goal of Tapestry is to meet the needs of each learner one by one, one to one, and all for one. To that end, at the very core of the Tapestry curriculum is a flexible approach that provides vast resources for teachers to accommodate any student interest that effectively practices CCGPS mastery. With special consideration of those students who have an ASD who often possess extremely narrow scopes of interest and/or their peers with varied cultural schemata, this approach ensures students can make connections, build skills, and demonstrate what they learn, engaging them through relevant, high-affect topics rather than penalizing students when they lack interest in a theme. A student with a singular focus on ants, for example, can use that understanding to learn history, psychology, and sociology, demonstrating it all with a parallel ant universe that communicates these things. Like the differentiation strategies used to meet students with a diverse array of skills, content will be differentiated to address interest as well.

With textbooks and/or canned curricula, such a differentiated approach might be impossible. In order to best accommodate each student's interests and leverage content and activities in which students will be most engaged, the primary curricular materials for all content areas will be accessed via electronic devices (such as Chromebooks—see Appendix X) rather than textbooks. A variety of subscriptions and software will be obtained to ensure teachers and students have a myriad of means to master each content area. Tapestry will utilize the Discovery Education suite of resources as the primary paid subscription (Appendix J), supplemented by a variety of free subscriptions to resources such as those available through iTunes. Through generous access to technology and activities and resources provided by partners (including learning expeditions and labs), students will use technology as a curricular cornerstone to make the standards come alive. Teachers will be trained and supported through the Professional Development (PD) provided by Discovery Education and partners to lead guided investigations, research, and an inquiry-based approach to discovering content via electronic applications, supplemental classroom materials, and manipulatives. Note that the budget in Appendix N assumes one Chromebook for each enrolled student annually. The proposals for Chromebooks (Appendix X) and the Discovery Education materials (Appendix J) demonstrate a significantly less expensive approach than textbooks for each course and will provide greater access to the most current range of materials to accommodate diverse student interests.

Discovery Education

Constantly updated to include current events and developments, Discovery Education materials and the techbook is CCGPS-aligned for K-12 science (including specific modules for Biology, Chemistry, Earth & Space Science, and Physics), social studies (including World History, U.S. History, World Geography, and Culture), ELA (including reading, composition, and listening and speaking assets for all grade levels), and mathematics (including algebra 1 and geometry--available starting in the summer of 2014). Non-fiction excerpts for all content areas and streaming features will provide ELA teachers a wealth of access to content for ELA classrooms across all grade levels, addressing the CCGPS's greater focus on non-fiction readings and standards. The modest estimate for paid subscription services (Appendix J) will include professional development and tech support, access to a national community of teachers using Discovery Education, and a shared resources platform that makes lessons and assessments available. In addition, Streaming Plus services provide supplemental support for content area modules by providing an array of resources that can be accessed by students individually or as a class to complement lessons. Discovery Education Streaming Plus contains a growing library of over 9,500 videos, 77,000 content-specific clips, and more than 160,000 multimedia assets which integrate seamlessly into any curriculum. This enables teachers to plan interdisciplinary lessons using the same resources and/or enables students to choose the activities and resources that interest them most to work on a common standard. Discovery Education techbooks also include formative assessments, enabling students and teachers to monitor student progress and mastery as they move through materials. See Appendices I and J for more information about the resources Discovery Education will provide.

English Language Arts/Reading

Like the other content areas, the ELA curriculum in all grades will be aligned to the CCGPS and leverage students' interests. Novels, non-fiction texts, and other written pieces will be presented to students through electronic devices (likely Chromebooks that use materials from Discovery Education, as described above) taking student interest into account. This electronic information will be supplemented by a classroom library in each class. See Appendix I for the ELA curriculum.

Reading/Listening/Speaking

Foundational skills in ELA for students who need support with decoding will be taught using a phonics-based approach that is consistent with the Lindamood-Bell and Orton-Gillingham instructional frameworks. Beyond decoding support, much of the ELA curriculum will be organized into a framework consistent with the Orton-Gillingham and Lindamood-Bell materials and strategies, and teachers will receive training on these strategies through partnerships with local universities (Appendix K) and advisory council members (Appendix G). The Orton-Gillingham approach was designed as a methodology for teaching children with learning disabilities in reading and written expression, and particularly for overcoming difficulties acquiring the phonetic skills that are necessary for success in those areas. The Orton-Gillingham approach utilizes specific, sequential, direct, multisensory instruction to build literacy skills. The Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes are sensory-cognitive programs that stimulate the basic sensory functions related to learning by developing the underlying processes necessary for language and literacy success. They are used both with typically functioning students and those students who struggle with literacy development as the result of sensory processing and/or other

learning disabilities. Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes may be utilized through instructional materials provided by learning centers, as well as professional development in the strategies for each teacher.

The Visualizing and Verbalizing curriculum, a program of the Lindamood-Bell suite of instructional tools and frameworks, provides resources and strategies to build students' reading comprehension. The program is tailored to those students who have weak concept imagery, which is often accompanied by difficulty with critical thinking, following directions, and/or connecting in conversations. Students with weak concept imagery may also have difficulty expressing ideas in an organized manner. This challenge is especially prevalent in students on the autism spectrum and related disorders, to whom the curricular materials and concept imagery-building strategies are tailored. Strategies and exercises are also especially applicable for English Learners (ELs) who have decoding skills but are still developing English language proficiency. The Visualizing and Verbalizing PD and materials provide a course of building concept imagery in students who can decode with fluency but are unable to satisfactorily build comprehension skills. The exercises and strategies provide students with means of developing concept imagery skills that strengthen processing and increase reading and listening fluency. Support in implementing these tools and access to the resources will be largely provided through university partnerships and members of the advisory council who have received training in these strategies.

Composition/Literature

Based on CCGPS, ELA coursework in all grades will have a more significant focus on informational texts, which are selected largely in response to student interest and application within interdisciplinary thematic units organized by the teachers. Tapestry students will use resources like those provided by Discovery Education and other streaming services to which Tapestry will subscribe (iTunes University, Nook, etc.) to access reading passages and texts available online (such as online newspaper and magazine subscriptions). Through each classroom library, students will also have access to a variety of hardbound books for reference, pleasure, or extended reading activities. The Writer's Workshop protocol for composition will guide teacher-created lessons around composition, and the myriad of materials on Discovery Education will provide support in planning and revising compositions. Teachers will collaborate to create school-wide rubrics for writing that ensure expectations for composition are consistent throughout the school and provide a vertically-teamed approach to building strong writing skills for each student.

Mathematics

The goal of the math curriculum, across all grade levels, is to provide students with the mathematical understanding they need to access higher level math coursework and the ability to recognize and readily apply mathematical concepts in real-life situations. The investigative, hands-on approach to building math sense ensures that students have explored the role of math in life as part of their understanding. As appropriate, cross-curricular approaches (math standards integrated into science labs, applications of mathematical principles in economics, etc.) will ensure that the study of math is not just limited to the instructional time allocated for math class. Students of all skill levels will practice math concepts in the modalities through which they might approach them in life, with robust access to manipulatives. For example, rather than

simply memorize multiplication tables, students will investigate multiples in money, charts, and abacuses. Rather than simply memorize theorems, students will explore geometric properties by creating 3-D shapes in clay, using tools to measure and track patterns to determine how these measurements can be predicted. Many of the math applications on Discovery Education and Khan Academy provide this type of practical, interdisciplinary-based approach, as well as progress monitoring and data-tracking tools.

Khan Academy is a not-for-profit online curriculum with materials and resources all available free of charge. Students can make use of the extensive video library, interactive challenges, and assessments from any computer with access to the web. The system includes completely customized, self-paced learning tools; a dynamic system for getting help; and a custom profile, points, and badges to measure progress. Coaches, parents, and teachers have access to student data in real time, with windows into student work, class reports, and recommendations for interventions based on disaggregated data. Khan Academy contains a library of videos that cover K-12 math, interdisciplinary science lessons, and humanities with playlists on finance and history. There are also adaptive assessments to provide data and serve as gateways to accessing the next standards.

Mad Minutes, Everyday Math lessons, and exercises from other math materials available electronically may also provide additional resources for math teachers to build curriculum that addresses the needs of the students in each class. Teachers will work cooperatively to vertically align math instruction and be encouraged to use a myriad of sources and materials to supplement these programs. See Appendix I for the math curriculum.

Science

The holistic, investigative approach to instruction at Tapestry will necessarily position science as an anchor to all subject areas in the school. Lab-based explorations of math concepts, investigations of phenomena that impact historical events and in-person re-enactments of stories (supported through the drama curriculum and theater partnerships) in ELA will enable students to not just read about, but experience what they are learning. This means the scientific concepts and principles outlined in the CCGPS for science will be integrated across content areas in a cohesive, authentic way. See Appendix I for the science curriculum.

In the instructional periods designated for science, all units will be connected to annual scope and sequence that aligns science standards for the grade level to the CCGPS as a minimum. Core materials for science will include materials from Khan Academy, iTunes University, Discovery Education, and other electronically accessed materials that align with the CCGPS. To supplement these resources, Tapestry will also utilize hands-on labs to guide classroom experiences. There is plentiful support for this approach through the online resources and subscription services the school is adopting, most of which require basic materials that negate the cost of all-in-one kits and expensive labs. As the school grows and high school science coursework is offered, labs and experiments that align to these standards will serve as an anchor for instruction that is supplemented by the electronic resources.

A cornerstone of the Tapestry science program will be the school garden. Maintained by students and staff, the garden will provide opportunities for a hands-on extension of the core curricula, as

well as opportunities for socialization and community-building. Math and science will be incorporated into gardening as students design their garden beds, learn the parts and life cycle of a plant. From the cultivation of herbs, students will experience a variety of textures, smells, and colors. Students can compare and contrast plants and reflect on their observations as part of the ELA curriculum. A farm-to-table objective allows for character building through the necessary tending to the garden and provides students a way to learn to take care of living things. Furthermore, they can see the fruits of their labor, eat what they grow, and learn about nutrition and health. Students can share the experience and joy of collaboration toward a goal. Studies show that gardening improves an individual's mental, emotional, physical, and intellectual well-being⁵. A sub-committee of the advisory council has already been organized to oversee this initiative, and the fundraising team has already prospected the necessary grants to facilitate start-up. In-kind support from resources like the Fernbank Science Center and the Southeastern Horticultural Society (both of whom provide outdoor education PD and support to Georgia public schools) will guide teachers in integrating the garden into instruction.

Social Studies

The social studies curriculum will utilize Discovery Education techbooks, supplemented by primary source documents, excerpts, and other materials as selected by the teaching staff. Lessons will be largely based on real-life applications of social studies standards and concepts, with a culturally-relevant approach to investigative social studies established as the instructional paradigm. Beyond the generally accepted incarnation of cultural relevance, students will explore themes and standards relevant to their lives and the lives of people living with disabilities. Social studies standards in all grade levels provide a multitude of opportunities to explore current events, social trends, and cultural paradigms that all students, and especially those on the autism spectrum, will benefit from learning. Partnerships with organizations focused on self-advocacy will be used to bolster the curriculum (such as those with the New Normal Society and SENSE Theatre), providing students with means of examining concepts such as ability, disability, and identity through the lens of adults with autism and related disorders. Additionally, students will explore varying cultures by experiencing concepts through drama and pragmatic social experiences. These experiences will be enhanced through the use of cultural celebrations, including technology-based explorations of historical people, places, and events. Internships and service learning initiatives will also provide access to social studies standards in ways that are relevant and meaningful to the students, providing learning experiences that further understanding of alternate social and cultural norms. Social studies content and themes will be integrated with science, ELA, and mathematics. See Appendix I for the social studies curriculum.

Physical Education

Because research demonstrates that adequate movement will promote both physical development and academic progress,⁶ Tapestry will provide physical education for all students in all grade levels at least several times each week. Moreover, daily opportunities for fresh air breaks, recess, and movement will be offered. Outside of the PE courses high school students will take for credit toward graduation, all students will participate in PE coursework that enables them to not only

⁵ <http://world.edu/school-gardens-improve-health-academic-performance-reduce-discipline-problems>. Accessed February 18, 2013.

⁶ Jensen, E. (2005). *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*: 2nd Edition. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

participate in physical activity, but also build healthy habits. PE curriculum will be tied to CCGPS, occupational therapy and recreation therapy guidelines, and individual IEP goals, with all PE classes planned in collaboration with recreational/physical/occupational therapy professionals and/or advisors. As many children with intellectual disabilities also have deficits in developing motor skills and overall coordination, Tapestry will leverage its relationship with Brenau University to develop physical education programming that will facilitate development and encourage participation and investment of all Tapestry students. PE coursework will provide students with development of fine and gross motor skills, practical applications of healthy principles, understanding of athletics rules, and participation in team-building through sports and activities. A PE lesson may range in scope from a yoga practice to quiet the mind and build strength to a demonstration and practice in wearing a heavy backpack in a way that minimizes strain. Music, drama, art, and even other content standards may be incorporated into a PE lesson (examination of physical science principles in a weight-lifting lesson, math and music standards integrated into a lesson on partnered dancing). Health curriculum will be delivered through a combination of hands-on lessons and the Discovery Education techbooks health curriculum.

Theater/Dramatic Arts

Another unique aspect of the Tapestry model will be a focus on theater that provides each student with drama instruction annually. All middle school students will participate in weekly drama electives classes, with access to extracurricular theater programming in addition to the alignment of theater coursework to drama selections in ELA courses. High school students will have several theater electives to choose from and will be strongly encouraged to pursue at least one theater offering as part of their high school program. Through partnerships with the organizations listed below, Tapestry will provide drama curriculum to all students in all grade levels as part of afterschool programming, advisory curriculum, and school-wide presentations and workshops.

Significant research shows that drama and theater increase social skills, social awareness, confidence, and presentation skills for all children, and especially those children on the autism spectrum.⁷ Aspects of theater training have been integrated into effective occupational and recreation therapy protocols to provide students with safe spaces in which to build social and interpersonal skills. Drama has been demonstrated to have a significant effect on all students—in addition to the benefits afforded for students in the autism spectrum. A study by the American Alliance for Education and Theater found that “students involved in drama performance scored an average of 65.5 points higher on the verbal component and 35.5 points higher in the math component of the SAT.”⁸

SENSE Theatre/Vanderbilt University

SENSE Theatre was developed at the SENSE (Social-Emotional Neuroscience & Endocrinology) Lab at Vanderbilt University and is directed by Dr. Blythe A. Corbett, a pediatric neuropsychologist. Described as “a unique theatrical intervention research program designed to improve the social and emotional functioning of children with autism and related neurodevelopmental disorders,”⁹ the program uses theater instruction and exercises to build a

⁷ *Theater as Therapy for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, April 2011. Volume 41, Issue 4, pp 505-511.

⁸ <http://www.aate.com/?page=effects>. Accessed April 11, 2013.

⁹ www.sensetheater.com. Accessed February 9, 2013.

number of interpersonal and social skills in students in order to reduce the stress associated with these interactions and provide a fun, healthy means of exploring interaction. Through this relationship, SENSE Theatre faculty will provide curriculum, materials, and training to staff at Tapestry to deliver to students, as well as on-site performances and facilitation of workshops. Offerings from SENSE Theatre will take place both within the regular school day during the drama course, as well as in afterschool theater offerings. In addition, Tapestry will serve as a lab school, providing data and access for SENSE Theatre interns to implement strategies and tools developed in the program. See Appendix K for details on this partnership.

Alliance Theatre

The partnership with the Alliance Theatre will yield access to theatrical curricula, exercises, and materials that will be implemented in both elective drama coursework and afterschool theater offerings. Alliance will also support Tapestry staff and students in the development and performance of an annual theatrical production, which will provide all students with an opportunity to share what they have learned with families and the community at large. Another component to the partnership will be a summer drama camp that the Alliance will offer for incoming Tapestry students prior to opening, for the purpose of community-building. See Appendix K for details about this partnership.

Electives

As part of the interdisciplinary, student-centered approach to curriculum, elective offerings will be largely informed by student interest, using the annual administration of student interest inventories to determine elective coursework. In middle school grades, theater electives (supported through partnerships with SENSE Theatre and the Alliance Theatre) will be supplemented by music, arts, and other elective coursework led by general education teachers. Electives could range from an interdisciplinary look at a particular historical period that includes music and art, to a robotics course. At the high school level, Tapestry will retain teachers to lead the electives required for graduation using student interest inventories to determine course offerings. Partnerships continue to be developed that will supplement elective offerings in addition to elective staff that are currently part of the projected staffing model.

Advisory

In addition to the academic curricula described above, students in all grades at Tapestry will also be a part of an advisory group. Each teacher at the school will also play the role of an advisor to a small group of approximately 10 students in order to help meet the developmental and academic needs of adolescent students. These students may be assigned to mixed-age groups in order to accommodate developmental levels, interests, and personalities. Advisory will meet daily, and once a month there will be an extended advisory time. The central purposes of the advisory program are

- a. To learn to understand and appreciate people who are different from us.
- b. To participate in activities that build group spirit and cohesiveness.
- c. To support and be supported by other advisory members in discussing and facing academic, social, and community issues.
- d. To work together on common projects which benefit others through service to the community.

- e. To participate cooperatively in projects and experiences that build understanding of concepts and goals.

Advisory content will vary by grade level and advisory, and the development of curricula for advisories will be supported by the school counselor and other support staff in response to students' needs and interests. *Conscious Discipline*, a robust program with materials that include a myriad of supports and topics that align with Tapestry's vision for advisory will be used as a cornerstone to the curriculum developed. *Conscious Discipline* teaches the skills needed to successfully manage life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, communicating effectively, acting with sensitivity to others' needs, and getting along with others. The program is excellent for students that need social skills help and behavioral support, such as students with sensory processing difficulties and ASD, as well as all adolescents as they develop their identity and navigate the challenges of social interaction with peers. Through research and practice, the program has been demonstrated to decrease impulsiveness and hyperactivity in even the most challenging children. In a 2001-2002 study, teachers and administrators in a Florida elementary school (K-6th) identified 12 students as the most difficult and assessed them using the Behavioral Assessment System for Children (BASC), which measures adaptive and disruptive behaviors in school. Teachers and administrators nominated students for this study based on the chronic number of discipline referrals and high amount of school resources being utilized for their behavior disruptions. With the implementation of *Conscious Discipline*, 75% of the students moved from an "atypical" to a "normal" range based on the pre- and post- assessment, achieving significant improvement in the following areas: hyperactivity, aggressiveness and impulsivity¹⁰. See Question 29 for more information about the Conscious Discipline program and resources and how they will be used to shape school culture and build student skills.

Advisory curriculum will include (but is not limited to) the following:

- Exploration of current events and popular culture
- Study skills and work habits
- Communication and active listening skills
- Coping strategies for anger, disappointment, and other challenging emotions
- Healthy lifestyles and choices
- Time management
- Independent living skills

A strength-building approach will also feature prominently in the advisory and throughout the school culture, giving teachers and students a chance at the start of each year to identify key skills and strengths to be built upon throughout the year. Students start each year by assessing their strengths and outlining an annual plan to build upon these strengths. As part of each student's portfolio, these strengths will be communicated to all staff so that redirection, guidance, and support are all organized around a critical lens of expounding on students' interests and areas of strength. This provides a "can do" approach to personal skills development and establishes a culture throughout the school of recognizing what is working and building on this—a more positive framing of the classroom and school-wide culture. Transition planning from middle school to high school and high school to postsecondary pursuits will also feature

¹⁰ Baily, B.A. (2001). *Conscious Discipline: 7 basic skills for brain smart classroom management*. Oviedo,FL: Loving Guidance

prominently in the advisory curriculum and will be facilitated through a partnership with Georgia State University (Appendix K).

In addition to providing explicit time for investigation and practice of skills that support academic achievement (outside of content area classes), advisories provide consistency, added support, and a more personalized school environment for all students. The decision to develop curriculum in response to student needs rather than adopt a canned curriculum is rooted in the belief that students will have a wide variety of needs and interests, regardless of their grade level, which will best be addressed through an instructional approach tailored to their needs.

4. Describe the instructional methods to be used, including any distinctive or unique instructional techniques or educational programs to be employed.

Coalition of Essential Schools Characteristics

One of the defining characteristics of Tapestry will be its participation in and alignment to the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES). CES provides coaching and support for cultures of continuous improvement and powerful professional learning communities to support and promote innovative and effective teaching. CES works with school districts and other entities to shape the policy conditions that support and promote schools characterized by personalization, democracy and equity, intellectual vitality and excellence, and graduates who experience success in all aspects of their lives: educational, professional, civic, and personal. As a part of the CES community, Tapestry staff will benefit from networking, workshops and other PD, tools and practices, and paradigms for program execution that have been demonstrated to engender effective schools in which stakeholders thrive academically and personally. Participating in the CES network avails models, tools, and shared resources to Tapestry that will facilitate implementation of the following academic and organizational characteristics:

Classroom Practices

- All Tapestry curricula and strategy rooted in culturally-responsive pedagogy
- Differentiated instruction in all classrooms
- Essential questions and inquiry as the foundation of all instruction
- Habits of mind and heart serve as the compass for curricular and instructional planning
- Interdisciplinary curriculum provides cross-curricular, authentic applications of standards
- Performance-based assessment
- Student-centered teaching and learning
- Multi-age flexible groupings in content classrooms

Organizational Practices

- Access, opportunity, and post-secondary preparation
- Family engagement and community partnerships
- Continuous school improvement
- Culture of fairness and trust
- Maximizing resources for equitable outcomes
- Professional learning community
- Transformational leadership

Tapestry will subscribe to the CES Common Principles, which provide a guiding philosophy for all programmatic elements and decisions at the school. The CES Common Principles describe the core beliefs and characteristics of Essential Schools and work in tandem with the CES Benchmarks, which describe resulting practices that successfully bolster student achievement.

The CES Common Principles that guide the program are

1. *Learning to use one's mind well*

Tapestry students will learn a variety of skills and strategies that can be leveraged in a myriad of situations.

2. *Less is more, depth over coverage*

The goals of Tapestry are that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge (as aligned to the CCGPS). The aphorism “less is more” dominates: curricular decisions are guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.

3. *Goals apply to all students*

Tapestry goals apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary.

4. *Personalization*

Teaching and learning is personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Small class and school size, in conjunction with supplemental staff from partners and volunteers afford consistent access to flexible groupings and small group instruction. Individual transition plans for each student guide strategies, goals and models of support. Curricular selection and lesson planning is driven by student interest inventories and may vary from year-to-year.

5. *Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach*

The prominent pedagogy will be coaching, provoking students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.

6. *Demonstration of mastery*

Teaching and learning is documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Students are provided intensive support and resources to assist them in meeting and exceeding standards. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific projects, are used to better understand the learner's strengths and needs and to plan for further assistance. Students have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community in student-led conferences, quarterly presentations, and school-wide exhibitions.

7. *A tone of decency and trust*

The tone of the school explicitly and self-consciously stresses values of unanxious expectation (“I won't threaten you, but I expect much of you”), of trust, and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity, and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school's particular students and teachers are emphasized. Parents are key collaborators and vital members of the school community.

8. *Commitment to the entire school*

The principal and teachers will perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and a sense of commitment to the entire school are expected of all staff, including those in non-instructional roles.

9. *Resources dedicated to teaching and learning*

As evidenced by the school budget (included as Appendix N), ultimate administrative and budget targets include student loads that promote personalization and substantial time for collective planning by teachers.

10. *Democracy and equity*

The school employs non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies, modeling democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. Tapestry honors diversity and builds on the strength of the community and all stakeholders, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.

Co-Teaching

In co-teaching, two or more teachers share responsibility for planning, instruction, and evaluation for a classroom of students. Although the model emerged from the special education field, it has been adopted more broadly into general education settings with great success¹¹. Recent research indicates that the use of the co-teaching method is positively associated with increased student achievement in the classroom for all students, making it a promising practice for meeting diverse student needs throughout the learning process.¹²

Training for co-teaching focuses on specific strategies designed to utilize both professionals in the classroom to maximize learning and on effective communication. Tapestry will use the Friend and Cook approach, outlined below.

- **One Teach, One Observe:** One teacher leads the lesson while the other watches for specific behaviors or teaching strategies.
- **One Teach, One Assist:** One teacher leads the lesson while the other assists with student questions, redirecting students, or management.
- **Station Teaching:** Instructional stations are created to break down a skill or concept into different parts. The students rotate from one to another throughout the lesson time. The co-teachers lead the stations. Generally, there is an independent station as well.
- **Parallel Teaching:** The co-teachers split the class in half and each teach a lesson at the same time. The lesson can either be the same or different content.
- **Supplemental Teaching:** One teacher leads the lesson or monitors classwork while the other works with a small group on enrichment or re-teaching.
- **Alternative or Differentiated Teaching:** The same lesson is taught by each co-teacher in a different way to accommodate different learning profiles.
- **Team Teaching:** One lesson is taught by both co-teachers, carefully planning for each person's participation in the lesson.

The keys to successful co-teaching are intentionally planning the use of strategies that are most useful to students in each lesson, and defining each teacher's role clearly, which will be a foundation of the collaborative planning model at Tapestry. Because each core content classroom will be co-led by two lead teachers (one of whom is likely to be a special education or EL

¹¹ Darragh, J., Picanco, K., Tully, D. & Henning, S. (2011). "When teachers collaborate, good things happen": Teacher candidate perceptions of the co-teach model for the student teaching internship. *Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges of Teacher Education Journal*, 8(1), 83-103.

¹² Bacharach, N., Heck, T., & Dahlberg, K. (2010). Changing the face of student teaching through co-teaching. *Action in Teacher Education*, 32(1), 3-14.

specialist) whose role in each lesson is driven by the model above, students will benefit from a strong, synergistic approach to instruction that maximizes the impact of two instructional leaders.

Individualized, Interest-Driven, Relationship-Based Models

In line with its core philosophy, Tapestry may adopt additional instructional models that focus on building skills through social-emotional and intellectual development, capitalizing on the student's natural emotions and interests. By starting with the student's interests, teachers can capture students' attention and improve connection. This approach is particularly effective for children on the autism spectrum who often have very narrow interests, but also increases engagement of all children. This approach will be supported through the Tapestry partnerships with UWG and KSU to maximize communication and the individualized curricula.

Tapestry teachers will spend a significant amount of time and energy to find the best ways to engage students in content that is focused on interesting, meaningful, and essential questions that intrigue students and pique their natural curiosity, allowing for multiple access points for different types of learners. To this end, the techbooks and other curricular materials listed herein will be used as a foundation for curriculum, but no class will be spent moving sequentially through a sequence of lessons as the plan for the year. Rather, teachers will work cooperatively to share resources, formulate interdisciplinary approaches, and provide high-interest models of instruction to facilitate student mastery of standards in a way that is engaging and provides experiences to bolster what is explored through the electronic medium and other available resources (such as the Chromebooks). See the sample module in Appendix H for more information about how curriculum will be aligned to student interests and organized into interdisciplinary units across content areas.

Reduction/Elimination of Sensory Processing Distractions

Critical to student success will be a modified school environment to accommodate sensory sensitivities (lighting, sound proofing, reduction of other stimuli). Individuals with sensory processing difficulties (SPD) may be unable to appropriately process information received through the senses; this is common in many children, but especially those with ASD and related challenges. Due to a better understanding of SPD, studies estimating anywhere from 1 in 20¹³ to 1 in 6 children have SPD and it is estimated that up to 85% of people on the autism spectrum have some degree of SPD.¹⁴ A person with SPD finds it difficult to process and act upon sensory information, which may be manifest in delayed and reduced motor function, behavioral problems, anxiety, and depression: all major obstacles for students who are expected to be learning at school¹⁵. Because Tapestry is focusing its programming and recruitment on students on the autism spectrum, it is anticipated that a large number of the students who will enroll at Tapestry will have some degree of SPD. Foundational elements of the Tapestry model are the modifications and strategies that will be implemented to reduce stimuli that could distract and negatively impact the learning of students with SPD. The partnership with Brenau University

¹³ Ahn, R. R., Miller, L. J., Milberger, S., & McIntosh, D. N. (2004). Prevalence of parents' perceptions of sensory processing disorders among kindergarten children. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 58, 287–293.

¹⁴ Sasson, Carter, and Briggs-Gowan. Sensory Over-Responsivity in Elementary School: Prevalence and Social-Emotional Correlates. *J Abnorm Child Psychol* (2009) 37:705–716

¹⁵ Rogers SJ, Ozonoff S. Annotation: what do we know about sensory dysfunction in autism? A critical review of the empirical evidence. *J Child Psychol Psychiatry*. 2005;46(12):1255–68

will provide staff with resources and progress monitoring to reduce sensory distractions, as described below.

Reduction in Visual Stimuli

Tapestry will make every effort to rely on natural lighting whenever possible, utilize non-fluorescent lighting when able, diminish the use of large boards for instructional purposes, offer instructional material in a manner to reduce the need to visually transition from one forum to another, and utilize visual cues when appropriate for the needs of the student. Additionally, clutter and storage in classrooms will be kept to a minimum, with non-essential classroom items kept behind doors, in closets, or in other storage areas (which is accommodated with all of the facilities options currently under consideration).

Reduction in Auditory Stimuli

The Tapestry model utilizes small group instruction and small class sizes with few daily transitions between modules to avoid excessive noise from movement and/or large groups that may distract from the learning environment. Tapestry will not use bells, whistles or other loud or amplified communication unless absolutely necessary.

Reduction in Olfactory Stimuli

Tapestry will utilize a catering service rather than prepare meals on the premises and will allow students to eat where they can avoid olfactory aversions as necessary. Tapestry will discourage the use of strong perfumes and other products that emit scent in order to minimize distractions.

Transitions

With all of the above sensory related issues, many children have difficulty with transitions. Tapestry will utilize visual schedules and prompting, design schedules to minimize student movement from class to class, and will generally encourage the use of consistent routines to maximize the learning environment. See Appendix S for a sample daily schedule.

Students with a range of sensory processing challenges will benefit from periodic, sensory breaks and exercises integrated into the daily schedule to provide opportunities for regulation. The PE teacher/Occupational Therapist (OT) provided by Brenau University will also work with school staff and leadership to ensure everyone is responsive to the needs of students with SPD and understands how to address behaviors that emerge as a result of over-stimulation. This partnership will also make OT supplies and equipment available that the school would otherwise have to purchase. Advisory OTs Jenene Craig and Carol Taylor will work with Tapestry to ensure building modifications and other necessary steps are appropriately taken to accommodate the needs of students with sensory sensitivities. Additionally, Brenau University faculty will provide formalized professional development, as well as ongoing training and support to staff in addressing student needs.

Because the staff will be trained and supported in ways to both proactively address and respond to these challenges, strategies must include reduction of stimuli in school structures and multi-sensory stimuli in a controlled instructional environment. Various equipment used by OTs to address SPD will be made available to meet the needs of the student body, including trampolines, crash pads, swings, body socks, and other sensory-related equipment as needed.

Designated space for sensory regulation is made available to students as needed and will be part of regularly scheduled breaks. A careful approach to building students' capacity through sensory integration in physical education (and occupational therapy sessions as called for in IEPs) will enable students to understand their own sensory needs, be able to appropriately express these needs, and seek the necessary input for self-regulation.

Sensory-Based Learning

Teachers will engage students in a variety of learning activities that use multiple senses, effectively accommodating various learning styles. By engaging the student in a variety of ways, different neurological pathways are stimulated and the student is exposed to material in ways that may best suit his/her learning style and enhance overall learning. Many studies have shown that memory and comprehension are increased when students are taught using methodology that capitalizes on exposure to multiple senses.¹⁶ OTs and support from Brenau University will provide additional training and support for all teachers on how to appropriately utilize sensory-based learning for students.

Multi-Age Groupings

At Tapestry, students will be grouped in classes by educational goals, learning styles, and progress monitoring data, rather than grade level (where appropriate). This gives students access to the information they need and a style that meets them where they are and builds on a solid foundation of skills, rather than rushing students through standards and compromising mastery and depth of understanding. This also enables students to pursue an offering of subjects that aligns with their own interests, rather than have those subjects prescribed to them by grade level. Because coursework aligns with standards in every grade and EOCTs are required at the high school level, students will be supported in order to reach standards in the designated grade level as part of a more fluid, holistic approach to instruction wherein differentiation is the foundation of instruction.

Modified Block Schedule

One way Tapestry will create authentic cross-curricular approaches to learning (and reduced transitions for students who have sensory integration challenges) is to use a modified block schedule (see Appendix S for this proposed daily schedule). The implementation of a modified block schedule will allow for 90-minute periods of instruction for all students. A modified block schedule reduces transitions for students and also provides faculty more time to provide authentic cross-curricular approaches. At the middle school level, this schedule will enable teachers of different content areas to co-teach interdisciplinary lessons and organize extended instructional blocks of like content areas on the same day. The anticipated configuration is that math/sciences will meet one day; ELA/humanities/social studies on the next, for a Monday/Wednesday, Tuesday/Thursday schedule. Friday features extended learning times (ELT) of more than two hours each for math/science and English/social studies, in order to enable teachers to use flexible groups. The ELT and flexible grouping approach also supports team teaching, more frequent check-ins with IEP students, and collaboration during the school day to address immediate needs.

¹⁶ Luriiia, A.R. (1987) *The Mind of a Mnemonist: A Little Book About aVast Memory*. Harvard University Press

At the high school level, students will also participate in a modified block schedule that organizes their coursework into extended segments that alternate in an A/B schedule. This provides for an instructional block with more time and fewer transitions in the school day, while providing students a full course load. Rather than see six to nine teachers each day, students see only three teachers each day and in longer classes, which also enables planning to be organized into investigations and practical applications.

Block scheduling has been demonstrated effective for all students in scores of studies, providing benefits such as increased outcomes on standardized assessments and benchmarks that measure standards mastery¹⁷, increased number of credits earned for high school students (and fewer incidents of credit recovery)¹⁸, reduced administrative time and increased instructional time for teachers¹⁹, and fewer incidents of disciplinary infractions.²⁰ A complete study of the impact of block scheduling on student outcomes is outlined in a 10-year longitudinal study of Muscogee County schools.²¹

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) implements a flexible, responsive curriculum and offers options for how information is presented, how students respond or demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and how students are engaged in learning. UDL helps address learner variability by suggesting flexible goals, methods, materials, and assessments that empower educators to meet these varied needs. Through a partnership with the Department of Inclusive Education at Kennesaw State University (Appendix K), Tapestry teachers will be trained in UDL and how to implement it in the classroom, as well as ongoing support with planning using a UDL approach.

Systematic Repeated Exposure and Integration of Content

An important element of the instructional planning process will be inclusion of previously taught materials into subsequent lessons. This repeated exposure of content allows students to revisit standards throughout the year and/or at different grade levels, each time at a higher level of difficulty and in greater depth. Progressively teaching the same standard while adjusting the content, complexity, and modality to account for student schemata and developmental levels ensures access to the curriculum and a deeper understanding of the content.

Thinking Maps

Another strategy that will support the needs of all learners at Tapestry, with special focus on students with ASD and related learning challenges, is the use of thinking maps across content areas. Thinking Maps is a template for eight visual patterns, each based on a fundamental thought process. Each thinking map is designed to answer guiding questions that are related to a specific thought process and enable students to organize and process new information and concepts. All teachers will be trained and supported to use thinking maps in a variety of ways and in all content areas with the support of select advisory council members and partners.

¹⁷ Evans, W., Tokarczyk, J., Rice, S., & McCray, A. (2002). *Block scheduling: An evaluation of outcomes and impact*. The Clearing House, 75, 319–323.

¹⁸ LAB. (1998). *Block scheduling: Innovations with time*. Providence, RI: The Education Alliance at Brown University.

¹⁹ Canady, Canady, R. L., & Rettig, M. D. (1995). *Block scheduling: A catalyst for change in high schools*. Princeton, NJ: Eye on Education.

²⁰ Evans, W., Tokarczyk, J., Rice, S., & McCray, A. (2002). *Block scheduling: An evaluation of outcomes and impact*. The Clearing House, 75, 319–323.

²¹ Reames, Ellen H. *Block Scheduling Effectiveness: A 10-Year Longitudinal Study of One Georgia School System's Test Score Indicators*. <http://coefaculty.valdosta.edu/lshmert/gera/volume-7/Block%20Scheduling%20formatted.pdf>.

Thinking maps will be integrated across the curriculum with a goal of fostering cognitive development and content learning across disciplines by all students.

Metacognition

A metacognitive approach to learning provides a means for students to understand their thinking and learning, as well as identify and practice the specific cognitive skills needed in order to approach and complete a task. Metacognition includes many of the executive processes that are important to success in learning, including planning how to approach a task and the various activities involved in organizing and executing it. A metacognitive approach will be integrated into lessons, teaching students how to “talk through their thinking” so they can learn to apply thinking patterns to new situations. Through academic talk about students’ metacognitive processes as a part of each lesson (including journaling, content area logs, metacognitive sections in templates, and student-led problem-solving), students will learn how to think about their thinking and apply successful patterns of problem-solving to similar situations.

Understanding by Design

“To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you’re going so that you better understand where you are now so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.” (Covey, 1994) The Backward Design model of planning will be codified across staff norms as staff will spend each summer professional development/work session beginning with identifying educational outcomes, evidence to demonstrate the outcomes have been achieved, and then backward-mapping accordingly to effect these outcomes. As a necessary component of this approach, staff will continually reconvene to cooperatively revisit targets, progress toward those targets, and plan how to bridge gaps and engender specific student masteries. Teachers will meet in grade level and/or content area teams to use the UbD framework of backward planning that connects with students’ interests, baseline skills, and schemata. Moreover, all staff will be provided with templates and tools to organize lessons and assessments in relation to the end toward which they are working. These “ends” are likely to be more than just content area standards; staff will identify an array of skills and competencies students will need, from communication skills to self-regulation (largely dictated by individualized student transition plans), and integrate these goals into the lessons that are planned accordingly.

Transition Planning

All students will participate in the crafting of a transition plan that will help inform their support and educational goals throughout their educational career at Tapestry and beyond. Through the partnership with the Center for Leadership and Disability at GSU (Appendix K), school staff will receive support, training, and templates for effective transition planning. Moreover, faculty from the center will be available to help establish and monitor progress toward the realization of these plans, providing staff and students with another layer of support. Transition plans will leverage the skills students possess and build on their interests, reorganizing unique skills, abilities, and passions into further study and employment. At Tapestry, all students will participate in transition planning, ensuring every student benefits from a one-on-one, supportive approach that provides each student with the blueprint necessary to be successful through each stage of their educational career. Each student’s transition plan will relate directly to the student’s post-

secondary outcome goals and strengths. The course of study should be meaningful to the student's future and motivate the student to reach successful post-secondary outcomes.

Community-Based Instruction

Community-Based Instruction (CBI) is a critical component of special education programs for students with a variety of disabilities, but which benefits all students, including those without disabilities. CBI has been identified as an effective approach for teaching functional life-skills to students who exhibit a wide variety of learning styles. Instruction in the community settings increases the generalization of skills learned in the classroom setting and can increase the rate of acquisition of new skills through applied practice, allowing students more opportunities to interact with members of the community. The home and surrounding community, including shopping centers, convenience and grocery stores, public libraries, and post offices, take on importance as authentic instructional settings. For older students, the community may also include vocational settings and will culminate with the internship in which every student will participate. For all students, this approach ensures graduates have the character, confidence, and both socio-emotional and interpersonal skills necessary to leverage their education as successful adults and community members.

Internships

As a critical component of CBI, each high school student will participate in an experiential learning module that aligns with his/her individualized transition plan in the form of an internship. The myriad partners and supporters, which will continue to grow through the operation of the school, will be leveraged to provide internship opportunities in a vast array of fields for Tapestry students. The internship experience, which will be supervised by the advisory teacher, will provide students with a hands-on means of practicing standards and skills, as well as invaluable experience working in the community.

5. Describe the anticipated teacher-to-student ratio and the rationale for maintaining this ratio. See Class Size Rule 160-5-1-.08 for compliance.

The maximum student-teacher ratio in core content classes is currently 8:1, with 16 students in each class led by a co-teaching team. The student-teacher ratio afforded by the proposed budget and staffing model has been established as the base and will be the largest student-teacher ratio for core content classes the school will permit. Should additional revenue become available (as a result of philanthropy, increased public revenue, or allocations for students with special needs), the school may first invest this money to increase the number of special education teaching staff secured (and utilized in the co-teaching model), to further reduce the student-teacher ratio. Additionally, the myriad of partnerships (Appendix K) already secured and still in development will further reduce this ratio. With OT, SLP, and both special and general education teacher-interns available through select partnerships, the student-teacher ratio will be much lower than that afforded on the current conservative budget assumptions.

Small class sizes and an overall small school size are aligned to the CES common principles, as well as best practices for students who benefit from a highly-supportive classroom environment, including those with ASD. By keeping class sizes small, staff can build personalized, high-touch relationships with students to ensure they have the support needed to succeed in an inclusion

classroom. This individualization not only promotes a solid, supportive culture that is built on relationships, but also provides both intervention and enrichment for students at a myriad of skill levels and with diverse learning needs.

6. Describe how the charter school will meet the needs of students identified as gifted and talented.

The same best practices, including pedagogical and organizational elements that will serve the needs of students with special needs (especially those on the autism spectrum) and all students at Tapestry, will support gifted students. Both the delivery model described herein and Discovery Ed materials provide for significant differentiation, making the school an ideal fit for gifted students as well. Moreover, many students with ASD are twice exceptional: they require support in some subject areas but have been identified as gifted in others. Therefore, the building of a school model tailored to the needs of students on the autism spectrum predicates a model that will also serve students who are gifted. Individualized transition plans for each student and the high level of differentiation provided through the core school model provide opportunity for each student to receive enrichment appropriate for gifted students as a component of the gifted program.

Referral, Assessment, and Determination

Tapestry will adhere to the rules and regulations established by the Georgia DOE for the identification of gifted students and utilize the same processes and assessment measures (including CogAT and ITBS) in use in DCSD. The records of any student who enters Tapestry with a gifted designation will be immediately turned over to a designated gifted coordinator for the school. This person is a certified gifted instructor who, in addition to his/her teaching and/or administrative responsibilities, is responsible for overseeing the administration of the gifted program, ensuring compliance to all applicable guidelines and regulations, and leading the referral and determination process. A student transferring to Tapestry who meets eligibility criteria for gifted education services from within the state will be eligible for services at Tapestry after verification of records is complete. A student who transfers to Tapestry from another state and was determined gifted eligible in that state will be required to meet Georgia criteria before services in gifted education.

Referrals for the gifted assessment may be made by teachers or parents, or as a result of student performance on myriad assessment measures as directed by DCSD and GADOE guidelines for referral. A referral is reviewed by the Gifted Eligibility Committee, and pending written parent permission, available evidence will be used in concert with assessment measures at the school to evaluate the student in the four areas dictated by state guidance and regulations. Once a student has been assessed in the four areas dictated by the state and meets eligibility in three of the four areas, s/he will begin services; any student who does not meet eligibility may be retested again later in the same year or in a subsequent year should evidence continue to suggest his/her eligibility for services.

Services

Tapestry plans to offer a Collaboration model of gifted services to eligible students, which will enable gifted-endorsed teachers to work with students one-on-one and/or in small groups and/or

to collaboratively plan enrichment instruction during the regular content class period. Flexible grouping is afforded by a co-teaching model in each classroom, providing gifted curriculum that enriches and builds on the regular instruction curriculum, as deemed appropriate by the gifted coordinator and instructional staff, in tandem with the general education curriculum and model of instruction. Tapestry will use the state guidelines as a plan for staffing gifted programming and minimum for planning the number of instructional minutes for eligible students afforded weekly with a certified gifted teacher.

7. Describe any extracurricular or other auxiliary educational activities the charter school may offer, including any partnerships between the charter school and the local school system or other community agency (ies) regarding charter school students utilizing extracurricular activities at the local school that the student would otherwise attend, or at any other community location.

Through the robust partnerships already formed (Appendix K) and the ongoing relationship-building at the forefront of founders' agendas, Tapestry will offer extracurricular programming after school daily for all interested students in addition to electives held during the school day. As outlined in Question 3, theater will be an important component of these extracurricular offerings, with several partners (including the Alliance Theatre and SENSE Theatre) providing curriculum, materials, and even staff to run programs. Other extracurricular offerings will include the following:

- **Running/track team** and practice through a partnership with Running Mates, a non-profit dedicated to providing positive sports team experience and a foundation for physical fitness for children who have difficulty with social interaction, such as high functioning autism spectrum disorders and attention-deficit-hyperactivity disorder.
- **Focus groups/student studies** through The New Normal Society, an organization dedicated to helping children and adults understand autism. Through activities and learning sessions, students with autism learn about self-advocacy, and neurotypical peers learn how individuals with autism experience their environment and process sensory information differently. The goal of this program is to build empathy and acceptance of those with differences and help typically developing peers learn to communicate and develop meaningful friendships with individuals on the autism spectrum.
- **Camp WILLD** will be offered after school and in the summer through a partnership with the University of West Georgia. This enrichment program for language, literacy, and writing promotes academic success and social interaction through planning, organization, writing, and technology. All students are included in the program.
- **Theater/drama** offerings extend beyond the robust electives offered for all grades, and are supported as after-school and summer programming as well. Through partnerships with two or more entities that provide inclusive performing-arts programming for school-aged children students will have a myriad of ways of participating in theater and preparing for frequent performances.

Extracurricular offerings will be planned in response to student/family needs and interests, as well as partnership availability. The outreach and relationship-building that has been an ongoing focus for founders will provide access to a plethora of opportunities for students and their families. All extracurricular programming planned at present will be provided through the partnerships listed herein and any fees associated will be determined by those partners and

assessed directly by them, rather than through the school program; therefore, participation will be voluntarily.

8. If this is a charter high school, describe how the charter high school will determine that a student has satisfied the requirements for high school graduation as defined in SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.47.

In alignment with the Healthy People 2020 goal to increase the percentage of students served under IDEA who graduate with a regular diploma²², Tapestry is committed to ensuring every student completes the state’s rigorous requirements to earn a diploma. Based on current graduation data, it is anticipated that some students who choose Tapestry (especially those with ASD) may require more than four years to meet these requirements. Students will be supported to authentically and completely meet the requirements for a diploma, even if it takes longer than four years. Because mastery of standards and preparation to transition successfully to postsecondary careers and education are critical to the mission of Tapestry, additional staff is planned for a “12+” year (in year six) for those students who require additional time. In this year, staff will provide more individualized management to support all students reaching completion of graduation requirements.

Each student will be required to satisfactorily complete the graduation requirements for the state of Georgia, which include completing the credits outlined in the table below and passing the Georgia High School Writing Test. Rather than require additional credits for graduation from Tapestry, staff is committed to students completing the requirements with fidelity and a high degree of mastery. Students are awarded credit for any course in which they earn a passing average (65% or higher) based on the teacher’s grading guidelines. Those courses that align with an EOCT will include the score of the EOCT as a portion of the overall grade, making the score on the assessment a component of the considerations for promotion.

Advisory teachers will work with the guidance/transition counselor and all other instructional and support staff to ensure that all students are on-track to complete the requirements for graduation. Because it is anticipated that some students will have modified graduation requirements in accordance with their IEPs, special education teachers will work closely with the counselor and advisor to ensure all graduation requirements for all students have been met.

Georgia Graduation Requirements	
English/Language Arts	4
Math	4
Science	4
Social Studies	3
Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE), and/or Modern Language/Latin, and/or Fine Arts	3
Health & Physical Education	1

²² <<http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/objectiveslist.aspx?topicId=9?>>

Electives (4 units)	4
TOTAL UNITS	23

Advisory teachers will communicate consistently with families about progress toward requirement completion and all families participate in a conference with the counselor before the start of students’ junior and senior years to review their cumulative records and compare them against graduation requirements. Student cumulative files will be maintained by the counselor and reviewed formally by the advisory teacher before promotion annually in order to create an additional level of accountability.

9. Attach a copy of the curriculum aligned with Georgia Performance Standards and align with the Quality Core Curriculum where applicable. Please note that the State of Georgia will be participating in the National Common Core Standards for curriculum and all charters are required to be in compliance with these standards.

As described in Question 3 above, Tapestry will not adopt a canned program, but will use a myriad of materials, mostly from streaming services and software through electronic devices, aligned to the CCGPS and driven by student interest. A summary of the curriculum that is currently available from Discovery Ed (with whom Tapestry will contract for a multitude of materials via techbooks) is included in Appendix J. A sample educational module is found in Appendix H. See Appendix I for the complete curriculum for each core content area in each grade.

IV. State and Federally Mandated Services

10. For students with disabilities, describe how the school will provide state and federally mandated service and comply with all special education laws, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Tapestry is committed to providing a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and servicing all special needs students for whom the school is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). A broad spectrum of special education services and coordination with DCSD will ensure compliance with all applicable rules, regulations, and laws. Accordingly, Tapestry will follow all DCSD and Georgia guidelines regulating the formation of an SST, 504 Team, and IEP processing and review. A certified special education teacher will be retained at each grade level as a co-teacher to manage delivery of IEP-mandated services, oversee IDEA compliance, and provide support to students who have been identified as eligible for special education services (or who qualify for early intervention services). One special education teacher will serve as the special education coordinator for the school, and that professional will participate in DCSD and GADOE trainings and communications to further ensure compliance. Because the school model has been designed with the needs of students who have ASD (and likely IEPs) in mind, the school may modify staffing to provide support services as student needs dictate. Tapestry is committed to developing a strong partnership with DCSD in order to leverage the expertise and resources of DCSD’s special education staff to complement that of Tapestry.

Special Education Services Model

All elements of the school, from the number of instructional minutes to the curriculum used to support literacy, have been made in order to provide FAPE. Modifications to the learning environment to accommodate sensory-processing challenges, a special education-certified co-teacher in the classroom, reduced class sizes, small group instruction, robust support for all staff in meeting the needs of special education students, progress monitoring in all content areas, access to diverse curricular materials through Discovery Ed that are aligned to the CCGPS and provide the same standards in a myriad of structures and modalities, and a positive school culture that promotes tolerance and respect for differences are all part of the core model that affords all Tapestry students a FAPE. Unlike other schools that offer special education as a modified component of their regular instruction program, the general education program at Tapestry is based on best practices for special education students who can be served in an inclusion model.

Students with Autism (and Related Challenges)

Although Tapestry will meet the needs of all students with IEPs for whom the school is the LRE, the model has been intentionally designed with the needs of students who have ASD and related diagnoses in mind. As a result, it is anticipated that a large percentage of the enrolled population of Tapestry will have an IEP and associated learning needs that are consistent with autism and related sensory processing disorders. Some of the elements of the school model that will best accommodate students with special needs, and especially those students with ASD include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Environmental modifications to reduce sensory-processing-related challenges
- Co-teaching model that includes a special education teacher in each core content classroom
- Minimization of transitions throughout the day
- “Fresh air breaks”/scheduled release time in each academic period to provide students with the opportunity for sensory regulation
- Curriculum and instructional strategies that align to common learning styles of students on the autism spectrum
- Communication and social thinking embedded in the curriculum
- Flexible grouping in academic and enrichment classes that aligns both to academic and developmental/psycho-social/emotional needs
- Theater/drama instruction for all students
- Low student-teacher ratios

Identification of Eligible Students

Tapestry will provide a complete continuum of special education services to students who qualify starting with identification of eligibility. Cumulative files and applicable records of all students will be requested from the prior school upon enrollment, and these records will be reviewed upon receipt to identify students who are eligible for services and immediately plan for accommodation of their IEP (and/or immediately begin services if the student is enrolled after the start of the school year). The special education teacher in the student’s classroom will collect additional information from parents/guardians regarding special education services and interventions their child has received at the schools in which s/he was enrolled before Tapestry and/or from outside providers to supplement information in the records.

The small structure of the school and leadership of a special education teacher in every core content classroom will enable staff to quickly identify students who do not have IEPs but may be eligible for services in order to begin the Student Support Team (SST) process as required by the state. In addition, ongoing assessments in each class (as described in Question 19) provide robust data on student performance and growth in order to identify students who may need additional support. Students who are not meeting academic, behavioral, and/or other expectations will be identified based on assessment data, in-class performance, and other observations or data points. A classroom teacher will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss the student's performance and outline strategies that will be utilized in the classroom to support the student. This begins the Response to Intervention (RTI) process (see Question 13 for more information about this process). A student moves through the RTI process before the SST process is initiated. If the student's performance in target areas still does not meet expectations with supports in place, the SST process will be formally initiated. The SST is comprised of the principal, both classroom teachers (which includes a special education teacher as a result of the co-teaching model), counselor, and other staff as deemed necessary. A school psychologist or other licensed professional who will participate in the student's evaluation may also participate in this initial meeting, as may the parents and student.

Requests for service for the student from the SST may include curriculum modification, learning style assessment, positive behavioral supports, achievement evaluation, home-school communication, or study skill assistance. Requests for special education services may also be made. Prior to consideration for special education referral, non-special education options and interventions will be used, documented, described, and discussed at the special education placement meeting. The SST process is comprised of the following six steps: 1) Identification of needs; 2) Evaluation (if necessary); 3) Educational plan; 4) Implementation; 5) Follow-up and support; and 6) Continuous monitoring and evaluation.

If the prescribed interventions prove to be unsuccessful and/or the SST determines that an evaluation should take place, the team will convene again with the student's parent or guardian. At this meeting, the special education coordinator will secure written consent for psychological and academic evaluations to determine if the child is eligible for special education services. Expertise and evaluation from DCSD providers will be sought as a first-choice, with third-party providers enlisted for this testing should DCSD providers be unavailable. Pending the results of the tests, an eligibility meeting will occur with the parent or guardian, the special education coordinator, the special education classroom teacher, and other identified staff members and evaluators as pertinent. If the parents choose, the student may also attend. The objective of the meeting will be to determine whether or not the student will receive special education services under an IEP and to construct an IEP if the student is eligible. Services aligned to the IEP will begin immediately, with provisions made by school site staff as dictated by the IEP. For services required by the IEP that will be provided by therapists and experts not maintained on-staff, Tapestry will first seek support from the expertise of DCSD staff consistent with the practice of other charter schools in the district.

Ongoing Progress Monitoring of Special Needs Students

Special education staff will use the student information system and/or software/platform (likely Edmodo) to track student data, along with a progress monitoring tool (likely AimsWEB) that

provides testing and data analysis in order to closely monitor student progress on assessments. This allows the special education staff to target the standards and goals with which each student struggles, as well as celebrate measureable success and improvement. At the end of each year, academic progress is evaluated and used to inform revisions to the IEP and other instructional plans for individual students. Progress against IEP goals and objectives, as well as a regular report card, will be documented and reported to the special education coordinator, appropriate staff, and parents. Progress monitoring at regular intervals not only informs programs and interventions, but modifications to a student's IEP as appropriate.

The principal will disaggregate annual data for students with special needs to compare their progress against that of their peers without IEPs to drive revisions to programming as needed.

Data Maintenance

As required by IDEA, the school collects and maintains the following information on students with disabilities:

- The count of all school-age students with disabilities being provided special education services by age, grade, category of disability and the number of students with disabilities and with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
- The number of students provided with test modifications and which types and the number of students assessed on the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA)
- The settings in which students with disabilities receive their services, specifically the portion of the school day they receive services with non-disabled peers including time away from the regular classroom
- The number of students with disabilities suspended "in-school" and out of school, organized by disability and length of suspensions
- The basis of exit of students with disabilities from Tapestry (*e.g.*, attainment of diploma and type, declassified, moved, etc.).

Compliance and Assurances

Tapestry will comply with all special education laws and regulations, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the IDEA. The Tapestry special education coordinator, principal, and all staff will work closely with DCSD to provide robust support to students who qualify for services. An annual analysis of data, disaggregated by subgroup, will be conducted by the special education coordinator to measure the growth and progress of students with IEPs against those without. Programmatic modifications may be made according to this data. See the "DeKalb County Required Statements" at the end of this application for assurances regarding special education services and procedures.

Assurances

Tapestry will

- Establish a Student Support Team (SST) in accordance with state guidelines and local school board policies and use DCSD forms for SST.
- Establish a Section 504 team in accordance with state guidelines and local school board policies and use DCSD forms for Section 504.
- Handle all discipline issues regarding Section 504 students in accordance with federal

regulations, state guidelines, and local school board policies including the Code of Student Conduct.

- Participate in workshops, in-service and/or trainings offered by DCSD for persons serving as SST/Section 504 chairpersons and Exceptional Children staff.
- Comply with Section 504 by providing the appropriate accommodations and equipment.
- Immediately notify the DCSD Director of Charter Schools upon receipt of a complaint made by a parent/guardian or student concerning Section 504 and/or Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, furnish a copy of such complaint and cooperate fully in the investigation, defense and resolution of such complaint.
- Hire or contract certified special education teachers to provide services to eligible students.

DeKalb County Schools will

- Provide professional development training for the SST.
- Provide professional development training for the Section 504 team.
- Provide technical/consultative assistance to charter schools requested by the charter school.
- Conduct Compliance Reviews of all charter schools to ensure that students with disabilities are provided a free appropriate public education.
- Approve and assign all administrative student placements for students that the district determines cannot be served appropriately in their charter schools through the Office of Student Assignment.

11. For English Language Learners, describe how the charter school will provide state and federally mandated services.

According to Sandra Nuñez, Director of DeKalb County School's EL Studies and Gifted Programs, there are 10,532 English Learners (ELs), 18,652 Primary Home Language Other Than English Students (PHLOTES), and 143 different languages spoken in DeKalb County. With a positive school culture that promotes inclusion and respect for differences, Tapestry will be an ideal educational setting for students from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, the small class sizes, low student-teacher ratios, and individualized approach to instruction and curriculum will provide ELs with the opportunities to practice their emerging language with the support needed to develop English skills and access the curriculum side-by-side with their native English-speaking peers. Tapestry shall comply with all applicable laws including Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended) and the federal Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974. Parents with LEP will receive communication from Tapestry in their native language to the extent practicable.

Tapestry will utilize an English immersion model for students with LEP, wherein they will receive the same academic content as native English speakers. All instruction will be in English, with the level of English used for instruction—both oral and written—modified appropriately for each EL. Through the co-teaching model that is core to Tapestry, every classroom will have two teachers, at least one of whom will provide sheltered content and supports to enable students with LEP to get the scaffolding they need to access the curriculum, regardless of their English proficiency. As appropriate, students with LEP may participate in small group instruction or “centers” within the immersion classroom to provide additional support.

Students who enter Tapestry with LEP will not be excluded from curricular and extracurricular activities based on an inability to speak and understand the English language. ELs will not be assigned to special education or remediation because of their lack of proficiency in English; moreover, ELs will be eligible to participate in all programs on the same basis that they are offered to other students. Faculty and staff at Tapestry will participate in training through the partnership with the University of West Georgia, which will help them better classify potential student deficits as language or learned based.

Tapestry programming for ELs will be further supported by board and advisory council members who are experienced ESOL educators (see Appendices E and G for the members with relevant expertise). These experts will support and design professional development, securing appropriate staff, developing and securing curricular resources, as well as evaluate the impact of the EL programming on student outcomes. Furthermore, TPSC will be supported by an ESOL consultant as a component of the partnership with the University of West Georgia (Appendix K).

Identification of Students with LEP

Tapestry will use the GDOE's process for identifying ELs. This process includes the following:

- a. A Home Language Survey (HLS) used to screen new enrollees for potential LEP will be conducted at the time of enrollment.
- b. If the HLS determines that a language other than English is the student's home language, the student's first-learned language, and/or the student's primary language, a designated TPSC staff member will then coordinate with a qualified speaker of the student's home language in order to conduct an informal interview in the student's native language and English. The interview will be conducted within 15 school days of the HLS.
- c. If the HLS determines that a language other than English is the student's home language, the student's first-learned language, and/or the student's primary language, Tapestry will administer the *W-APT* no more than once to determine if a student has LEP. The state's eligibility score will be utilized to determine eligibility for services. The *W-APT* will be conducted within 15 school days of the HLS.

Parent Notification and Right to Waive ESOL Services

If a student is determined to need ESOL services, parents will be notified in writing within 30 days of the start of the school year for continuing ELs, or within two weeks from the date of identification for new ELs. Parents will also receive notification of their right to waive ESOL services for their child.

Program Staffing

At least one teacher or administrator from the school will maintain an ESOL teaching endorsement or certificate and be designated as the ESOL coordinator. S/he will oversee the administration and scoring of the assessments, as well as participate in WIDA Consortium Professional Development opportunities as available. S/he will also deliver and/or oversee the delivery of the ESOL program at Tapestry. In addition, pro bono support staff will be provided through a partnership with the University of West Georgia, adding additional ESOL-trained instructional staff to co-teach and provide small group interventions. All teachers with LEP students will receive professional development on communicating with students designated as ELs and instructional strategies and best practices to facilitate content access for ELs. Procedures for detecting whether a student has English language deficiencies will be part of the professional

development plan for all instructional staff. Parents of ELs will be kept abreast of their child's progress in English language acquisition, in the language that the parents best understand, to the extent practicable.

Exit Criteria/Growth Assessment

Tapestry will administer the *ACCESS for ELLs* for all ELs annually to determine current levels of English language development, how much their language proficiency has grown, and if they are eligible to be exited from the program. If an LEP student fails to meet academic and English development goals, the student's instructional program will be reviewed, and appropriate modifications will be implemented. Any student classified and receiving educational services as an EL who tests out of the program will be carefully monitored by the program coordinator for a two-year period following his/her exit to ensure that growth and performance are meeting goals.

Accountability and Evaluation of the ESOL Program

The program coordinator will review disaggregated performance data of LEP students to compare against the performance and growth of native English-speaking peers. Likewise, students will be tracked longitudinally to ensure their growth is comparable: that they are able to master content while receiving programmatic support and acquiring English. The program will be revised in accordance with the data as appropriate.

12. Describe how the charter school will provide supplemental educational services in required cases pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.03.

Tapestry will provide SES (or related services as described in revised guidelines from the state related to the NCLB waiver), as required by the State Board of Education (SBOE) Rule 160-4-5-.03 and 160-4-5-.01 and No Child Left Behind. If required, Tapestry will contract with an approved SES vendor to provide additional support services and/or designate transportation and extended instructional time to meet requirements set forth by the SBOE and any/all applicable federal guidelines.

13. Describe how the charter school will provide remediation in required cases pursuant to SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

For any and all students who are unable to meet academic and/or behavioral standards, Tapestry will implement the RTI pyramid approach to support, which will be administered by school site staff with guidance from university partners as outlined in Appendix K.

Tier 1 will be considered the standards-based classroom where differentiated instruction will be implemented. The co-teaching model, flexible groupings within the classroom, and robust access to intensive support throughout the school day will all support the Tier I model of RTI, providing struggling students with myriad supports and interventions as part of the regular instruction model. Because the Tapestry model is rooted in providing inclusion for students with a range of abilities, the school is uniquely positioned to make Tier I services more intensive and responsive than at traditional schools. Progress monitoring tools, such as AIMSweb, will be used to track progress. Tier 2 of the RTI approach at Tapestry will be needs-based learning. In addition to Tier

1 instruction, students who are identified as needing additional support (based on the results of the universal screener and other ongoing assessment measures) will be provided additional intervention at least 1-2 times a week for 30 minutes. For students who are identified as not making sufficient progress in Tier 2 instruction, Tier 3 will be SST-driven support. Interventions will increase to 3-4 times a week and progress will be monitored approximately every 2 weeks. The SST process, as outlined above, will be initiated to formally investigate and document the student's response to interventions.

Tier 4 will be specially-designed learning. Students for whom Tier 3 is not proving effective will participate in instruction focused on specially-designed curricular materials to address students' unique needs. Mastery monitoring of the skills on which the students are working will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the curricular materials. Time embedded in the schedule for student data reviews and collaborative planning every week and in 10 pupil-free days throughout the year provides built-in time for teachers to review data to drive interventions appropriately.

Remedial Education Program

Tapestry will provide a Remedial Education Program (REP) for those students who meet requirements as stated in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-154 and in the *Georgia Department of Education Remedial Education Program Guidelines*. Tapestry will comply with all reporting requirements, including the percentage of students who passed state-mandated assessments. The REP will utilize the co-teacher model and other structures in place to provide differentiation, which may be manifest in flexible groupings to focus on specific concepts and/or standards, supplementary materials, and/or other strategies explicitly implemented to support those students who will benefit from the REP. A lead teacher will be designated as the REP coordinator to determine student eligibility, oversee delivery of services and the development and organization of materials, and review assessment data to make programmatic revisions as necessary.

V. Performance Goals and Objectives

14. Please list and describe in detail the specific academic performance-based goals and measurable objectives for the charter school, which at a minimum must include goals and objectives that are related to state and Federal assessment standards, measurable on an annual basis, attainable, and reflect the mission set forth in the petition. The petition must demonstrate that the performance based goals and objectives will result in continuous improvement in student achievement and will comply with the Single Statewide Accountability System. Failure to meet specific performance based goals and measurable objectives may result in charter termination.

The goals outlined below are in the public interest, will result in improvement of student achievement, and will comply with the Single Statewide Accountability System in accordance with OGCA §20-2-2063. The following goals serve the public interest by accurately assessing and tracking students' growth from year to year and in comparison to peer groups. Assessment of student achievement will involve a full range of measures to ensure the most comprehensive understanding of student progress. Quantitative data from standardized tests and results of performance-based assessment tools will inform Tapestry's comprehensive approach to measuring student performance.

Academic Goals

Goal 1: Tapestry will perform above a level that would cause the school to be designated for the Priority Schools, Focus Schools, or Alert Schools lists by meeting and exceeding College and Career Readiness Performance Index and State Performance Targets as defined by Georgia state requirements and the Georgia waiver of NCLB, subject to any amendment, waiver, or reauthorization thereof. Students will demonstrate proficiency and improvement over prior year's performance.

- **Measure 1:** Tapestry will meet or exceed all State Performance Targets and all other state-wide accountability requirements as established by the SBOE for all content areas of the CRCT, EOCT, and graduation rate.
- **Measure 2:** During each year of the charter term, the percentage of students who meet or exceed standards on each content area of the CRCT will meet or exceed the state or local district average of the same subgroups, whichever is higher, by at least 3% in all subjects at all grade levels.
- **Measure 3:** During each year of the charter term that Tapestry serves high school students (years 2-5), the percentage of students who score in the meets or exceeds category on the EOCT in all subjects will meet or exceed the local district or state averages of the same subgroups, whichever is higher, by at least 3% in all subjects.
- **Measure 4:** The percentage of students who qualify for special education services who participate in state-mandated assessments will be higher by at least 3% than the local and/or state average (whichever is higher) of that same subgroup.

Goal 2: Tapestry students will demonstrate proficiency and improvement on a nationally norm-referenced assessment annually.

- **Measure 1:** The percentage of students who meet or exceed their annual RIT growth targets on the NWEA MAP will meet or exceed the national average of the same subgroups.
- **Measure 2:** During each year of the charter term, 90% or higher of students will meet or exceed benchmark goals on a progress monitoring tool (such as AIMSweb).

Goal 3: Tapestry students will demonstrate post high school-readiness.

- **Measure 1:** 100% of students will graduate with a formal, individualized postsecondary plan.
- **Measure 2:** 95% of students will complete an internship that aligns with their postsecondary plan before graduation.
- **Measure 3:** 100% of graduates required to complete the GHSWT will meet or exceed standards.

Goal 4: Tapestry students will demonstrate high school-readiness.

- **Measure 1:** 100% of students will successfully complete the 8th Grade Portfolio Project before culmination.
- **Measure 2:** The percentage of students who meet or exceed standards on the 8th Grade Writing Test will be higher than the average of the same subgroup in the district and state by 3% or higher.

Goal 5: Tapestry students will demonstrate increased capacity to meet individualized goals.

- **Measure 1:** 100% of students will successfully complete an annual, interdisciplinary capstone project.
- **Measure 2:** 90% (or higher) of students will meet annual goals prescribed in their IEPs.

Organizational Goals

Goal 6: Tapestry will establish and implement sound and accurate financial management practices in all areas of the schools business operations, including GAAP and other best practices.

- **Measure 1:** Tapestry will be cash flow positive as evidenced by monthly cash-flow statement and the audited annual financial reports. All financial reports including cash flow reports will be included in the board meeting minutes.
- **Measure 2:** As a result of an annual financial audit, Tapestry will obtain an unqualified opinion as to whether the financial statements are presented fairly, in all material respects, with respect to financial position, results of operations, and cash flows in conformity with the Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAPP).

Goal 7: Tapestry will facilitate high levels of parent engagement and satisfaction.

- **Measure 1:** The percentage of parents who will report they are satisfied or very satisfied on an annual comprehensive parent satisfaction survey will be 85% or higher in the first year. Parent satisfaction will increase by 2% in year two and 1% annually thereafter until it reaches 90% or higher.
- **Measure 2:** 85% or higher of parents will participate in volunteerism at the school site annually.

Goal 8: Tapestry will engender increased student engagement and participation compared to that which students demonstrated in previous school placements.

- **Measure 1:** 90% (or higher) of Tapestry students will have increased attendance at Tapestry than demonstrated at their previous school.
- **Measure 2:** 95% (or higher) of Tapestry students will have decreased disciplinary referrals (including office referrals and suspensions) from that demonstrated in their previous school.
- **Measure 3:** The Tapestry average for disciplinary referrals will be lower than that of district and state schools for the same subgroups.

Goal 9: Tapestry will leverage local expertise and resources to ensure the school is utilizing available local support.

- **Measure 1:** Tapestry will form and maintain partnerships with agencies that have a high value-add and mission alignment to the school as evidenced by the value of the services and/or support provided.
- **Measure 2:** Tapestry will secure expertise and experience on ASD by ensuring at least 25% of the board is comprised of individuals with personal or professional ties to autism.
- **Measure 3:** The board will meet or exceed annual development goals to supplement public funding annually.

Goal 10: The Tapestry Board of Directors will establish an organizational strategic plan by the end of the second year of operation.

Goal 11: The Tapestry Board of Directors will participate in high-quality professional development for all directors annually.

VI. Waivers

15. State whether the charter school will or will not utilize the broad flexibility from law, rule, and regulation permitted by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(a). DeKalb is not inclined to accept a blanket waiver. List waivers being requested and how they will support raising student academic achievement.

Tapestry acknowledges that it is subject to the control and management of the DCSD Board of Education and that the school is expected to abide by and enforce the general rules and regulations governing all public schools to support the safety, welfare, and educational success of all students. Tapestry seeks a broad flexibility exemption per O.C.G.A 20-2-2065(a) in order to provide an education program tailored to the needs of Tapestry students. Because the school seeks to provide an environment and education program unlike anything currently offered in the state, it is critical that school leadership and the board have the flexibility to waive regulations that could prohibit maximum impact of the school program, even if they are not deemed critical to the model at this time. The particular sections of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia and other regulations outlined below are included in this broad flexibility exemption. The identification of these specific sections is in no way intended to replace the broad flexibility exemption, but simply to set forth specific examples that may be of particular importance to the school. Sections of Title 20 not listed herein are still considered to be waived under the broad flexibility exemption as permissible by law as part of the request for a broad flexibility waiver.

Title 20

Formation and Duties of Local School Councils – O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-85 and 20-2-86

Tapestry will be governed by a board of directors comprised of parents, practitioners and other stakeholders whose expertise and experience will be leveraged on behalf of the school in their governance role. Training will be provided in conjunction with school partnerships and will be specifically developed to meet the needs of Tapestry faculty and the enrolled student body.

School climate management program; model codes of behavior and discipline—O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-155

Tapestry plans to use the DCSD code of conduct, but will be developing model codes of behavior and discipline aligned with the school culture and the learning needs of its target population at its foundation. Tapestry’s behavior plan acknowledges that behavior is communication, and its staff will be trained to intervene and assess the needs of all the children and work to resolve behavioral concerns by determining the source of their behavior, rather than rely upon an infraction/consequence-based structure that serves to punish rather than redirect/educate.

Expenditure Funds – O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-167 and Minimum Direct Classroom Expenditures--O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-171

As a public charter school, Tapestry's model is that of flexible and innovative use of per-pupil and philanthropic funding. Tapestry will have flexible groupings of students, individualized curricula, educational partners and philanthropic donors. In addition, teaching modalities will be flexible so as to adjust to the needs of each student as they progress and/or need remediation and/or enrichment. As a result, Tapestry will need the ability to utilize resources in a manner to best serve its students.

Salaries, Class Size, Benefits—O.C.G.A. 20-2-182

Where appropriate and in the best interest of students, Tapestry will serve students in a multi-age format to build on their strengths while providing robust supports for growth areas. In order to successfully implement the model, Tapestry will need the greatest flexibility in relation to class size. It is not the intent to have extremely large or extremely small classes but rather develop a flexible approach to learning to serve the students in an environment where they can attend to learning and progress. Further, Tapestry seeks a waiver to maintain greater flexibility in teacher salaries as they relate to the needs of the school population. In this way Tapestry can best determine whether the needs of the students will be best served through the combination of full and part time practitioners to capitalize on the available talent and the needs of the student body.

Media Specialist—O.C.G.A. 20-2-184

As the school will have fewer students than a traditional middle or high school, the needs of this position may vary and may be provided through other staff and partnerships. It is not the intent of the school to not provide such a service for its students, but to determine the best method of providing such a service.

Funding for Additional Days of Instruction—O.C.G.A. 20-2-184.1

Tapestry seeks flexibility for additional days of instruction to minimize the breaks within the school year. As many students within the Tapestry target population thrive on consistency and repetition, Tapestry seeks flexibility in the utilization of these funds to ensure students have an annual calendar aligned to their needs.

Assistant Principals and Secretaries—O.C.G.A. 20-1-185

Tapestry seeks flexibility in determining the type and number of personnel for roles such as assistant principal and/or secretary. As a public charter school, Tapestry requests the freedom to determine the leadership and support structure that best fits the needs of its school's culture. Tapestry intends to designate leadership support roles and assistants on staff, but requests flexibility in title, role, and salary level for these positions.

School Transportation—O.C.G.A. 20-2-188

Tapestry does not intend to provide transportation to its students because the specialized program will attract students from all areas of the district. Through the use of public transportation, high parent involvement, and other efforts, the school will ensure transportation is not a barrier to access for interested students.

Certification Requirement of Hired Professionals - O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-200, Professional Standards Commission Rule 505-2-.09 1(a) and Fulton County Schools Policy GBBD for Professional Certification

Tapestry seeks the flexibility to employ or otherwise engage non-certified personnel in the event that the individual is determined by Tapestry to be the best individual to fulfill the role. Due to the small size of the school and high level of individualized education in the core model, teachers will be asked to teach and provide support in content and enrichment areas for which they do not retain specific certification. They may also be required to assist with small group instruction for grade levels and content areas in which they do not have certification in order to best meet the needs of the enrolled student body.

Appropriate Organizations to Provide In-Service or Continuing Education – O.C.G.A. 20-2-201(c)

Tapestry will provide robust continuing professional development and training, but the school has and is forming partnerships with experts who may be better positioned to provide this training and support. For this reason, Tapestry does not seek a waiver necessarily from the requirement of additional training, but rather from the subsection (c) pertaining to the development of these in-service opportunities by local areas of administration and “other appropriate organizations”. The unique needs of the target population may best be met through staff training and support that are provided by entities and partners who may not currently be in network with state and district providers.

Paraprofessional and Permitted Personnel—O.C.G.A. 20-2-204

Tapestry seeks to maintain flexibility with regard to the professionals working with the students. Through partnerships with institutions of higher learning, Tapestry may provide services through internships and other professional and educational programming. Tapestry seeks the flexibility to utilize these individuals in positions ordinarily delegated to paraprofessionals.

Conditions of Employment— O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-210 and Teacher Contracts – O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-211(a), 20-2-211(b), and 20-2-211(c). Teacher Salary Schedules and Increases – O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-212 through 20-2-212.6 and SBE Rules 160-5-2-.04 and 160-5-2-.05

Tapestry seeks to waive the state’s requirements related to annual performance evaluation, as it will rely on its own model to evaluate staff. This model is aligned to the mission and best practices of the model Tapestry provides. Further, Tapestry seeks to waive requirements related to salaries in order to retain flexibility to determine its own salary schedule and compensation for its employees. Tapestry further seeks flexibility to ensure merit-based increases as funding allows, in order to attract and maintain the staff that is best suited to the student body. Tapestry intends to offer a highly supportive and rewarding work environment with a specialized focus that will attract the best candidates for the positions available.

Substitute Teachers— O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-216

Tapestry seeks to waive any requirements related to substitute teachers as it will choose substitutes who best fit within the culture and expectations of the school. It is expected that substitutes are mission-aligned, have expertise with the target population, and deliver the same high quality instruction as the regular school staff. For this reason, Tapestry may rely on partnerships and other staffing models to address the need for substitute coverage.

Duty Free Lunch Period – O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-218

Tapestry seeks to have the flexibility to design its schedule to best fit the needs of the students. It might become necessary to require teachers to assist students during lunch hours. Seeking this waiver will provide the school leadership the flexibility to maximize student-teacher interaction and provide students with consistent support throughout the school day.

Furlough Days— O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-221

Tapestry requests a waiver to any requirements related to furlough days. As a public charter school with financial flexibility, Tapestry requires flexibility in designing its own school schedule in the event of challenging economic times, which may or may not include furlough days.

Organization of Schools; Middle School Programs— O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-290 (3)

Tapestry seeks flexibility in scheduling common planning time given the individualized education programs provided to each student at the school and how this may manifest scheduling teacher planning and meeting times. Tapestry has built in time for teachers to plan together, but reserves the right to dictate how, when, and how often this planning is conducted.

Contracts for Purchases— O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-500, 20-2-501, 20-2-503

Tapestry seeks to waive requirements relating to purchases as it seeks to retain maximum flexibility to allow school leadership to make purchasing decisions in the best interest of the student body. Purchasing protocols ensure that vendor contracts are competitive and the best use of resources for the school.

Additional Payments To Supervise Student Teachers—O.C.G.A. 20-2-833

Tapestry will enter into partnerships with institutions of higher learning, which will encourage interest and involvement of student teachers. In order to best utilize these relationships, Tapestry seeks flexibility to determine if and how much additional compensation is required for the supervising teacher.

Conditions of Employment – O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-850-853 and Grounds and Procedure for Terminating or Suspending Contract of Employment— O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-940

Tapestry hires and retains its own teachers who are not employees of DCSD and as such, Tapestry manages and administers its own human resource policies related to employment, sick leave, and the benefits package. Further, Tapestry employees will be at-will employees with no contracts. The school will hire and retain the most qualified, mission-aligned teachers, but will require the flexibility to remove a teacher who is not the best match for the enrolled student body.

School Administrator – O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-942(1.1) relating to school administrators

Tapestry seeks to waive any rules and regulations relating to school administrators as it will recruit, hire, and retain the best principal it deems necessary to realize the mission of the school.

State Board to Prescribe Textbooks – O.G.C.A. 20-2-1010 and Electronic Format of Textbooks: O.C.G.A. Section 20-2-1015 and SBE Rule 160-4-4-.10(k).

Tapestry seeks to choose and offer textbooks that may not be on the state approved list, mainly through the use of techbooks and other curricular resources in an electronic format. All curricula at Tapestry will be aligned to the CCGPS.

State Board of Education Rules

Personnel Required- School Size— SBE Rule 160-5-1-.22

The foundation of the Tapestry model is a small, inclusive environment that will provide individualized support to all students. To this end, Tapestry seeks to waive requirements around personnel required and school size as the staffing configuration will be aligned to the needs of the students enrolled.

Limited Public School Choice – SBE Rule 160-5-4-.09

As a public charter school, Tapestry seeks to be excluded from any rules related to limited public school choice and transportation. Tapestry should also not be subject to any transfer decisions by the local board of education as Tapestry is a school of choice and will enroll students as accepted by lottery (or first-come, first-served as described in the enrollment section).

Values and Character Education— SBE Rule 160-4-2.33

Tapestry seeks to waive any requirements to follow a character education program outside its choosing. The unique population targeted for enrollment will be served by the individualized approach, which will support academic and personal growth. The curriculum that may be delivered to bolster character and personal development will be selected by the school leader and staff to ensure the curriculum and/or materials best align with the needs of the student population. Therefore, Tapestry does not want to be required to use other programs that might not reflect its values or practices.

Course Listings—SBE Rule 160-4-2.20

As a public charter school, Tapestry seeks maximum flexibility in designing its courses that best meet the needs of its students and school culture. It is not the intent of this waiver to neglect to offer state recognized courses, but rather to allow Tapestry the freedom to create interdisciplinary coursework. All high school coursework will align with the guidelines for Carnegie units and courses unique to Tapestry will align with standards and regulations around high school graduation if they are to count toward graduation requirements.

Local Board of Education Rules

Policy GAEB-R (Harassment)

Tapestry will be independently governed and will adopt its own policies related to harassment that capture the spirit of the harassment rules as outlined by the Board Rule within the leadership chain of Tapestry.

ED-R Student Transportation Management

Tapestry does not intend to provide transportation but will encourage the use of carpools and coordinated public transportation as necessity requires.

DJE-R(1) Purchasing

Tapestry will develop its own policies related to purchasing and use of school funds and requires flexibility to ensure that all purchases are approved and for the best interest of students of Tapestry.

DJC-R Payroll Procedures

As a public charter school, Tapestry will employ its own staff and thus will not utilize the payroll procedures outlined by the county.

GBRA-R(1) Professional Personnel Personal Leaves and Absences

As Tapestry will hire and retain its own staff, it will develop its own policies with regard to leave and absences that otherwise conform to the law and are in the best interest of the instructional program being delivered.

IDA-R(1) (4) Basic Program of Instruction

Tapestry seeks to offer unique methods of instruction that are individualized and specifically suited to ensure the optimal learning environment for children on the autism spectrum to be educated with their neurotypical peers. As a result of this unique methodology, Tapestry seeks maximum flexibility in their program of instruction.

IDCF-R(1) Work-Study Programs

Tapestry intends to partner with the community to offer internships to its students to introduce students to the workforce. This program will be limited to the high school years and will be individualized to the student in confines of the restrictions related to school attendance and instructional hours.

IE-R Instructional Arrangements, Scheduling Procedures, Secondary School

Tapestry intends to offer fluid multi-age classes to ensure that all children are supported and allowed to improve and advance at their own pace. More, an innovative approach to scheduling that minimizes transitions and other elements common to scheduling in traditional school sites is being utilized to improve educational outcomes for the target population.

IFA-R, IFA-R(1), IFA-R(2) Instructional Materials Media and Equipment

Tapestry seeks to use its own media for instruction and intends to utilize different media to ensure flexibility for each student to progress through the CCGPS.

EC-R(0) Equipment and Supplies Management

As Tapestry will utilize its own equipment and supplies it seeks maximum flexibility in the purchase, management and disposal of its materials to ensure all equipment and supplies best meet the needs of the Tapestry students and staff.

IFCB-R Field Trips

As an independent charter school, Tapestry seeks maximum flexibility with regard to scheduling and coordinating its fieldtrips to best serve the needs of its students. The school will honor the spirit of this regulation by only scheduling learning trips aligned to content standards within

school hours and will ensure all trips scheduled are planned with clearly aligned learning outcomes.

IHEA-R Make-up work by students

Tapestry seeks maximum flexibility to design and implement its own strategies with regard to make up work to best accommodate the learning needs of each student. All students will be required to make up work for classes missed; however, the nature and timing of this work will be determined by the teacher in accordance with the needs of each student.

IKI-R Lesson Plans

Tapestry will develop personal education plans for all of its students. These plans will be fluid and designed to be implemented consistent with the unique educational strategies utilized at the school. Tapestry seeks maximum flexibility with regard to the development of lesson plans to align this process and appropriate templates with the methodology being implemented.

JS-R Student Fees, Fines, and Charges

Tapestry seeks flexibility with regard to developing its own accountability measures for the utilization of fees, fines, and charges to best suit the needs of the smaller school environment.

KG-R Allowable Use of School Facilities

Tapestry seeks flexibility in the guidelines related to the use of school facilities recognizing that the use of the building cannot conflict with the mission of the school and its primary objective of educating its student body.

KIB-R Special Interest Materials Distribution

Tapestry seeks flexibility with regard to distribution of such materials. As Tapestry hopes to establish itself as a research partner (as insomuch as it does not interfere with instruction), this flexibility, combined with appropriate oversight, will facilitate the development of successful tools and strategies that can be generated through such research (with informed parental consent).

KNBA-R Complaints about Instructional Materials

As Tapestry will be governed independently through its own board of directors, Tapestry maintains a grievance policy for all stakeholders that directs concerns to the board as the final authority in the process. As such, stakeholders are instructed to direct any and all grievances, including those about instructional materials, to the proper channels as identified in the school's grievance policy.

16. If the school will utilize this flexibility, state that the charter school will comply with all the requirements of the Single Statewide Accountability System and will meet or exceed the performance-based goals included in the charter including but not limited to raising student achievement. Please provide a description of illustrative examples of how the charter school will implement the flexibility granted by the broad flexibility waiver to meet or exceed the performance-based goals and to increase student achievement. This should explicitly state what the flexibility granted will allow the charter to accomplish over the course of the charter term. The petition shall include illustrative examples of how the charter will implement the flexibility

to meet or exceed the performance-based goals and to increase student achievement.

Tapestry will comply with all the requirements of the Single Statewide Accountability System and will meet or exceed the performance-based goals included in the charter through its use of an innovative model. As outlined above, a broad flexibility waiver will enable school leaders and the board to make swift decisions around programmatic elements in order to meet the unique needs of students enrolled. Examples of how the broad flexibility waiver may be used to meet and exceed the performance goals outlined herein include the following:

- Paraprofessional services may be provided by a university partner rather than a staff member who is hired with the title of paraprofessional.
- A vendor who provides a competitive quote for services to the school because of their mission-alignment may not be a preferred vendor for DCSD.
- The staffing model may need to be adjusted annually to accommodate the needs of students as dictated by their IEPs.
- Staff who are certified in ELA may be asked to provide math remediation to a small group of students during an RTI period in order to accommodate small groupings and create a seamless staff support model for each student.
- The local board for the school will be charged with a number of responsibilities that may fall to the district in traditional schools, providing local control over the operation of the school. Examples include designation of and participation in a local grievance policy for stakeholders, organization and procurement of benefits for staff, creation of a salary scale, and oversight of the board in fiscal and operational decisions.

Because Tapestry is specifically building a student-centered model of inclusion that will likely result in a significant percentage of students requiring programmatic modifications, it is highly likely the needs of enrolled students may vary from year to year. As a result, there are a number of waivers the school may require in its opening years and will not require in subsequent years, and vice versa. For this reason, the broad flexibility waiver best equips the school's leadership to make real-time decisions in the best interest of students in the school and school community, while maintaining the integrity and spirit of the regulations.

17. If the school will NOT utilize this flexibility, the school must enumerate specifically what waivers it is requesting and the rationale for each including how each waiver shall help the school meet or exceed the performance goals and to increase student achievement. Describe further how each waiver shall help the school meet or exceed the performance-based goals included in its charter.

Not applicable—Tapestry is seeking a broad flexibility waiver.

VII. Description of Assessment Methods

18. Describe the charter school's plan to obtain student performance data for each student, which must include how the current baseline standard of achievement shall be determined in order to meet the petition's performance-based goals and measurable objectives. For the charter school's first year, baseline student achievement data shall be collected within three months of the first day of school. This data may include, but is not limited to, standardized assessment results from previous school years

Baseline Student Data

Each student who enrolls at Tapestry will participate in baseline assessment within the first three months of school (or within one month of enrollment if the student enrolls after the traditional start of the school year). This baseline will include the MAP for students in grades 6-8 (students may take the MAP up to grade 10) to baseline skill in reading, math, and ELA, as well as an internally devised assessment (based on released questions from the CRCT/PARCC) to measure standards mastery in social studies and science. In addition, CRCT data from the student's previous school (if they attended school in Georgia) and any other assessment data from the prior year (including nationally norm-referenced assessment data, IEP performance measures/evidence, and grades) will become a part of this baseline examination of a student's mastery of prior skills. All high school students will participate in a baseline assessment developed by the instructional staff that measures standards mastery in each content area. This may include aspects of assessments from the various curricular assessments being used, as well as released questions from pertinent materials (such as the CRCT and EOCT). All standardized assessment data considered in this baseline will be submitted to the local and state authorizers to establish the baseline from which all goals in the accountability measures section are based. Baseline assessment data will also be used to inform instruction, teacher supports, and other programmatic elements for the coming year.

State-Mandated Assessments

Tapestry will administer all state-mandated assessments in accordance with local and state regulations and in alignment with the DCSD calendar for assessments. The CRCT (or PARCC), Georgia Writing Test for 8th Grade, Georgia High School Writing Test, and all End of Course Tests (EOCTs) will be administered to all Tapestry students as appropriate and with consideration of any applicable IEP guidelines. In addition, Tapestry will administer CogAT and ITBS as required and provided by DCSD. Data from these assessments will be reviewed in a staff-wide PD day, wherein school leadership guides teachers in reviewing and disaggregating data to measure individual, cohort, and subgroup trends. This data will be used both to inform the remainder of the school year instruction (and may be used to assign students to an extended year—see Appendix S) as well as individual student supports. Because goals for the school are aligned to student outcomes on these assessment measures, school-wide decision making about the model will be driven by data and use the data from these assessments to analyze programmatic effectiveness and necessary revisions.

Northwest Education Association Measures of Academic Progress Assessments (MAP)

In order to provide additional internal data, students also take the NWEA MAP up to three times annually. The MAP is used in grades 6-8 in reading, mathematics, and language arts. The summer/fall assessments are used to baseline student mastery and establish the annual goal. The winter administration provides predictive data in advance of the CRCT, and the MAP has been reliably linked in research as an accurate predictor of CRCT ranges. The breakdown of student needs into specific strands enables staff to target instruction leading up to the CRCT around the specific strands students have still not mastered. This computerized, adaptive test also assesses the level at which students are performing and compares that against other students of the same age nationally. Individual student growth and longitudinal growth over the duration of a student's tenure at Tapestry are measured annually, with the MAP platform producing reports that provide this information as part of their service. Students and parents review this

information, as do teachers and instructional leaders. This information is used to measure not just individual student growth to inform intervention and supports, but to evaluate school-wide trends and growth to make programmatic changes as needed. Cohort, sub-group, grade level, and content area reports are just a few of the snapshots the MAP affords the school principal and teachers for their annual summative review of school-wide student performance and growth, as well as to inform instruction and PD.

Other Formal Assessments

Tapestry will use a data tracking tool, such as Edmodo, to maintain individual student e-portfolios, track and analyze assessment data, and organize disaggregated data for cohorts and subgroups in order to simplify the data-drive approach of the school. Edmodo is a safe, free online networking site that provides increased opportunities for students and teachers to connect, build relationships, and collaborate. On Edmodo, teachers can continue classroom discussions, give polls to check for student understanding, and award badges to individual students based on performance, behavior, or accomplishments. Student e-portfolios and other assessment data will be maintained on Edmodo, providing teachers, parents, and students access to growth data and strategies to implement a seamless approach that aligns home supports to those administered at school.

Diagnostic Assessments

Through the use of curricular resources like those provided through Discovery Education and Khan Academy, a number of curricular-based assessments will be available to teachers to formatively measure standard-mastery. These assessments may be used throughout the year to determine interventions, measure effectiveness of the RTI process, diagnose applicable program participation (such as REP, gifted, and initiation of the SST process).

Prescriptive Benchmarks

Tapestry will adopt a progress monitoring tool (such as AIMSWeb) for all students in all grades. This enables staff to administer brief, reliable assessments as often as each day that provide formal data to drive instruction. Data from the progress monitoring tool is downloaded for each student weekly and used to inform the data team meetings, enabling teachers to collaborate using real-time data to build supports for students the subsequent week. This will drive lesson planning and individual and group interventions for each student.

Unit Assessments

All instructional units will culminate with an assessment measure that determines mastery of the standards covered within that unit. Unit assessments will take a variety of forms, including presentations, experiments, or that demonstrate student mastery. Teachers will collaboratively plan assessment measures to ensure they are reliable, valid, and closely aligned to the target standards. Unit assessment grades will weigh heavily in student progress reports and will be maintained in portfolios (as described herein). All of the curricular materials being explored for use on student techbooks include assessments that measure mastery as students work, and may use assessments as gateways, requiring mastery before a student can promote to the next standard and maintaining assessment data to drive support.

Annual Capstone

Every student in every grade will prepare a capstone project annually, which demonstrates an interdisciplinary look at their interests and what they have mastered that year, providing acceleration of the knowledge gained by each individual student. The capstone project will be aligned to the CCGPS (especially those that address listening and speaking standards that cannot be measured by standardized assessments) and will require students to demonstrate a myriad of skills and growth to earn a satisfactory score. The following standards are exemplary of what skills the rubric will measure for the annual capstone:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Capstone projects will be rated using a rubric and will evaluate both the product/presentation and the process the student executed on to develop the product. Capstone projects will be authentic and may integrate community-based instruction.

In eighth grade, the capstone will be a cumulative presentation that includes alignment to the student's transition plan and includes the student's e-portfolio for middle school. Students will be required to successfully present all three elements for a jury in order to promote to ninth grade. For high school students, the cumulative project required before graduation may be an internship or experience, and a presentation of the skills practiced through this experience will be required.

Informal Assessment

Because instruction at Tapestry is rooted in an investigative approach and is anchored in weekly data team meetings, there will be myriad means of daily informal assessment for all students. Staff will be supported in tracking student mastery through the use of e-portfolios (maintained on Edmodo or a similar tool). Every student will have a portfolio that includes work samples, assessment records and data, teacher observations, records of teacher-parent communication, and other relevant artifacts. Through frequent student data meetings, teachers will review the portfolios to identify student strengths, goals, and strategies that have the greatest demonstrated impact. Because portfolios are cumulative over the student's tenure at Tapestry, longitudinal growth and progress against goals will be measured over multiple years to provide robust data to inform student interventions and strategies. At a minimum, quarterly portfolio reviews will be conducted with parents and students to show how students are growing and highlight goals toward which each student is working. Parents will receive information in these reviews to guide their support of student goals at home, and students will participate in advisory lessons geared toward preparing for and responding to their portfolio reviews.

19. Describe how the charter school's assessment plan will measure student improvement and over what period of time.

As described above, all of the assessment measures, from the MAP to classroom-based performance assessments, will be used to drive flexible grouping, instructional strategy, and all elements of planning. All students will also participate in all state-mandated assessments and any other applicable assessments, such as the ITBS, CogAT, and any other assessments required by

the authorizing district and/or state DOE. In addition, as described in Question 11, EL students will participate in the WIDA and ACCESS to measure their English language mastery and prescribe appropriate supports. All of these formal, standardized means of assessment will be administered under the direction of the school principal and in adherence with all applicable guidelines and timelines.

Assessments at Tapestry are used to not only measure student mastery and inform instruction, but also to measure staff efficacy and guide the school as a whole in meeting its goals (see Appendix W for a template that will be modified for staff goal-setting). Staff participates in ongoing review of assessment data through weekly data meetings and monthly full-day PD sessions dedicated to analyzing data and student performance. All data from throughout the year is collected and analyzed for semesterly review by the entire staff. This information is used to guide PD for individual teachers as part of their annual evaluation and coaching, as well as school-wide training initiatives for the subsequent semester. A formal, annual summative analysis of all data is conducted by the school leadership team and shared by the principal with the board in order to critically analyze the school model and programmatic adjustments that may need to be made to yield greater results.

Sample Assessment Schedule*

Assessment Name	Assessment Area	Students Assessed
Georgia CRCT (or other state-mandated, criterion-referenced assessment)	Reading, ELA, math, science, social studies	Grades 6-8
Georgia Writing Assessment	Writing	Grade 8
Norm-Referenced Assessment (NWEA MAP)	Reading, language arts and math	Grades 6-8 (may be added in grades 9 and 10)
Georgia End of Course Tests (including the new EOCTs for Coordinate Algebra and/or other EOCTs as revised/developed and required)	Ninth Grade Literature, American Literature, Math I/Algebra, Math II/Geometry, Physical Science, Biology, US History, Economics*	Students who have completed the course for which the EOCT is required
Georgia High School Writing Test	Graduation readiness; written communication	11 th graders (and upper grades for students who need to retake)
Georgia Alternative Assessment, CRCT-M	Content areas measured by the CRCT (ELA/math/science/social studies)	Grades 6-8, 11, and other students as applicable in accordance with IEP
WIDA, ACCESS	English language proficiency	Students who may qualify for EL programming and students designated as LEP

*Tapestry will administer all state-mandated assessments on the same schedule as DCSD and following the same guidelines, including administration of updated/revised assessments on the same timeline administered by DCSD.

More details about how and in what timeframe each of the proposed assessment measures will be utilized to measure student improvement are outlined in Question 18 above.

20. Describe how the charter school will use this assessment data to monitor and improve achievement for all students.

As described above, ongoing assessment of both the formal and informal types will be used by all staff to measure student progress, inform class instruction and structures, and drive individualized student approaches. Data will not only be used to craft intervention; they will also be used to build upon strengths and provide enrichment for all students. Weekly data team meetings held during the Friday Extended Learning Time (ELT) periods (as well as before and after school) will focus on individual student data and classroom data, analyzing trends to make revisions to curriculum, strategies, and flexible grouping approaches. Quarterly portfolio reviews will be held with each student and his/her parent or guardian to review progress and offer strategies to build skills at home in concert with approaches at school. Whole school data analysis will take place at the end of each semester to give a more summative understanding of student growth.

21. Provide a statement detailing how the school shall comply with the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through § 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements, including the manner in which the school shall work with the authorizer(s) to participate in statewide assessments.

Tapestry acknowledges it is subject to the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. §20-14-30 and §20-14-41 and will participate in all state-required testing as stated in SBOE Rule 160-3-1-.07, as well as any federal accountability requirements. This includes alignment to all guidelines around how and when assessments are administered and by whom. A designated staff member will be responsible for coordinating assessment administrations and will participate in applicable training made available, as well as serving as primary point of contact for assessment matters.

22. Please state how the school shall comply with the accountability provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through § 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements, including the manner in which the school shall work with the authorizer (s) to participate in statewide assessments.

Tapestry works with DCSD to participate in all state-mandated assessments by participating in training from DCSD when available, adhering to DCSD assessment schedules and guidelines, and assigning one staff member to work as primary testing coordinator and district liaison who is responsible for communicating with DCSD staff regarding assessment participation and implementation.

23. Attach the charter school's proposed annual calendar and a draft of the charter school's daily school schedule. This calendar shall align with DeKalb County's calendar for all assessments required by the State.

Daily Schedule

As described in Question 4, Tapestry will leverage a modified block schedule in all grades to minimize transitions, require a fewer number of teachers and classes for students each day, and provide for experiential-based learning through extended instructional blocks. The 6th-8th grade schedule will allow students to stay in the same classroom throughout the day with teachers

moving to them, and high school grades will move to each of the three periods they participate in daily, reducing loss of instructional time to transitions and movement between classes. Tapestry will have a slightly longer instructional day than traditional DCSD schools, with students starting their day at 8:30 am (teachers start at 8:00) and finishing at 3:30 pm (teachers finish at 4:00 except for days that they have staff meetings, student conferences, PD, planning sessions, or an extracurricular activity they sponsor after school). The extracurricular period will run from 3:45 until 5:00 pm and will be optional for students and staff.

Annual Calendar

Tapestry will utilize a “traditional” calendar (like that provided in Appendix S) that includes fewer breaks throughout the year and a longer “summer break.” Frequent full-staff PD days are aligned to public holidays to provide students with “four-day weekends”, rather than full week extended breaks throughout the year, which disrupt the routine that is so critical for students with ASD and related challenges. The calendar is organized so that the first 90-day semester culminates before the winter break to ensure students do not lose critical information during an extended break before taking semesterly assessments. The second 90-day semester is followed by the optional extended instructional year of up to ten days for students who need it, as well as culminating PD for all staff. This means students who have met and exceeded their goals and who choose to end the school year at the end of the second 90-day period will be released. Students who are invited to stay for the additional period will work in smaller, more intensive groups with laser focus on the standards and goals that haven’t been met to ensure each student has the support s/he needs to make benchmarks before the year ends.

Summer programming may be provided through partnerships to continue the support afforded throughout the regular school year; however, it will be optional and developed in response to the interests of enrolled families. Partners like the Alliance Theatre and UWG are already prepared to offer drama and literacy camps exclusively for Tapestry students each summer (Appendix K).

The Tapestry annual calendar will incorporate state and district assessment schedules when they become available and align accordingly. The draft attached will be revised as necessary to ensure Tapestry students participate in assessments at the same time as their peers in traditional schools.

VIII. Description of School Operations

24. Describe the attendance zone for the charter school, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2062 (1.1).

Tapestry will be open to any interested student eligible for the grades served who resides within the DCSD attendance area.

25. Describe the rules and procedures that will govern the admission of students to the charter school.

Admission

There are no prerequisites for admission to Tapestry—all students who are eligible for DCSD schools are eligible to apply and will be admitted by random lottery (or on a first-come, first-served basis if the number of applicants by the lottery date is fewer than the number of available seats). No tuition will be charged. The attendance zone is comprised of the whole of DCSD, and

the unique program will attract students and families who align with the programmatic philosophy, rather than a targeted geographic area. Enrollment priorities are described below.

No enrollment information will be required until after students have been selected in the lottery (see the admissions application in Appendix V). Tapestry admits students via an admissions lottery conducted in February at the close of the open enrollment period by randomly selecting from a pool of students who have submitted this application form. This period will open January 1 of each year and close at a pre-determined date in mid-February annually. (When possible, the enrollment period will be aligned to other DCSD charter schools to make enrollment calendars and requirements clear and consistent for parents throughout the district.) If there are more applicants than seats available at the close of the open enrollment period, an admissions lottery will be used to select students for available seats. Each family will be assigned an ID number for each application, and those ID numbers will be selected at random in a public lottery (after assignment of each applicant who qualifies for an enrollment preference according to the order of preference outlined below) until each number has been drawn, with the first numbers chosen awarded available seats in the order drawn, and all subsequent numbers selected assigned to the waiting list in the order of the number drawn. Any siblings who concurrently apply will both (or all) be assigned seats upon selection/assignment of any one of the siblings in this process. Any additional students who apply after the lottery and/or during the open enrollment period if not all available seats are filled will be placed at the end of the waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis. An electronic version of the charter agreement will be made available to all enrolling students for review. In order to provide as many interested families access to the program as possible, Tapestry will accept new students for any vacant seat at any time in the school year and/or in any grade level.

Enrollment

In order to enroll a student at Tapestry, parents and students must reside within the DCSD zone, be eligible to attend a school in the DCSD district, and be eligible for one of the grade levels offered at Tapestry. Once admitted through the lottery process, parents or guardians are required to register and will be sent information with directions for how to register their child, including specific information on documents they will need. Parents who fail to register their child with all of the required documents during the registration period may forfeit their child's seat at Tapestry in order to make the seat available to the next student on the waiting list.

Enrollment Process

Returning students will be asked to submit an intent to re-enroll annually in advance of the conclusion of the open-enrollment period. This ensures each returning student (and any siblings or other students who qualify for enrollment priorities outlined below) are given the first seats to become available for the subsequent year.

The Tapestry registrar (or designee) will collect and file the following required forms (for students who have not reached the age of twenty by September 1 or have not received a high school diploma or the equivalent as prescribed in OCGA § 20-2-150) from parents/guardians of new students selected in the admission process throughout the enrollment period:

- Copy of the birth certificate or passport

- Certificate of Eye, Ear, and Dental Examination (Georgia Department of Human Services form 3300)
- Certificate of Immunization (Georgia Department of Human Services form 3231) or waiver as per OCGA § 20-2-771
- Photo identification of the parent or guardian enrolling the child
- Proof of residency documents (e.g. current utility bill [gas, electric, or water only—no phone bills], signed lease, or mortgage contract) or an Affidavit of Legal Residence (which must be submitted in the presence of both the guardian and the owner/lessee co-named). Children who meet the definition of homeless as set forth in Section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 USC § 11434a *et seq.*, and who are located within the DeKalb County School District may enroll using applicable guidelines.
- Withdrawal records from previous school including last grade placement
- Proof of custody or guardianship if not the birth parent
- Tapestry Registration Form
- Media Release
- Field Lesson Permission Form
- Medical Information Sheet
- Technology User Agreement
- Emergency Contact and Release Form
- Any other forms required by the school as part of the enrollment process

Tapestry will enroll immigrants/non–visa holders meeting age and residency requirements and shall not inquire about their legal status as part of the enrollment requirements or any other process.

Student Information System/Data Collection and Reporting

Records Maintenance

Tapestry will follow, at a minimum, the district and any applicable state policy and practices for enrollment verification and maintenance/updating of student records. Tapestry will maintain all electronic student records in a password-protected system that is accessible only by designated staff. Hard copies of records will be kept secure in locked files, in order to protect confidentiality of information contained therein. The school principal and designated staff maintains and updates files in order to maintain confidentiality and preserve accuracy. Any information contained in student records may be examined by appropriate staff with the clearance of the registrar; however, student records will not be permitted to be removed from their secure storage area.

Student Information System (SIS)

Tapestry will report daily attendance and discipline incidents to DCSD using the standard, approved method of data collection. Master schedules and student schedules will exist for all students, as well as final marks for each course after each semester. The registrar or his/her designee will participate in training provided by DCSD, who will provide the necessary software and training for the SIS. Tapestry has budgeted for and will provide hardware and the necessary internet service connection for the approved method(s) of student information, and maintain the systems needed to utilize the required SIS adopted by DCSD. The DCSD SIS will be used for the collection of all data and information required by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-320 for mandatory reporting

to the State Department of Education (SDOE) and federal agencies. The method of data collection will be that which is currently in use by DCSD and may be changed from time to time based on technology currently in use. Existing periodic and end-of-year checklists provided by DCSD will be used to define when progress reports, report cards and other verifications are to be produced.

Withdrawal

Any parent who decides that it is not in the child's best interest to remain at Tapestry may withdraw the student to attend his/her respective zoned DCSD school without penalty. Tapestry will utilize the waiting list to maintain full enrollment as vacancies arise.

26. Describe or attach a copy of any admissions application the charter school proposes to use or a description of the application that demonstrates that the application conforms to requirements set forth in the Guidance accompanying this Rule, including the requirement that charter schools shall have open enrollment.

Please see Appendix V for a copy of the Tapestry Admissions Application.

28. Describe whether the charter school will use any enrollment priorities pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a) and (b). Additionally, students not residing in DeKalb County are not eligible to attend the charter school. A charter school may not charge tuition.

Tapestry will not charge tuition. Students who do not reside in the DCSD attendance area will not be eligible to attend Tapestry.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A.20-2-2066(a) (1), the following priorities will be taken into account in the following order:

1. Priority admission will be given first to siblings, including those selected during the lottery process or already enrolled Tapestry students.
2. Priority admission will be given next to children of staff or board members, regardless of whether they reside within the DCSD District.

29. Describe the steps that will be taken to reach students that are representative of the racial and socioeconomic diversity in the school system.

It is the intention of Tapestry to provide a full inclusion model for its students, with targeted recruitment of those students on the autism spectrum or with related diagnoses and their neurotypical peers. At present, founders are legally unable to provide enrollment priorities that would enable the school to maintain an enrollment comprised of equal percentages of students with ASD and their neurotypical peers; therefore, the school will be forced to rely on its recruitment strategies to encourage a diverse mix of learners (including those with and without ASD) to apply. For Tapestry, this means recruitment of diversity extends beyond racial and socioeconomic status to include students with and without autism and related disorders.

Tapestry is the effort of a committed, diverse group of DCSD families and was not founded by an outside entity that came to the community, nor was it founded by a neighborhood group or

organization of stakeholders unified by geography. Rather, Tapestry was founded by families and professionals from the community who envision an innovative, inclusive environment for their students. There are literally hundreds of community members and parents who have participated in the development of the school model through petition support (Appendix L), the advisory council (Appendix G), board (Appendix E), and partner organizations (Appendix K). Founders have publicized information about the school throughout DCSD via PTA meetings and newsletters, have led outreach meetings with prospective parents nearly every month, published information in a variety of print media (including the AJC, local Patch, and other community newspapers), and have maintained a rigorous calendar of outreach and event attendance to ensure all families throughout DCSD have information about the school. It is this unique, truly community-conceived path to planning and opening Tapestry that has successfully enlisted diverse stakeholders and will continue to do so as students are recruited. In fact, to date, Tapestry founders have more than 250 signatures on a petition of support from prospective parents, as well as an even larger number of stakeholders following the school on social media and signed up for the mailing list (see Appendix M).

Tapestry will not have to begin student recruitment anew once approved; prospective families and students have been planning the school since its inception and will continue to informally and formally advertise throughout DCSD. The frequent engagement with community entities, service providers, neighborhood leaders, and families throughout the district has and will continue to make information about the school and the admission process easily accessible to all interested applicants. This approach to outreach and information about the school application process will ensure students and families represent the racial and socioeconomic diversity of the school system. Because recruitment has not been targeted on a specific geographic area within DCSD, efforts such as informational sessions, community outreach meetings, and “friend-raiser” events have been conducted throughout the district in different communities comprised of the families, service-providers, and stakeholders who represent the diversity of DCSD.

In addition to the current outreach approach, once approved, Tapestry founders will ramp up student recruitment through the following means:

- Information and applications made available at offices of service providers and partner entities for families of potential students who receive various related services (including speech therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy providers; counseling centers; university research programs; and family support groups and education centers)
- “Family meetings” held in the homes and communities of interested applicant families that are publicized through flyers, email blasts, social media, and word of mouth
- Flyers at local places of worship, recreation centers, community meetings, community functions, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses
- Advertisements in local newspapers, newsletters and other media, both digital and print
- Providing information via word of mouth among parents in the community
- Visiting and speaking at local community based organizations
- Advertising on the DCSD website, in School Choice publication(s), and participation in any DCSD resource fairs and/or school choice information events/materials

Given the strong presence and community support from which Tapestry already benefits and the pro-bono support of Razorfish (Appendix K) to execute a robust publicity campaign once

approved, founders are confident that applicants will reflect the diversity of the communities served by DCSD.

29. Describe the rules and procedures concerning student discipline and student dismissal (including code of conduct and student due process procedures). It is advisable to adopt DeKalb's Code of Student Conduct. See DeKalb's Code of Student Conduct for Guidance and attach a copy in the Appendix.

Disciplinary Procedures and Code of Conduct

Tapestry will adopt the DCSD Secondary Code of Conduct to guide student discipline, student due process, and student dismissal procedures (see the Code of Conduct in Appendix R) as a baseline. The DCSD Code of Conduct informs all aspects of disciplinary proceedings, including administration of in-school and out-of-school suspensions of up to 10 days for applicable offenses; expulsion proceedings for those offenses that are expellable, such as Federal law 18 U.S.C. § 921, which states that school districts must have a policy requiring the expulsion of a student from school for at least one year for possession of or for bringing a firearm to school; and a DCSD due process hearing for those suspensions that will last 10 days or more. A designated staff member will be responsible for attendance at informational meetings and in-services offered by the DCSD Department of Student Relations and will bring this information back to the staff. Moreover, this designated staff member may be responsible for leading parent, student, and staff information sessions on the school's code of conduct and disciplinary proceedings.

The DCSD Code of Conduct will be utilized within the context of the Tapestry culture paradigm, which establishes as its core belief that behavior is a form of communication often related to a regulatory issue or developmental deficit (for *all students*, including students on the autism spectrum, with other exceptionalities, and their neurotypical peers). Staff, parents, and students will work collaboratively to ensure effective communication, problem solving, and positive outcomes to any behaviors that disrupt the learning environment. Prior to the opening of the school, staff will be trained in basic principles of positive behavior management, and a school-wide behavior management program based on School-Wide Positive Behavior Support²³ will be employed across all classes. Two founding board members (Drs. Ann Abramowitz and Greta Massetti) are clinical psychologists with a high level of training and experience in this area and will organize the training. Furthermore, through a partnership with the Center for Leadership in Disability at Georgia State University, Tapestry staff will have ongoing training and support in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

The following are the core strategies for Tapestry's PBIS:

- Focus on creating a positive school culture that fosters relationship building and respect for all members of the school community.

²³ Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., Todd, A. & Lewis-Palmer, T. (2005). School-wide positive behavior support: An alternative approach to discipline in schools. In L. Bambara & L. Kern (Eds.), *Individualized support for students with problem behaviors: Designing positive behavior plans* (pp. 359-390). New York: Guilford Press.

- Focus on preventing the development and occurrence of disruptive or problematic behavior, which is more effective, cost-efficient, and productive than responding after problem behavior patterns have become ingrained.
- Help students develop appropriate social behavior and thinking. Because children come to school from many different backgrounds, Tapestry must define the core social expectations (e.g., be respectful, be responsible, be safe), and overtly teach the behaviors and skills associated with these expectations. When all students in the school are taught the same social skills, a social culture is established where students not only have personal knowledge about social expectations, they know that everyone in the school knows those same social expectations.
- Solicit the participation of students in the development of school rules and values. Strive for an understanding of the underlying values from which rules are developed, i.e., respect for others' rights to feel safe, to be respected as individuals, and to have an environment conducive for learning.
- Acknowledge and praise appropriate behavior. Students should receive regular recognition for appropriate behavior at rates that exceed rates of recognition for rule violations and problem behaviors. Negative consequences alone will not change problem behavior. Instead of ignoring problem behavior, a continuum of consequences (e.g., correction, warning, and office discipline referral) for problem behavior should be maintained and used to prevent escalation and allow instruction to continue in class.
- Gather and use data about student behavior to guide behavior support decisions. Data on what problem behaviors are being observed and how often, where and what time of the day they are occurring, and who is engaging in these problem behaviors enable schools to develop the most effective, efficient, and relevant school-wide behavior support plan.
- Invest in the systems (e.g., teams, policies, funding, administrative support, data structures) that support staff in their implementation of effective practices.

As a DCSD school, all students and families are entitled to the same due process as other students in the district. At the school site level, all students and families will be afforded due process by having access to the principal to review teacher decisions. (The complete parent grievance policy is outlined below in Question 30.) Tapestry does not have the authority to expel a student from DCSD, and Tapestry students who have committed an expellable offense, according to DCSD's policies, will participate in the same process with the same rights afforded to any student who attends a DCSD school, including a hearing with DCSD.

Conscious Discipline

Conscious Discipline is a comprehensive self-regulation program that integrates social-emotional learning and will be used explicitly as the foundational curriculum in advisory, as well as the framework throughout the school day to guide classroom management and behavior support. All teachers will be trained in the program, which utilizes everyday events as the curriculum to build emotional intelligence by empowering adults to consciously respond to daily conflict, transforming it into an opportunity to teach critical life skills to children. The evidence-based model is organized into four components: Seven Skills of Discipline, The School Family, Seven Powers for Conscious Adults, and Brain State Model.

Seven Skills of Discipline

The Seven Skills of Discipline provide adults with strategies to effectively manage classrooms, redirect inappropriate and/or undesirable behavior, and help students maximize their performance. The seven skills are Composure, Encouragement, Assertiveness, Choices, Empathy, Positive Intent, and Consequences. By implementing the skills together with the other elements of Conscious Discipline, teachers and staff members learn to stay in control of themselves and in charge of students in a manner that models the same skills adults seek to teach their students.

The School Family

School climate impacts all achievement. The culture of a school can foster bullying, blame and cliques, or it can build cooperation, willingness and responsibility. The School Family, built on a healthy family model, targets optimal development of all stakeholders in the school by building a community with intentionality. These connections provide the three essential ingredients for school success:

- **A willingness to learn:** Without willingness, each interaction becomes a power struggle instead of a learning opportunity. The School Family brings all children, especially the most difficult, to a place of willingness through a sense of belonging.
- **Impulse control:** Connection with others is the construct that literally wires the brain for impulse control. Disconnected children are disruptive. External reward/punishment systems cannot improve a child's ability to self-regulate because they are not designed to teach new skills. The School Family uses connection to internally encourage impulse control and teaches self-regulation skills in context.
- **Attention:** The human attentional system is sensitive to stress and becomes engaged with positive emotions. The School Family reduces stress while creating an atmosphere of caring, encouragement, and meaningful contributions. These components are essential for children to develop and apply sustained attention.

The School Family creates a fundamental shift in education and classroom management that moves from coercion, fear and external rewards to intrinsic motivation, helpfulness, problem-solving and connection.

Seven Powers for Conscious Adults

This aspect of Conscious Discipline enables adults who work with children to become conscious of hurtful patterns and enables them to change those patterns, remaining calm in the face of antagonism and disorder. The Seven Powers for Conscious Adults empower the adults in the school building to self-regulate and proactively address student behavior without moving to a place of frustration, fear, sarcasm, or punitive measures, empowering all stakeholders in a more calm, orderly, and respectful culture. The seven powers are

1. Power of Perception: No one can make you angry without your permission.
2. Power of Unity: We are all in this together.
3. Power of Attention: What we focus on, we get more of. When we are upset, we are always focused on what we don't want.
4. Power of Free Will: The only person you can make change is yourself.
5. Power of Acceptance: The moment is as it is
6. Power of Love: See the best in others.
7. Power of Intention: Mistakes are opportunities to learn.

Brain State Model

The Brain State Model surpasses behavioral approaches that teach specific behaviors, and offers a neuro-developmental model of the brain. The Conscious Discipline approach empowers staff to be conscious of brain-body states in themselves and children. It then provides staff with the practical skills needed to manage thoughts, feeling and actions. With this ability to self-regulate, staff members are then able to teach students to do the same, both through modeling and explicit instruction in and practice with those practical skills. This helps students who are physically aggressive (survival state) or verbally aggressive (emotional state) become more integrated so they can learn and use problem-solving skills (executive state).

In addition to the implementation of curricular resources for students to be used in advisories, Conscious Discipline principles will be taught as part of the staff-wide professional development. Behavior support for each student will be based on this model, using the tools and skills as a means to make conformity to behavioral norms through the Conscious Discipline model a means of teaching students a variety of skills that will benefit them through school and life. Parents will also have access to training and tools in Conscious Discipline (a complete parent resource module is available through Conscious Discipline) as a part of the parent outreach and initiative to provide consistent support not only throughout the school day, but at home as well. Trained advisory council members and the support of Georgia State University will make the Conscious Discipline framework and tools available to all staff and parents.

Responding to Infractions

When students commit infractions as defined in the Code of Conduct (Appendix R), the disciplinary approach will be shaped by Conscious Discipline and the positive behavior support paradigm. Some means of addressing infractions may include but are not limited to the following:

- Teacher-student and/or counselor-student conferences
- Student-led discussion with teacher or school principal that outlines the events leading up to the incident
- Behavior contracts individualized to student needs
- Redirection and/or removal from the situation that gave rise to the infraction
- The development of or reminders of self-monitoring strategies to prevent future infractions
- Access to “fresh air breaks”, sensory regulation, or other appropriate means of redirecting student anxiety/frustration
- Communication plans to guide students in communicating their needs that may include communication support tools

Any student who is receiving special education services or has been identified as a student with a disability under IDEA or a student who may qualify for services and whose acts are determined by the teacher, principal, or board to have violated any rules, regulations or laws as alleged, shall be referred to an IEP committee to determine if the student’s conduct is a manifestation of his/her disability. If a student with disabilities has an IEP that includes disciplinary guidelines, that student will be disciplined according to those guidelines as required by IDEA. Nothing in the Tapestry approach to discipline and culture will be permitted to infringe upon any rights provided pursuant to IDEA, Section 504, or the ADA.

30. Describe the rules and procedures concerning how the school will address grievances and complaints from students, parents, and teachers.

Student/Parent Grievances

Student/parent grievances will be addressed first at the school site, with parents encouraged to communicate openly and frequently with staff through ongoing informal and formal measures initiated by the school. All parents will have access to each staff member's email, and all emails will be responded to in a timely manner as a part of each staff member's job requirement. Parents are encouraged to visit the school site and all staff will make themselves available to confer with parents by appointment.

If a parent is unable to resolve a grievance with the staff member or if the grievance involves school leadership, parents may schedule an appointment with the principal. An appointment to discuss a concern will be made promptly, and parents will be asked to communicate the nature of the concern and parties who should attend the conference when scheduling the appointment. Parents may bring representation to this appointment if they so desire. After the meeting with the principal, an official response (in print) to the grievance will be made by the principal within 5 business days. If the grievance is still unresolved after this step or if the grievance is with the board, parents will be able to contact the board chair to schedule an audience with the board. Upon communication of the grievance, the board chair will determine whether the grievance should be heard at the next regularly scheduled board meeting or in closed session before the next board meeting. Parents may also bring representation and/or witnesses to this appointment if they so desire. The board will make a decision regarding the grievance within 5 business days of the hearing, and the written decision will be submitted to the parents and any involved staff, as pertinent. The say of the board is considered the final say in the grievance.

Staff Grievances

Staff grievances will follow the same chain of command, starting with strong encouragement to resolve the grievance amongst the parties involved through informal measures. If the grievance cannot be resolved by the staff member's manager, the matter will next be heard in a scheduled appointment with the principal. If the grievance is still unresolved after this step or if the grievance is with the board, the staff member will contact the board chair to schedule an audience with the board. Upon communication of the grievance, the board chair will determine whether the grievance should be heard at the next regularly scheduled board meeting or in closed session before the next board meeting. Staff members may also bring representation and/or witnesses to this appointment if they so desire. The board will make a decision regarding the grievance within 5 business days of the hearing, and the written decision will be submitted to the staff member and any other involved party, as pertinent. The say of the board is considered the final say in the grievance. General staff grievances will be aired and addressed through the two elected staff representatives on the board, who may be asked to recuse themselves from grievance hearings for other staff members.

Under the whistleblower policy, staff members must report suspected fraud and dishonest conduct to the chair of the board or the chair of the board finance committee, who then have responsibility to investigate all reported violations.

31. Generally describe the charter school's employment procedures and policies.

Employment Procedures and Policies

Tapestry utilizes the selection process outlined in Question 39 to hire its staff. This comprehensive process ensures that the school principal hires the most qualified staff members who will enable the school to meet and surpass its goals. Tapestry does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, or disability. All Tapestry staff sign an "at will" agreement. This agreement allows staff members to leave Tapestry with or without written notice and with or without cause. The agreement also enables administration to dismiss staff members with or without written notice and with or without cause.

The Tapestry principal will determine the compensation and benefits package for each employee based on experience, qualifications, and responsibilities of the specific position being hired. The Tapestry salary scale, included in Appendix Q, provides a guideline for the salary range for each position. All Tapestry staff members are required to undergo fingerprinting and formal background checks to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. See Question 39 for a detailed explanation of the recruitment, hiring, and evaluation processes.

Organizational Model

Due to the small size of the school, all teachers, volunteers, counseling staff, and the business manager will be organized under the principal (who reports directly to the board). The business manager supervises the registrar and any non-instructional staff. See Appendix F for the Tapestry organizational chart. Additional levels of support are organized through Critical Friends Groups (CFG), each of which is led by a staff member as part of his/her annual leadership development goals. These CFG leaders oversee peer observations, help teachers collect and analyze data, and work with the principal to provide support to teachers. Because of the collaborative environment, which is characterized by a growth mindset, all teachers will work together to hold each other accountable for growth toward student and staff goals.

32. If certification by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC) is not required, please provide a description of the training and experience that will be required, including how the school will determine whether a teacher has demonstrated competency in the subject area(s) in which he/she will teach as required by NCLB. If the teacher is required to be highly qualified under No Child Left Behind, please describe how the school will ensure the teachers meet the definition of highly qualified.

All instructional staff, including co-teachers, enrichment/electives teachers, and other staff will be selected based on their experience, skills, and mission-alignment and may not have the current certifications or qualifications required in the traditional school setting; however, those instructional staff candidates with appropriate certification and highly-qualified status will be given priority in hiring. Depending on the position for which they are hired, Tapestry will require the following of any instructional and/or leadership staff who do not possess current GAPSC certification:

- Experience and demonstrated proficiency serving the target population and/or similar student populations

- Training and/or certification in related skill sets that are applicable to the position
- Mission-alignment and a demonstrated understanding of the educational model being administered

All instructional staff without local, current credentials and certifications will be encouraged and supported in pursuing applicable certifications as part of their professional development process. Partnerships with several local university schools of education will provide resources and support for teachers to obtain credentials necessary for their position.

33. Describe whether the charter school will use the state salary schedule, and if another schedule will be used, provide that schedule. Please attach the salary schedule to be used.

Tapestry will base compensation on the salary schedule included as Appendix Q, but the final decision in compensation for each staff member will be the purview of the principal. Salaries are intended to be competitive with state averages, but the recruitment and retention of staff will be predicated on mission-fit and a highly collaborative environment, rather than higher salary than that of DCSD traditional schools. Tapestry reserves the right to revise this schedule as part of the annual budget process should economic constraints prevent Tapestry from continuing to offer the salary schedule attached. Tapestry may also offer higher salaries based on an employee's experience or expertise, should funding become available.

34. Describe the charter school's procedures to ensure compliance with the requirement that staff members are subject to fingerprinting and background checks.

All offers of employment are contingent upon fingerprinting and a clean background check being completed in advance of the start date. Additionally, all governing board members will undergo fingerprinting and a background check. The business manager will maintain staff files, overseeing that each employee and volunteer complies with this requirement and has a clean background check before beginning work at the school site.

35. Describe the charter school's insurance coverage, including the terms and conditions and coverage amounts thereof.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(b)(5), The DeKalb County Board of Education is included as an additional insured, and Tapestry shall hold harmless and indemnify DeKalb County School District, the board of education, its members, officers and employees for every liability, claim or demand upon the charter school; and Tapestry agrees to defend and indemnify the DeKalb County Board of Education in any action arising in any way from the charter school's activities. (Appendix U)

Insurance coverage will include the following (at a minimum):

- Workers compensation (the limits of which shall be in compliance with state law)
- Employers' liability insurance to cover bodily injury by accident in the amount of \$100,000 for each accident
- Bodily injury by disease in the amount of \$100,000 for each employee
- Comprehensive general liability insurance in the following forms:

- (1) comprehensive form;
- (2) contractual insurance;
- (3) personal injury;
- (4) broad form property damage;
- (5) premise - operations; and
- (6) completed operations.

This coverage shall be in the amount not less than \$1,000,000, combined single limit, and shall also cover the use of all equipment, hoists, and vehicles on the premises not covered by automobile liability. The policy coverage will be on an occurrence basis.

- Automobile liability insurance will be in the following amount:
 - (1) comprehensive insurance in an amount not less than \$1,000,000 for bodily injury and property damage combined single limit; and
 - (2) specific extensions of comprehensive form coverage and coverage for all Tapestry-owned, hired, leased and non-owned vehicles used in the operation of Tapestry.

In addition, Tapestry will maintain a crime/fidelity bond, which covers all persons receiving or disbursing funds. This policy, which is insured up to \$1 million, will be maintained during the length of the renewal term, and evidence of such coverage is submitted annually to the DCSD BOE. See Appendix U for a coverage proposal from a possible vendor.

36. Describe whether transportation services will be provided and include a statement that the transportation program will comply with applicable law. If transportation services are not provided, explain how this will not discourage eligible students from attending the school.

At this time, Tapestry does not plan to provide transportation services. Through ongoing communication with MARTA (specifically with Sharon Crenshaw, Director of MARTA Mobility and Mia Tidwell, the Travel Training Program Coordinator), Tapestry is confident families will have a myriad of options to transport students to and from school, including discounted MARTA access, carpools organized by the parent support organization, or access to a transportation provider for a low-cost, fee-based service. Like many magnet and charter programs throughout the district, it is anticipated that the families who enroll at Tapestry will make arrangements for their own transportation. Because MARTA has an organizational priority around transportation services for residents who have physical and intellectual challenges, this department has committed to providing resources, education, and training for students and their families on how to use MARTA to meet their transportation needs.

Should school leadership determine that the absence of transportation services is a barrier preventing interested families from attending Tapestry, they may choose to adopt a transportation program that will comply with all applicable laws and obtain the necessary permits and insurance to provide for such a program.

37. State whether the charter school will provide food services (including participation in federal school meals programs). If food services will be provided, please describe this program briefly.

Tapestry will provide food services for those students who choose to purchase a lunch at school but does not intend to participate in the Federal School Meal Program at this time.

Because of common dietary approaches taken by families who have students with autism, a provider will be chosen who can provide meals that align with family needs, such as gluten-free and casein-free options. The assumption for food services in the budget represents an average of estimates provided by vendors who would be able to accommodate these needs. The provision of meals that meet these needs make it likely that the food services program at Tapestry will be popular with families, thus the assumption of high participation. Current facilities options and an interest in reducing olfactory stimuli on-site will require the vendor to prepare meals off-site and transport food to the school each day. All guidelines and regulations around food preparation, storage, and distribution will be the purview of the selected vendor, but will be overseen by the school's business manager.

38. State whether the charter school will elect to participate in the State Health Benefit Plan as provided pursuant to O.C.G.A. §20-2-880 and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-910.

Tapestry does not intend to participate in the State Health Benefit Plan, but reserves the right to do so in the future if it becomes financially feasible.

39. Describe the proposed staff qualifications, employee recruitment procedures, hiring practices, compensation, and employee evaluation procedures. For Conversion Charters: please state, the charter will adhere to current DCSD policies, procedures and standards in all areas regarding the status of district employees to include treatment, qualifications/credentials, placement, compensation, and evaluations. DeKalb County Schools maintains absolute authority in all employment matters.

Recruitment

Because of the unique model Tapestry seeks to provide, mission-alignment and attitudes about learning will be especially critical for all staff. Tapestry's recruitment for staff will focus heavily on the supportive community of professionals who are involved in work with autism and related challenges. Through the robust partnerships being formed and consistent outreach to both individuals and organizations that serve the needs of the autism community, Tapestry founders have already tapped into a number of entities such as schools and service providers that train professionals who would be a strong fit for the Tapestry mission. Outreach in the autism community to parents has also yielded a wealth of resources to find teachers and other necessary professionals who are eager to apply their experience and expertise in a school that focuses on inclusion, rather than work in a school as part of a department that serves a small percentage of the student body. Some of the programs that have committed (Appendix K) or are expected to commit staff to the programmatic needs at Tapestry upon petition approval include the University of West Georgia, Brenau University, Mercer University, Georgia State University, and Kennesaw State University.

As one of only three schools nationwide that has an established focus on inclusion for students with autism, Tapestry plans to conduct a national search to recruit the most committed and skilled teachers who have experience and/or interest in serving adolescent students with ASD in an inclusion environment. Other means of staff recruitment, both for founding staff and throughout the operation of the school, will include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Advertising in print media and professional journals
- Postings in online job search engines
- Recruitment at professional conferences and meetings
- Networking with service providers and partners
- Outreach to local schools, institutions, and other educational programs that train/certify eligible professionals (including those universities and programs with whom Tapestry has formed partnerships)
- Networking with other CES schools and schools throughout the country who provide services for students with autism
- General outreach, marketing, and communications will be afforded through the partnership with Razorfish (Appendix K).

Hiring Processes

In the start-up phase of the school and for staff vacancies annually, the board will organize a hiring committee comprised of parents, board members, and advisory council members who will hire the principal and then support the principal in vetting candidates for all other positions. Although it will ultimately be the decision of the principal as to who is hired, the purpose of the hiring committee is to provide a whole community vetting process to ensure the school staff is strong, mission-aligned, and best positioned to meet and exceed the goals outlined herein. The hiring committee will be an ad hoc committee organized annually at the behest of the board chair and will include expertise not only in education, but also finance, operations, and HR to ensure all candidates are vetted for the various responsibilities they may be expected to shoulder. Special attention to candidates' philosophy of education and demonstrated success in building caring, productive relationships with students will be crucial.

Candidate Selection Process

For all staff, including non-instructional, the selection process begins with the submission of the following application materials: resume or CV, cover letter that outlines the candidate's interest in Tapestry and inclusion model for students with an ASD, and a philosophy statement (tailored to the position for which the candidate is applying). Candidates who submit satisfactory application materials will then be invited to participate in a phone interview with a member of the hiring committee during start-up (or the principal in subsequent years). This interview will serve to ensure mission-alignment and a clear understanding of the principles upon which the school was founded. After a successful phone interview, candidates will be asked to submit professional references and unofficial transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended. Once this step has been successfully completed, instructional candidates will be asked to submit a lesson plan and conduct a lesson—this may be video-taped with the candidate's own class or set up as a teaching demonstration on site by the hiring committee or principal. An in-person debrief with the hiring committee on the lesson and to cover other areas of interest will then be scheduled if the lesson is satisfactory and demonstrates the tenor of classroom leadership Tapestry founders seek. For non-instructional staff, the lesson will be substituted with a performance task assignment that will be submitted to the hiring committee/principal for review. Once a candidate successfully makes it through all of the aforementioned steps, a final in-person interview will be held with the principal. If an offer of employment is made as a result of this final interview, the candidate will need to complete fingerprinting and background check before the at-will agreement is signed and employment begins.

Dismissal

All Tapestry employees sign an “at will” agreement. The agreement enables administration to dismiss staff members with or without written notice and with or without cause.

Compensation

Given the small size of the school, highly supportive environment, and other means of ensuring staff satisfaction, Tapestry is not planning to offer a higher salary than that of its parent district, but has created a draft salary scale that is competitive with state averages. The Tapestry principal determines the compensation (within the approved annual budget) for each employee based on experience, qualifications, and responsibilities of the position. In addition, some teachers may be offered a stipend in exchange for additional duties. See Appendix Q for the proposed Tapestry salary schedule upon which compensation designations may be based.

Tapestry will offer a benefits package to all staff members through a third-party benefits provider. Depending on the expense of coverage, Tapestry may ask staff to pay a portion of their coverage. Tapestry does not anticipate providing benefits through the state health benefits plan, but reserves the right to do so should participation become financially feasible.

As dictated by law, all full-time Tapestry teachers participate in the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS). The Tapestry business manager will oversee this relationship and make arrangements with the TRS directly. Tapestry acknowledges it is subject to the requirements of TRS and making contributions for each Tapestry participant.

Staff Retention

Research shows that the most critical factor in high-quality staff retention is not compensation but a supportive, mission-aligned environment that enables teachers to participate actively in decision-making. In fact, teachers repeatedly report that a positive, collaborative school climate and support from colleagues and administrators are the most important factors influencing whether they stay in a school²⁴. Hiring teachers with a common mindset is the foundation of the teacher retention plan. A highly collaborative environment that encourages a growth mindset is manifest in common planning time, daily student study meetings, Critical Friends Group protocols for PD, and staff-wide decision-making on key school mode elements. In addition, a “re-sign” bonus is included for all teachers after their second year of employment with an annual incremental increase in salary thereafter (currently assumed at 2% annually—see Appendix N).

Professional Development

Tapestry is dedicated to supporting professional growth of teachers, and as such will plan and institute a myriad of professional development measures. The goal of the professional development program is not just to inculcate staff into an environment and practices that will serve students, but to provide each teacher and non-instructional staff member with the tools and support they need to grow and feel invested. Professional development initiatives will be driven by the interests and needs of teachers in much the same way curriculum will be tailored to the needs and interests of students. The principal will baseline each staff member through an

²⁴ Hirsch, E. & Emerick, S. with K. Church and E. Fuller. (2006) *Teaching and learning conditions are critical to the success of students and the retention of teachers: Final report on the 2006 Clark County teaching and learning conditions survey*. Hillsborough, N.C.: Center for Teaching Quality.

entrance interview that yields an inventory of interests and goals that will shape each staff member's coaching and provide the platform for measuring each teacher's growth (see Appendix W for a template that will be used for this).

Due to the robust outreach of the founding team and an ongoing focus on relationship-building with professionals in the autism community, Tapestry has secured and is continuing to develop myriad partnerships with leading experts in a variety of educational programs. As outlined in the LOIs in Appendix K, many of these entities will provide professional development, individual staff coaching and support, and assessment of strategies to drive PD initiatives as a foundation of the support they will offer. Moreover, all partners have agreed to participate in a Tapestry Consortium, which will meet annually, in order to set goals and ensure the success of Tapestry. The following partners have committed to supporting the growth and development of Tapestry staff through PD, training, and continuing education (in addition to other services their partnership agreement may entail):

- *Brenau University*: Faculty and OT students will provide coaching and support on OT strategies to be incorporated across the school day, as well as PD on sensory-sensitivity challenges, sensory-based instructional strategies, transition planning, and OT-framed supports.
- *Georgia State University Center for Leadership in Disability*: As a core component of the partnership with the center, faculty will provide one-on-one coaching and whole staff PD on Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), integration of vocational skills into the curriculum, and transition planning.
- *Kennesaw State University Department of Inclusive Education*: The KSU department of Inclusive Education faculty will take the lead in training and PD on Universal Design for Learning and building curriculum rooted in student interest. They will also provide PD and ongoing coaching (and evaluation) on the inclusion program as a whole, tailoring PD to the demonstrated needs of the inclusion model at Tapestry as data becomes available. This may include analysis of student data to cooperatively plan programmatic revisions, review of scopes and sequences, and other supports of the inclusion environment's success.
- *Mercer University*: Faculty from Mercer have already participated in the selection and review of curricular materials, and will continue to provide support to staff in choosing and revising the right instructional materials and curricula to meet the needs of students.
- *New Normal Society*: This agency will provide strategies for reciprocal social opportunities in the classroom, positive ways to communicate with typically developing peers about the autism spectrum, and ways staff can engage the families of those on the spectrum. Staff will lead ongoing PD sessions designed to help teachers understand how the student with autism experiences the classroom, accompanied by strategies that not only supports students with autism, but also students with a variety of learning differences.
- *University of West Georgia*: One of the many supports provided through this partnership will include PD and strategies to integrate writing and communication skills effectively across content with the needs of students with ASD in mind. UWG faculty will also provide whole staff training and one-on-one coaching to teachers as requested on ESOL best practices and integration and support of EL students in the inclusion setting. The speech-language-pathology team will provide additional support and training as

appropriate, with the ultimate goal of affording a designated professional to serve as staff speech pathologist for the school.

Staff-Wide Professional Development

Time for professional development is integrated into the weekly schedule with an expectation that all staff will participate in PD/staff meetings for no less than one hour weekly after student dismissal. This time will be dedicated to staff-wide trainings, team-building, student study sessions, data analysis, the sharing of classroom practices, lesson plans, or student work, and other initiatives. Different staff members may volunteer to facilitate meetings, and all staff members will be encouraged and expected to present during this time, at least once per semester, on a topic of their choice. For example, staff who have won a mini-grant will use this time to present what they have learned. Others will share something that is or is not working in their classroom in order to disseminate best practices and collaboratively problem-solve. Guest speakers and facilitators may be invited from the myriad partners to provide additional tools and strategies.

Non-instructional staff will be encouraged to participate in all meetings that are not explicitly instruction-based so they can meaningfully participate in the school culture and meet student needs. This creates greater consistency in the school culture and better enables all staff to work together toward common goals. Staff-wide PD may be held off-campus if appropriate, and may include visits to other schools and service providers, professional conferences, and even “learning labs” that may be used to deliver student instruction (such as a nature walk to explore how outdoor education can convey ELA standards or a meeting on school grounds to plan a geometry lesson measuring features of the school building).

Each summer, all staff will gather for 5-10 days to determine scopes and sequences and unit plans, participate in professional development, and collaboratively plan their year. This summer session will utilize baseline student data of incoming students, enabling teachers to plan specifically for the students they will serve. This also gives new staff a chance to team-build with colleagues and learn the culture of the school. An additional retreat is planned mid-year and will be supported by school partners and fundraising.

Critical Friends Group

The Critical Friends Group (CFG) is an ongoing professional learning community comprised of small groups of staff members who participate in regularly scheduled (monthly or more) meetings led by a staff member who has been trained in the CFG facilitator protocol. The CFG protocol provides for a small group of educators to improve their practice through collaborative learning. Members of a CFG use different protocols to examine issues/dilemmas related to student learning, look closely at student work, debrief peer observations, learn from print and other texts, and reflect upon teacher work.

Critical Friends Groups develop improved teaching practice and student outcomes by

- Creating a community of constant learning and reflective practice
- Making teaching practice explicit and public by “talking about teaching”
- Helping stakeholders work collaboratively in democratic, reflective communities with a common purpose

- Establishing a foundation for sustained professional development based on a spirit of inquiry and trust
- Providing a context for staff to understand work with students, relationships with peers, and thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs about teaching and learning
- Helping educators turn theories into practice and standards into actual student learning.

Staff will be organized into flexible CFG that meet no less than once each month. The topics and facilitators for these groups will be dependent upon the student and teacher needs. Support and training from advisory council members and partnerships will establish the CFG protocol for teachers at Tapestry.

Continuing Education Mini-Grants

Another element of the professional development program at Tapestry is a fund earmarked for continuing education mini-grants. The funds will be made available to teachers and administrators through a competitive process, with the requirement that staff members share out what they have learned with a designated CFG or whole staff. Tapestry staff can apply for these funds by submitting a proposal to a designated team who will use specific criteria, agreed upon by founding teachers and the board academic excellence committee, to determine which initiatives will most significantly benefit the school.

An application for a professional development mini-grant for professional development funds might include the following:

- Alignment of PD activity to mission, vision, school goals, and student/staff needs
- Measurable outcomes that will be established as a result of the PD
- Ongoing support and/or relationships that will be established as a result of the PD experience
- Explicit plan to share out the information and materials acquired at the training
- Proposals for ongoing costs that may be incurred as a result of fidelity or ongoing implementation of training elements.

Although the total amount available for mini-grants annually will vary according to the budget, relationships with partner entities and community organizations are likely to yield access to training even when funding is low. Fundraising initiatives annually will be organized around the mini-grant fund, with a minimum amount established as a component of the annual budget's base expenses.

Individualized Evaluation and Coaching

As part of the individualized approach to education at Tapestry, each teacher will have an Individualized Professional Development Plan (IPDP) that guides his/her professional growth annually. The IPDP begins with an entrance interview with the principal before the start of the school year wherein s/he inventories the staff member's strengths, interests, and growth areas. Where possible, data such as student outcomes in previous years will be used to help formulate goals that align to both school-wide performance goals and pedagogical philosophy. As a result of this interview, each staff member will have an annual plan that outlines specific target outcomes for the year and one to three foci for continuing education and coaching. Although coaching throughout the year may provide support in areas outside of the IPDP, the consistent

thread of coaching and progress monitoring will be based on these foci. Pursuit of professional development outside of Tapestry should align to school-wide or IPDP goals, with common foci that exist across staff members helping to organize CFG and/or staff-wide PD topics. Foci for the year might include anything from having difficult conversations to integrating arts content into the core subject area standards to using assistive technology.

Throughout the year, each staff member will be observed frequently and informally. A protocol such as the Marshall Mini-Observation²⁵ protocol that incorporates Tapestry teacher competencies, may be used to guide observations and feedback in these brief, frequent visits. A teacher competency framework, such as the one included in Appendix W, will be modified to the needs of Tapestry and used to create consistency around teacher development and competency evaluation. The protocol will not just be limited to instructional staff, with the same principle applied to check-ins with non-instructional staff as well. All staff will be encouraged to participate in peer observations using the same competency framework and will have designated release times during instruction where they will be covered by a member of the leadership team in order to observe and provide feedback to a colleague.

The plethora of feedback from these frequent observations will be used to guide each staff member in a collaborative, strengths-based approach to evaluating professional growth throughout the year. Each staff member will participate in a mid-year conference and end-of-year conference using notes from these observations, self-assessment tools, and student performance data to collaborate with the principal on a formal annual evaluation, which is included in the staff member's permanent file and based on the competency framework included in Appendix W. This collaborative, supportive approach to professional growth will support the growth mindset critical to establishing high teacher satisfaction and performance.

School Principal

Recruitment and Hire

The most critical hire for Tapestry will be that of the founding principal. A key focus in the substantial outreach being conducted by founders is casting a wide net for principal candidates. Because this will be the first hire (with all other staff hired by the principal), founders have begun conversations with partners and individuals about the experience, skills, and mindset that the founding principal must have. In addition to mission-alignment, commitment to an effective model of inclusion for students with autism, understanding and dedication to the CES elements of the school, expertise and experience with the target student age group, and a proven track record of excellence in school leadership, the founding principal must possess the flexibility, ingenuity, and resilience necessary to be the founding leader of a start-up charter school. The alignment of resources through the board and advisory council serve not only to support a founding principal once s/he has been hired, but to instigate a hearty recruitment process that ensures Tapestry will be positioned to recruit and retain the best-qualified principal in the country. Like the process and resources outlined above for recruitment of other staff, these same processes and resources will be used to ensure the widest net possible is cast for this critical hire. The principal will be awarded a stipend to begin his/her role in a part-time capacity as soon as

²⁵ Marshall, Kim. 'Mini-Observations' – *Seven Decision Points for the Principal*. Education Week, Vol. 28, Issue 20, Pages 24-25: Published Online: Feb. 3, 2009, in Print: Feb. 4, 2009

this professional has been found, and at least one semester in advance of the first operational year of the school.

The hiring committee, as described above, will use the same process outlined for hiring staff to choose the principal. In lieu of a teaching demonstration, principal candidates will deliver an original presentation, which outlines their vision for the school. Furthermore, they will participate in an array of assignments that include simulated tasks common to a school leader (such as budget revisions, completing documentation for federal grant compliance, writing a letter to a community partner, or having a difficult conversation with a parent). The debrief after these tasks will focus on the candidate's ability to not only successfully complete the tasks (or find resources for tasks with which they need support), but to analyze and prioritize action steps for the school they visited. In addition to interviews with the founding board, principal candidates may also be asked to meet community stakeholders, who can in turn provide feedback to the hiring committee.

Once selected, the principal will receive a competitive salary and benefits package commensurate with his/her experience and expertise. Because founders plan to have the principal begin work on a stipend basis in January of 2014, the vetting process will begin immediately upon charter approval (recruitment is already ongoing).

Professional Development and Evaluation

Like the rest of the Tapestry staff, the principal will be expected to have a growth mindset and participate in a meaningful, ongoing professional growth plan. The academic excellence committee will collaborate with other committees as appropriate to devise a dashboard of data points, upon which the principal will report to the board monthly. These data points will be one element of the principal's annual evaluation—s/he will be expected to *exceed* the goals outlined herein for the school, and constant close attention to the data in relation to these goals will be a component of the principal's coaching from the board. The entrance interview, mid-year conference, and end-of-the-year interview process adopted for all staff will also apply to the principal and will be led by an appropriate board member or a leadership coach with whom the board contracts. This ensures the principal is also able to set annual professional growth goals and pursue training and coaching that align with his/her interests, skills, and goals to facilitate effective growth and support on all levels of the organization. The designated principal coach will also participate in several observations at the school site annually to provide observation notes to supplement dashboard data. As a collaborative process, the principal will be expected to self-advocate and self-assess, leveraging the collective expertise and vast resources represented through the myriad partnerships and advisory council/board volunteers on behalf of the school.

IX. Facilities

40. Describe the school facilities to be used, their location(s), and any pending modifications necessary for utilizing the space for educational purposes. Please state whether the building is new or existing. Building plans must be approved by the DeKalb County School's Facilities department. If the charter intends to lease or contract with a church or other religious organization, please attach a completed questionnaire regarding this arrangement (please see DCSD Charter Guidelines for this form).

At present, Tapestry's first choice for a facility is the Northeast Baptist Church at 4046 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, 30340. This facility has a separate designated educational area that is free from religious iconography and has the square footage and classroom space needed to accommodate the school program through capacity. Green space on the campus is appropriate for the school garden, a critical element of the science curriculum. Students may have lunch in the classrooms (to reduce stimuli and provide students with social interaction in small groupings) or in the large fellowship hall for those who wish to eat in a more communal environment; meals will be prepared off-site and delivered pursuant to a vendor contract. The large green space can accommodate organized sports activities, and there is a paved trail around the building that can be safely used as a track for running. Indoor PE is provided in the sensory room for activities such as yoga or weight-lifting and on days where outdoor exercise is not possible. Each classroom will maintain a library (supplemented by materials available through student laptops). Tapestry will occupy 14 classrooms, a music room, a sensory room, a library, and office space. (note diagram Appendix T).

At present, the terms of a potential agreement have been established by the church and the budget is based on these assumptions, including an all-inclusive monthly lease that includes some classroom furniture, infrastructure and hard-wiring for phones and technology, storage space, utilities and regulation/safety compliance maintenance, facility and grounds maintenance and upkeep, and access to an adequate number of classrooms and space for meetings through capacity. In addition, the facility is equipped with an elevator and bathrooms that are ADA-compliant.

Other options that are being investigated include the establishment of mobile units on DCSD property, (such as in the vacant space available behind the Technology Center at 2652 Lawrenceville Highway Decatur, GA 30033) or available space in a surplus facility. Because the Tapestry program will be comfortably accommodated in a small facility or in no more than four modular units on an underused campus, space on a DCSD property would be a first-choice when and if it becomes available. The private space leased by The Museum School at Avondale Estates (First Baptist Church, 47 Covington Road, Avondale Estates, GA 30002) in its inaugural year is another option, as is in the classroom space at the Salvation Army (2090 North Druid Hills Road, Atlanta, GA 30329). Availability and preliminary estimates from each entity have already been secured and are available upon request. Appendix T includes an LOI and floor plans from the primary facility option, as well as a proposal for modular units, should space on a DCSD campus become available.

Although the primary facility choice requires no renovation to accommodate a school program, as a part of the Tapestry model any facility adopted on a temporary or permanent basis will be modified to accommodate sensory processing challenges. These renovations will be overseen by OTs from Brenau University under the guidance of Carol Taylor and/or Jenene Craig. The Northeast Baptist Church is particularly ideal as a first site because it will require no renovations and only minor modifications to lighting, which could be accommodated within the terms of the lease at no additional expense to the school.

Any facility to be used will meet all codes for sanitation, fire, construction, stability, temperature, ventilation, and suitability of physical space. The principal, business manager, or

designee will grant access to local health and fire department officials for inspection of the premises or operations of the school for purposes of ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of students and employees pursuant to Georgia Statutes and National Fire Protection Association Life Safety Code, N.F.P.A. 101 in advance of the start of school or as directed.

Tapestry acknowledges that it is subject to all federal, state, and local rules, regulations, court orders, and statutes relating to civil rights, insurance, the protection of physical health and safety of school students, employees and visitors, conflicting interest transactions, and the prevention of unlawful conduct.

41. Please provide a statement that any future facility used to house students will be subject to approval by the local Board of Education and the Department prior to occupancy.

Any future facility used to house students will be subject to approval by the local board of education and the state department of education prior to occupancy.

42. Provide documentation of ownership or a copy of the lease of the facility. If ownership documentation or a lease is unavailable, provide a timeline for obtaining such facilities or providing such documentation (this question does not apply to conversion charter schools).

See Appendix T for the LOI from Northeast Baptist Church. Proposals from several other sites that fit within the current proposed budget (including the Salvation Army site) are available upon request. Once the charter is approved and a facility confirmed, Tapestry will provide all facility documentation to DCPS and GADOE as required (and in advance of the start of the first operational year).

43. Attach a copy of Certificate of Occupancy. Please provide a Certificate of Occupancy, or a timeline detailing the latest possible date by which the Certificate of Occupancy will be obtained prior to students occupying the proposed facility.

The Certificate of Occupancy will be obtained and submitted to DCSD and GADOE by June 30, 2014.

44. Provide the school's emergency safety plan, which may constitute a statement that the petitioner will prepare a safety plan in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1185 and will submit and obtain approval of that plan from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency by a specified date.

Tapestry leadership will develop a school emergency safety plan in accordance with O.C.G.A. §20-2-1185 and will submit and obtain approval of that plan from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency by June 1, 2014. This approved plan will be submitted to DCSD and the GADOE as required.

45. Provide a copy of the school's site selection form.

See Appendix T for the required Questionnaire for a school housed in a faith-based facilities and the State school site selection form (with all sections available to petitioners completed and remaining sections to be submitted upon approval).

X. Parent and Community Involvement

46. Describe how parents, community members, and other interested parties contributed to the development of the petition and how they will be involved in the school.

Beginning in 2012 with a team comprised of DCSD parents and service providers from the autism community, founders began a discovery period of meeting with parents, teachers, and other community professionals interested in an inclusion-model charter school in DCSD that was focused on how to best meet the needs of students with ASD in a truly inclusion environment. This discovery period included research, sharing of information, informal meetings, and the establishment of electronic information sharing to make a wide array of information available to all interested parties. At the first official meeting in March of 2012, approximately 25 people moved the project forward by proposing and developing concepts and establishing the mission, target community, and guiding principles of the school. Founders have hosted community forums nearly every month since the inception of the plan, and advertisements in DCSD PTA newsletters and other print media has been used to widely advertise and invite participation. The founding team (board and advisory council), now comprised of more than 45 core members, with the support of educational consulting services, then spent the next year meeting with interested stakeholders, supporters, and decision-makers to craft the comprehensive plan described herein. As outlined in Appendix L, another 130+ community members participated in small group and/or one-on-one meetings to provide input and vet initial plans for the school.

At present, more than half of the board is comprised of parents of students on the autism spectrum, with the remaining members invested as professionals and practitioners working in the community, including one with autism (many more parents are included in the advisory council). The robust partnerships developed have lent another level of investment from the community, leveraging the expertise of universities, therapists, teachers, and other volunteers with talent and experience not only to the crafting of the charter, but to the ongoing founding and operation of the school. Moving forward, the school will continue to maintain a board that has significant parent representation, as well as an advisory council giving stakeholders without the time to devote to a board seat a role in actively supporting the school. Myriad volunteer opportunities will be made available to parents and other interested community members as well, making the school a true grass-roots enterprise. Volunteer opportunities will be managed by the business manager and principal and will include but are not limited to clerical support, receptionist responsibilities, cultivation of gardens, tutoring/mentoring, club/extracurricular sponsorship, and school site maintenance/beautification.

47. Describe in detail the community support for this school and the need for this particular school in the community it will serve. Support may be evidenced through additional documentation (see DCSD Guidelines for Charter School Petitions for details).

In addition to a highly-involved board of 15 members, advisory council of more than 20 (and growing), and many committed partners with other partnerships in process pending charter

approval, Tapestry has secured a number of other means of community support. More than \$100,000 has been raised to date, coming from the individual contributions of more than 250 community members. There are also over 250 signatures on a petition of support (largely comprised of prospective parents) with more following school developments on the mailing list or on social networking sites. Every meeting has been well attended with a diverse turnout of parents and stakeholders. See Appendix M for additional documentation of community support.

As outlined in the Executive Summary and Questions 1 and 2, the need for the school is demonstrated not only by overwhelming prospective parent interest, donations, and volunteerism, but through a review of academic performance data for DCPS. As the number of students with autism grows (having increased 507% in Georgia public schools over the last eleven years), the percentage of students with autism served in an inclusion environment in DCSD is less than 50%. This highly-supportive, innovative school model will serve students with a variety of needs and backgrounds. As a result, the school provides a truly innovative option not just for students on the autism spectrum, but for any student who would benefit from the innovations outlined herein.

XI. Demonstration of Fiscal Feasibility and Controls

48. Indicate whether the school will utilize the local school board for fiscal management; and, if so, specify what autonomy the charter school will have over budgets and expenditures.

Management of School Finances

The Tapestry board of directors will manage the finances of the school and will have total autonomy over budgets and expenditures with the support of the school principal. The founding board has devised a comprehensive fiscal controls protocol that will guide the school and its governors in the control of the financial and budgetary proceedings.

The finances of the school are managed at the school site level by the school principal with the support of the business/operations manager. The annual budget will be prepared by the principal and business/operations manager and submitted to the board for review, revision, and approval in the spring of each year. This budget will be based on a review of spending from the prior year in order to assure all projections are based on accurate assumptions.

Monthly, the business/operations manager will meet with the board finance chair to review budget-to-actual and other expense reports. The findings from this meeting will be reviewed in great detail by the finance committee in its monthly meeting and then summarized to the board by the finance chair. The whole board participates in the rigorous review and vetting of the annual budget and any subsequent amendments that are requested once the fiscal year has started. Board approval is required for any spending that exceeds the budget projections. The board chair or finance chair signature is required on any single expenditure that exceeds \$5,000.

Segregation of Duties

The founding board finance committee, under the guidance of the founding treasurer, has devised the budgets included as Appendices N and O, as well as comprehensive fiscal controls policies to ensure the efficient and appropriate management of school funds. The segregation of duties to ensure sound financial practices includes the following:

Position	Daily Financial Management Duties
Tapestry Registrar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives and logs all shipments and goods requested by purchase order • Receives all mail (including invoices)
Tapestry Business/Operations Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes purchase orders from staff • Order supplies and materials • Makes bank deposits • Files receipts and invoices • Prepares invoices for payment and writes checks through accounting software • Manages payroll through the selected vendor • Processes GA Teacher Retirement System payments • Oversees benefits administration • Processes DOE meal reimbursement requests
Tapestry Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approves purchase orders • Approves check requisitions and reimbursement requests • Authorizes payment of invoices and signs checks • Reviews monthly bank statement against bookkeeping entries • Authorizes adjustments to payroll • Reviews monthly bank statements • Reviews monthly financial reports • Manages expenses against budget
Tapestry Finance Chair/Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconciles bank statements • Reviews monthly finance reports with the business/operations manager and finance committee • Provides guidance to school principal related to budget management • Supports the business/operations manager with the annual audit and serves as liaison between auditors and board • Serves as second signature for checks over \$5,000 (or board chair)

The following systems are examples of controls that will be established at Tapestry to ensure proper accounting and records of finances:

- The Tapestry business/operations manager maintains a monthly cash flow forecast with an ongoing 12-month view. It is updated on a monthly basis and provided to the finance committee for review.
- Tapestry will manage payroll through a third-party vendor to ensure payroll disbursements are properly recorded, compliance with legal requirements is maintained, and disbursement of funds to employees are only made upon authorization.
- Tapestry will initiate an annual financial audit, which will be conducted by an independent, Georgia-licensed CPA. The audit, which ensures that the school’s financial records are in compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), is financed through the school’s annual budget.

In addition to rigorous internal control policies, the school also takes additional security measures by procuring a crime/fidelity bond, which covers all persons receiving or disbursing funds. This policy, which is insured up to \$1 million, will be maintained during the length of the renewal term, and evidence of such coverage is submitted annually to DCSD.

Organization of Budget

Tapestry will use the same numbering system in its chart of accounts as used by the Georgia Department of Education for bookkeeping.

49. Please use the spreadsheets provided by GADOE to accompany Guidance for Georgia State Board of Education Rule 160-4-9-.04, which list detailed budget information projecting revenues and expenditures for the first five years of the proposed charter term. For the first two years of the charter term, the detailed budget information must include spreadsheets projecting revenues and expenditures that assume one-half of the projected student enrollments for the first two years. If any sources of revenue appearing in the spreadsheets are anticipated to come from private sources, documentation of such revenues must be included along with the petition.

Regular Budget

Revenue

The projected regular budget assumes per-pupil funding that was formulated using an average of DCSD charter schools serving middle school grades and is kept flat over the charter term. These averages do not include Title I funds, but do include an “average” enrollment of students who qualify for IEPs (12%), making the Tapestry budget conservative in its revenue assumptions should the percentage of SWDs be higher than average (which is a strong likelihood given the model and student recruitment). The revenue also includes the state planning grant awarded in 2012 and only \$100,000 in private fundraising (more than \$100,300 has been raised as of April 2013 and the campaign is ongoing), assuming the minimum of supplementary funds that will be available by the time Tapestry opens. The dedicated pro bono support of a development firm (Appendix K), in conjunction with a strong development committee and established track-record of fundraising, suggest that revenue is likely to be higher and that current projections are conservative. Years 1-5 also include meal fees and student activity fees for 65% of students.

See Appendix P for documentation of revenue to date from private sources, which includes more than 250 private donations that total more than \$100,000, as well as the planning grant awarded by the state.

Expenditures

The largest expenditure in the budget is staffing, outlined in the table below.

Tapestry Staffing						
Title (Average Salary)	2013-2014 (planning)	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Students						
		96	128	160	192	224
Administrators						
Principal (\$70,000)	0.25	1	1	1	1	1

Bus/Ops Manager (\$55,000)	0.25	0.75	1	1	1	1
Total Administrators	0.5	1.75	2	2	2	2
Teachers						
6 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)		2	2	2	2	2
7 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)		2	2	2	2	2
8 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)		2	2	2	2	2
9 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)			2	2	2	2
10 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)				2	2	2
11 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)					2	2
12 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)						2
Total General Ed.		6	8	10	12	14
Special Ed Teachers (\$40,000)		3	4	5	6	7
Arts/Electives (\$40,000)		0	0.25	0.5	1	1
Total Teachers	0	9	12.25	15.5	19	22
Support Staff/Clerical						
Guidance Counselor (\$40,000)		0.5	0.5	0.5	1	1
Registrar (\$30,000)		0.5	0.5	1	1	1
Nurse (\$40,000)		0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total Support Staff	0	1.5	1.5	2	2.5	2.5
Total Staff Members		14	18	21	24	27
Total Staff Eligible for Benefits	0	10	14	18	23	26

Many of the year one expenses, such as student and staff computers, curriculum, and insurances, are paid at the end of the planning year to offset the start-up expenses incurred in year 1, where little supplemental funding is assumed. Instructional assumptions include one computer for each staff member (including part-time) and student, supplementary instructional materials included in classroom supplies, a modest furniture budget to supplement that provided by the landlord (which will be included in lease terms), many services (tech support, marketing, etc.) provided at no cost by partners in Appendix K, all grounds/facilities maintenance and upkeep included in lease terms, and an annual contingency based on 2% of total annual expenses. The high cash rollover annually (especially after year 3) will likely be tapped for increased special education materials that are required before funding is allocated, facilities modifications the school chooses to adopt, additional instructional materials, and/or increased allocation to the contingency fund.

See Appendix N for the complete regular budget for the first five years of the charter term, which includes revenue and expense assumptions, narrative, and cash flow for years 0-2.

Contingency

The contingency budget and cash flow for the planning year and first two years of operation in Appendix O outline the projected budget should enrollment be halved. Note that salaries are not reduced in an effort to ensure that staff recruitment and retention are not impacted by lower revenue. Rather than grow an additional grade, if enrollment was still at half by the end of year 1, Tapestry would recruit only for additional students in grades 6-8 for year 2, increasing class sizes slightly (still leveraging co-teachers and a smaller class size for flexible grouping

approaches) rather than serving an additional under-enrolled grade. The registrar position would be eliminated altogether with the counselor moving into a full-time role (this position is part-time in the regular budget) to assume both counseling and registrar responsibilities. The business manager would stay at part-time for both years. The nurse position and elective teacher positions would also be eliminated and addressed through partner relationships. Salaries of these positions would be cut only as a last resort.

Tapestry Contingency Staffing			
Title (Average Salary)	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
<i>Students</i>		48	64
Administrators			
Principal (\$70,000)	0.25	1	1
Business Operations Manager (\$55,000)	0.25	0.5	0.5
Total Administrators	0.5	1.5	1.5
Teachers			
6 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)		1	1
7 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)		1	1
8 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)		1	1
9 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)			
10 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)			
11 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)			
12 th Grade Teachers (\$40,000)			
Total General Ed.		3	3
Special Education Teachers (\$40,000)		1.5	1.5
Arts/Electives (\$40,000)		0	0
Total Teachers	0	4.5	4.5
Support Staff			
Guidance Counselor (\$40,000)		1	1
Registrar (\$30,000)		0	0
Nurse (\$38,000)		0	0
Total Support Staff	0	1	1
Total Staff Members		8	8
Total Staff Eligible for Benefits	0	6	6

Other efficiencies to address significant under-enrollment in the contingency budget include the purchase of one computer (and associated software) for only half the students; this would not impact student-computer ratios because of the proposed schedule, which provides for only half the students to participate in core content classes at a time. Other contingency strategies include slight reduction of per-pupil materials allocations, reduction of space used in the facility (which will effect a lower lease rate), and slight reduction in recruitment expenses for staff (based on the assumption few additional staff would be hired for year 2). Curricular materials, staff

compensation, and all fixed costs, such as bookkeeping fees and the cost of the audit, all remain the same as in the regular budget. See Appendix O for detailed budget information projecting revenues and expenditures for the first two years assuming one-half of projected student enrollment.

50. Please state that the school is subject to an annual financial audit by an independent Georgia-licensed Certified Public Accountant, in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065 (b) (7). The financial reporting format shall be in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Tapestry is subject to an annual financial audit by an independent, Georgia-licensed CPA, in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065 (b) (7). The financial reporting format shall be in conformity with GAAP. The audit and associated reports will be received by DeKalb County School's Director of Finance within 90 days of the fiscal year end. Tapestry will comply and adhere to the state and local October 1 financial audit deadline at Tapestry's expense each year. Founders acknowledge that any significant financial audit findings may result in termination of the charter after review by the DCSD Finance Department.

51. Identify the school's Chief Financial Officer and describe how that person's credentials comply with the Guidance for Georgia State Board of Education Rule 160-4-9-.04 for the purpose of developing and adhering to generally accepted accounting principles.

The founding board will work with the school principal to recruit, retain, and develop a school-site business/operations manager who will act as the organizational CFO upon hire. This person, at a minimum, will have credentials that comply with the guidance from the Georgia State Board of Education Rule 160-4-9-.04 and will begin his/her work in the planning year on a stipend-basis. Candidates with experience managing the finances of charter schools, in particular, will be given preference. Relationships such as those built with GCSA and other support entities have already been formed to ensure the business/operations manager has the training and support necessary to successfully manage the school's finances under the guidance of the school principal and board. Michael Burke, founding treasurer and finance committee chair, will serve as the interim CFO in the planning year until the business manager is hired (see Appendix E for his resume).

52. Provide a description of the method used to recruit the number of anticipated students at the school and a statement setting forth the school's plan for maintaining and/or increasing attendance.

As described in Question 28 above, Tapestry founders have already developed and begun to execute on a robust outreach process for student recruitment. The myriad partner organizations, community meetings/information sessions, and very public approach taken by the founding team in their planning year have yielded significant community support (see Appendix M). After the opening year, outreach and student recruitment will be organized by the school principal and registrar with support from the board, advisory council, parent support organization, and the pro-bono marketing services of Razorfish (Appendix K). Methods of outreach and recruitment to be utilized throughout the life of the school to ensure full enrollment in each grade annually include

the following:

- Distribution of literature at formal/informal information sessions at partner organizations' events and services locations
- Community roundtables/education sessions with the school principal and board members for local parents and other interested community members
- Frequent "open house" events that enable interested applicants to visit the school and learn more about the model
- Advertising in print and electronic media to promote the school's mission and provide information on the application process
- Targeted outreach to organizations, entities, and professionals who serve children on the autism spectrum, such as support groups, therapists, researchers, and the medical community
- Close working relationship with DCSD and the local special education service providers to share application and program information
- Visibility and high level of involvement of stakeholders in advocacy work for children with ASD and their families
- Participation/membership in development initiatives and professional organizations (such as CES)
- Maintenance of website and social media/networking accounts to provide timely updates and information

53. Describe the manner in which the school's enrollment count will be determined for the purposes of calculating charter school funding, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2068.1 (c) or O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2090 (d), as appropriate.

Tapestry will ensure all student information is entered in the student information system with accuracy and will submit enrollment information as required by DCSD and the SBOE on the dates required using the designated student information system. It is anticipated that the school will be funded on the anticipated enrollment for each year and that funding will be retroactively adjusted to the official enrollment counts to address disparity between projections and actual enrollment as DCSD policies dictate. Tapestry will also follow all guidelines and timelines in determining the annual Full Time Equivalent (FTE) as required by the SBOE and the Certified/Classified Personnel Information Data Collection Report (CPI) required by the Georgia Department of Education.

54. Provide a proposed timeline as to when the charter school expects to receive state and local funding from the local board in order to begin operations.

Tapestry anticipates receiving its first disbursement of funding from the local school board in July of 2014 (based on the projected enrollment described herein), with one monthly disbursement per month over the twelve months of the fiscal year which has been adjusted retroactively to the official count (if it differs from the projected number).

55. Please state that the charter school will comply with the federal monitoring requirements for schools receiving federal funds.

Tapestry will comply with federal monitoring requirements for schools receiving federal funds.

The governing board acknowledges it is accountable for the school's operational functions, including but not limited to fiscal oversight and facilities planning. Tapestry will be responsible for providing various financial reports to the DeKalb County Board of Education, including but not limited to monthly budget status report, monthly cash reports, and quarterly statements.

56. Please describe in detail the school's plans for securing other sources of funding.

Given the array of services and supports Tapestry plans to provide for all students, founders are committed to ongoing fundraising and procurement of services and partners that will supplement public funding. The board has recruited the development expertise of Birdie Grants (Appendix K), a development organization that specializes in supporting the needs of non-profits. Through this partnership, Birdie Grants will conduct grant prospecting and writing, support Tapestry with grant management and compliance, and assist with other fundraising activity as deemed appropriate at no charge. In addition, the board has a standing development committee chaired by an experienced non-profit fundraiser. At present, the pledge campaign has raised more than \$100,000 to date, comprised solely of individual donations from a committed community, demonstrating the public support and development potential of the school. Several advisory council and board members have roles on boards of local philanthropic entities; it is anticipated that many of these will provide support once the charter is approved.

Because the model can be provided for students on per-pupil with limited supplementary special education funding (should the population of students who enroll be largely comprised of students without IEPs consistent with the average of those enrolled at other charter schools), it is anticipated that the increased services needed for a larger population of special education students will be provided through the correlated increased funding. The flexibility of the model enables the school to be responsive to the population that enrolls, with staffing/class size as the greatest variable to be adjusted in response to the needs of students.

In addition to raising cash for general operating expenses, the school has established myriad partnerships that provide expertise, staffing, materials, and curriculum at no charge. This provides for a fiscal model that relies as heavily on the reduction of expenses through donated services (without compromising program quality and integrity) as it does on increasing revenue—of particular importance in an era where austerity cuts have become common for public schools. As outlined in Question 7 and Appendix K, the partnerships already secured provide professional development and even staff members who will offset the expense of the model.

XII. Description of Governance Structure

57. Please describe in detail how the charter school will be governed.

Tapestry is organized under the Tapestry School, Incorporated Corporation, and as such will be governed by the local board of directors, as described herein. The founding board (which transitions to a governing board as described in Question 59) holds the charter and is ultimately responsible for meeting and exceeding the goals described herein, as well as maintaining the organizational health of the school.

58. Please state that the governing board shall be subject to the control and management of the local board and subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. §§ 50-14-1 et seq. and 50-18-70 et seq.

The Tapestry School Board of Directors is subject to the control and management of the local board and is subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A 50-14-1 (open and public meetings) and O.C.G.A. 50-18-70 (inspection of public records).

59. Describe in detail the governing board's function, duties, and composition, including the board's role as it relates to the charter school's mission. Also include information on how and when governing board members will be selected, trained, how long each governing board member will serve, how governing shall avoid conflicts of interests and how governing board members may be removed from office, as outlined in Georgia State Board of Education Rule 160-4-9-.04.

Board Composition

The Tapestry board is comprised of no more than 15 voting directors, which will include two full-time staff members elected annually as designated staff representatives once the school is operational. One-third of the current founding board will have a term of office that ends at the conclusion of the planning year, availing two seats for staff representatives and three seats for new (or re-elected) directors. The principal serves as an ex-officio member of the board (making the total number of directors 16). The board is focused on recruiting parents and community members and seeks to maintain a balance of stakeholder representation. As such, no maximum is imposed on the number of parents to serve on the board and at present, nearly half of the board is parents whose students would be eligible to attend. See Appendix E for professional biographies and resumes for the complete board, as well as a board analysis that summarizes the competencies and networks leveraged by the founding board.

Founding Board

At the time of submission, the founding board is comprised of 15 members. The number of members on the board is dependent upon the skills and experience needed, and board gap analysis is conducted annually to determine the skill sets that may need to be added (with a cap of 15 directors). As a founding board, the skill sets of the current directors are focused on those which best benefit the founding and establishment of an organization. The founding board is charged not only with organizing the school model and petition, but also recruiting the school principal and students in the first class. For this reason, the directors currently in place have been extremely active in the community and have participated in a number of activities, such as determining class schedules, setting policies, and developing curriculum, many of which will be the purview of school leadership once hired to ensure the board is governing rather than managing the affairs of the school. All founding board members will be assigned a staggered term of one, two, or three years beginning with the first day of the fiscal year that serves as the planning year of the school. This ensures that most founding members are involved in the transition of the board from founding to governing and preserves the mission and vision of the founders as the school shifts its focus from opening and growth to ongoing operation and stability, while providing space for the board to recruit additional expertise as necessary for the opening. At this time, recruitment for additional founding board members has ceased, with interested candidates serving instead on the advisory council, described in detail below.

Officers

Board officers are elected by a majority vote of the board for one-year terms (with the exception of the school principal, who is an ex-officio member of the board and employee of the corporation hired by the board).

Chair

The chair shall preside at meetings of the board of directors; shall make reports to the board; shall have the general powers and duties of management usually vested in the office of the chief executive and chair of a corporation; and shall have such other rights, duties, and powers as are authorized by the board of directors.

Vice Chair

The vice chair shall, in the absence of the chair, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the chair, or such of them as may be so delegated, and shall have such other rights, duties, and powers as are authorized by the board of directors from time to time. (Note that the founding board utilizes two co-chairs in lieu of a vice-chair.)

Secretary

The secretary shall attend all meetings of the board of directors and shall record the minutes of all proceedings, including all votes, in a book or database to be kept for that purpose, and shall perform like duties for the standing committees when required. The secretary shall give, or cause to be given, such notice as is required of all meetings of the board of directors and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by law, the Articles of Incorporation, bylaws, or the board of directors.

Treasurer

The treasurer shall serve as the chair of the finance committee and as such shall ensure the accurate accounting of revenue and expenses. The treasurer oversees the financial operations of the school through monthly budget reviews, accounting spot-checks, and participation in the preparation of the annual budget and any necessary amendments. Although the corporation CFO will be a paid staff member (business manager), the treasurer provides support, guidance, and coaching to this staff member and supports the principal in his/her evaluation and coaching of the business manager.

School Principal

The school principal is an ex-officio member of the board and does not vote, nor is s/he elected by the board. S/he shall manage daily operations of the school; hire and supervise instructional and support staff; ensure the charter contract goals are met; report at least quarterly to the board of directors on charter compliance and progress toward meeting goals; assist the board chair with scheduling and setting agendas for board of directors meetings; facilitate and implement policies duly adopted by the board of directors; act as liaison between the school, the charter sponsor and the state department of education; and perform such other duties as the board of directors shall prescribe.

Committees

Although ad hoc committees may be formed from time to time to address special needs and concerns (such as a hiring committee), the board will maintain standing committees comprised of the following:

- Executive Committee: The role of the executive committee is to act upon all matters pertaining to the welfare and management of the corporation between regular meetings of the board, oversee the effective operation of the board through initiation and management of the annual self-evaluation process, and develop the annual board training calendar. This committee is also responsible for addressing any internal issues of the board, addressing any concerns in accordance with the whistleblower policy, overseeing the annual evaluation process for the school principal, and managing HR concerns that have been re-delegated by the board at large. Membership in this committee is limited to five directors and must include the chair.
- Partnerships Committee: Due to the significant role partnerships play in the school, a partnerships committee has been organized to both recruit and manage partner relationships, and the chair of this committee will serve as the primary contact for all partner entities. Although different staff members at the school may be designated primary contact for different specific staff and/or contacts for partner entities (the ESOL teacher may be the primary contact for the UWG ESOL representative; the lead special education coordinator may be the primary contact for the OT staff), the committee will broker these relationships, finalize agreements, provide check-ins to both the school and its partners, and evaluate the value-add of partners (and the needs additional partners could address) as part of its annual evaluation process. This reduces the burden of partnership management from the principal and ensures that the vast resources and networks of the board and advisory council are best leveraged on behalf of students and staff. This committee will require a significant commitment of time and involvement from its members and candidates will be vetted for this capacity accordingly.
- Development/Fundraising Committee: The role of the development/fundraising committee is to organize financial capacity to bolster the annual public funding at Tapestry. Responsibilities of this committee include managing the “give or get” pledge of all board members, organizing and hosting school tours and fundraising events, grant prospecting, and conducting outreach to critical friends in the philanthropy community. The development/fundraising committee will also adopt any board initiatives that require significant giving, such as a capital campaign or annual fund. This committee may include members who are not on the board, but must be chaired by a board member.
- Nominating Committee: The nominating committee recruits and maintains a slate of eligible prospects for board vacancies that arise at the annual meeting, as well as unexpectedly throughout the year. The committee vets candidates for requisite mission alignment and baseline skills and directs them to appropriate volunteer opportunities, such as the advisory council and or board committees until an appropriate vacancy arises. The nominating committee leads recruitment outreach, as well as develops and delivers on-boarding materials for new directors. Membership in this committee is limited to board members.
- Finance Committee: This committee is chaired by the board treasurer and works closely with the school business manager to ensure the fiscal health of the organization. Responsibilities include monthly review of financial documents and review of the

proposed annual budget. The committee may include as few as two members, one of whom must be the treasurer.

- **Academic Excellence Committee:** The academic excellence committee is comprised of volunteers who possess experience and/or expertise in the academic operation of the organization. The committee will oversee the school’s progress toward meeting its academic goals through development of partnerships with entities that will bolster the effectiveness of chosen curricula and instructional strategies, aligning resources to support academic achievement and professional development initiatives for staff, and staying abreast of research and developments that will benefit the academic program at Tapestry. The committee will be chaired by a board member, but is likely to be comprised of volunteers from partner organizations and the advisory council who are involved in education-based work.

Board Functions and Duties

As the governing body of Tapestry, the board is not only charged with seeing the mission of the school fulfilled, but also holds the charter and is ultimately accountable for the school meeting and exceeding the goals as articulated herein. The board connects the school to the wider community, provides expertise to the organization, assists with fundraising, confers credibility on the school, oversees and supports the principal’s performance, and helps fulfill many governance functions including legal responsibilities, general oversight, planning and policy-making, and fiduciary requirements. The board is legally and morally accountable for the health, vitality and effectiveness of the school. Therefore, the board assures due diligence for the entire organization.

The role of the board is that of governance (not management) and to that end, the school principal will be evaluated and coached on his/her ability to manage the school and effect the results set forth as goals. The board is focused on priorities that protect the mission and vision of the school, with day-to-day decisions delegated to the principal. The following table illustrates how responsibilities are assigned and the criteria the board and principal use to appropriately assign responsibility.

	The Board (Governance)	School Principal (Management)
Develops the...	Ends (results)	Means (methods)
Asks...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why • What • How Much 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How • What • When • Where • Who(m)
Creates the school’s:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Mission • Goals • School-wide policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives • Strategies • Action Plans • Procedures • Manuals/guides for action

The board's responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

- Serving as ambassadors for the school by clearly articulating the school's mission, accomplishments, and goals to the community and by garnering support from important members and entities of the community
- Assuring there are adequate resources for the school to fulfill its mission by working with the school principal to raise private funds
- Monitoring the management of financial resources by approving the annual budget and ensuring proper financial controls are in place
- Supporting the school principal by ensuring that s/he has the moral and professional support s/he needs to further the goals of the school (including annual evaluation and coaching)
- Monitoring and ensuring compliance with the Georgia DOE regulatory statutes and other local, state, and federal laws by regularly reviewing school policies, programs, and practices
- Assessing its own performance annually by evaluating its success as a board and its performance in fulfilling its responsibilities
- Identifying, recruiting, and screening candidates for the board of directors and advisory council
- Resolving parent and staff grievances that are unable to be resolved at the school level

Board members are expected to

- Attend at least 80% of board meetings, in addition to committee meetings and other school activities
- Actively participate in one or more fundraising activities, as well as a "give or get" annual commitment
- Recuse themselves from discussions and votes wherein they have a conflict of interest
- Maintain visibility in and a practical understanding of school operations through frequent visits, volunteerism, and stakeholder communication
- Engage key community members in the school's operation, including active recruitment of board and advisory council candidates
- Actively participate in or chair at least one committee of the board
- Provide consulting and advice in their area of expertise
- Participate in and take responsibility for making decisions on issues, policies and other board matters
- Respond promptly to any communication from the board chair and/or school principal
- Maintain confidentiality in all areas where appropriate
- Participate in annual training and development activities designed to increase their capacity as board members and advocates for people with autism

Director Recruitment, Selection, Development, and Removal

Recruitment

All directors will be responsible for outreach to the community to recruit interested candidates who have skills and experience that will benefit the organization. The Tapestry nominating committee will maintain a slate of interested candidates who are a mission-fit for the organization, which will be revisited when vacancies arise. In the event Tapestry has recruited interested candidates in a number that exceeds the available vacancies and/or as candidates are recruited throughout the year, the candidates will be encouraged to serve on board committees

and/or the advisory council. This will give each candidate invaluable experience working on behalf of the school, acquaint him/her with the school community and stakeholders, and better enable the board to evaluate the candidate's fit for any upcoming vacancies. Although volunteer participation will not be a requirement of board candidates in advance of their election to a vacant seat, it will be strongly encouraged.

Annually, the nominating committee will lead the board in a gap analysis, determining if there are skills or stakeholder groups under-represented with the current board configuration. The annual board gap analysis may uncover the need for a particular skill set that is critical for a particular school activity; for example, greater instructional expertise may be called upon in the early years of operation when the school model is being solidified; greater fundraising expertise may be called upon to raise money for a specific venture; or real estate expertise may be required should the school choose to pursue the purchase of a new facility. The annual gap analysis will drive board recruitment and ensure that as an existing member's term expires, a new candidate with necessary skills will be trained and ready to fill the vacancy. One-third of the founding board, comprised of 15 members, will roll off after the planning year to allow space for two staff members and any additional capacities needed for opening as deemed appropriate by the board gap analysis.

Selection

At each annual meeting of the board of directors, the directors shall select a slate of candidates for each vacancy to be presented to the board and will be elected to the position by a majority vote of the board. All directors are then affirmed for election through a "confirming vote" from parents/legal guardians of all students then enrolled at the charter school and full-time employees then employed by the school. Should parents/guardians and staff not confirm the election by a majority of votes, the nominating committee will choose another candidate to be elected by the board, and then to be confirmed by the parent/guardian/staff confirming vote. Should there be three confirming votes wherein the candidate selected by the board is not confirmed by the confirming election, the board will have the option of either selecting from the three prior candidates or selecting a fourth candidate not previously nominated to serve the term for the vacancy. The option will be selected by the board by a majority vote of the members.

Prior to each annual meeting, the board of directors shall seek recommendations from interested constituents including parents/legal guardians, staff, community leaders, business partners, and the current board members. When selecting a slate of nominees, particular consideration shall be given to individuals whom the board of directors considers to be representative of the communities to be served by the charter school and who have diverse backgrounds and qualifications, including without limitation experience/expertise in the areas of finance and/or accounting, business, education, law, and nonprofit or community leadership.

Terms and Limits

With the exception of the founding board, who will serve staggered terms as described above, each newly elected director serves a term of two years. There shall be no limit to the number of terms that may be served by a board member; however, upon the expiration of each term directors shall be re-elected by the majority of the board and go through a confirmation vote as outlined above.

Removal and Resignation

Directors may be removed by a two-thirds majority vote of the remaining directors for such reasons that include, but are not limited to, absence from board meetings without notice or just cause, not fulfilling duties as defined in the bylaws, not acting in accordance with the mission and core beliefs of Tapestry, or acting negligently or against the laws of the state of Georgia when representing Tapestry.

A director may resign by giving written notice to the board chair or secretary. The resignation is effective on the giving of notice, or at any later date specified in the notice. A director may not resign if the director's resignation would leave the corporation without a duly elected director in charge of its affairs.

Conflict of Interest and Other Board Policies

Any director, officer, key employee, or committee member having an interest in a contract, other transaction, or program presented to or discussed by the board or board committee for authorization, approval, or ratification shall make a prompt, full, and frank disclosure of his/her interest to the board or committee prior to its acting on such contract or transaction. Such disclosure shall include all relevant and material facts known to such person about the contract or transaction that might reasonably be construed to be adverse to the corporation's interest. The body to which such disclosure is made shall thereupon determine, by majority vote, whether the disclosure shows that a conflict of interest exists or can reasonably be construed to exist. If a conflict is deemed to exist, such person shall not vote on, nor use his or her personal influence on, nor be present during the discussion or deliberations with respect to, such contract or transaction (other than to present factual information or to respond to questions prior to the discussion). Directors who have been found to have not disclosed a conflict will immediately be terminated from their position. Each director is required, upon annual reinstatement of position and/or election to the board, to complete a Conflict of Interest form. Copies of forms for the current board are included as Appendix D.

60. Describe how parents, community members, or other interested parties will be involved in the charter school's governing board.

As described herein, both the Tapestry Board of Directors and the advisory council are comprised of community members. Although parents of enrolled students may not comprise more than half of the total directors, it is anticipated that high levels of parent involvement and the high percentage of parents of eligible students who may choose to enroll on the founding board will establish a precedent of a board of directors that relies heavily on parent participation. Moreover, through the annual board gap analysis, the involvement of community members and other interested parties will be measured annually with priorities for increased involvement established as appropriate. Stakeholders from within the school and greater community are encouraged to submit their interest to the nominating committee for more information about the role of directors throughout the year in publications at the school site, on the website, and in parent and community outreach communication.

Although the board will fill vacancies on the board mid-year until the next general election at the

end of each school year, candidates will follow the confirming process outlined above. Each household is entitled to only one vote per election. A slate of candidates is organized and pre-vetted for minimum qualifications and mission-fit by the nominating committee in the process described in greater detail in Question 59.

61. Describe the method that the local board and the charter school plan to utilize for resolving conflicts.

Tapestry recommends the following process to resolve conflicts with the local board:

1. The parties' chosen representatives will meet informally, at least one time, to attempt to resolve the issue without resort to formal procedures.
2. If DCSD and Tapestry are unable to resolve any disputes, the issues will be reduced to writing and shared with the other party and a request will be made of the Georgia Department of Education to meet with the parties in an attempt to reconcile the differences.

Nothing set out in this dispute resolution procedure shall limit the parties' rights to seek redress under all applicable laws, rules, or regulations.

62. List any proposed business arrangements or partnerships with existing schools, educational programs, businesses, or nonprofit organizations and disclose any potential conflicts of interest. This includes a copy of any intended contracts for the provision of educational management services or the provision of supplemental educational services and remediation, and any agreements with other local schools for the charter school students' participation in extracurricular activities such as interscholastic sports and clubs.

Tapestry will be locally governed by the Tapestry School, Incorporated Board of Directors and does not intend to contract with a provider for educational management or supplemental education services. Furthermore, any director who represents or is affiliated with an entity that assesses a fee for their services would be asked to recuse him/herself from any decisions that impact that relationship and/or step down from his/her position as director if an ongoing conflict of interest arises.

In addition to the partnerships that will provide activities and programming as described in Appendix K, Tapestry may join the Georgia High Schools Association (GHSA) in order to participate in athletic competition with schools of the same class. Should the number of students at the high school level who are interested in playing sports not be large enough to facilitate participation in intramural sports, Tapestry is prepared to partner with an entity such as LUKE Sports, which provides athletic practice and competition among small charter schools.

Current partnerships with the University of West Georgia, the Alliance Theatre, SENSE Theatre, and Running Mates provide the basis for supplementary extracurricular activity. Additional relationships are being built through representation from other providers who currently serve on the advisory council. Founders continue to commit to outreach in the interest of developing supportive relationships with additional partners throughout the start-up and operation of the school. Several organizations with which Tapestry has begun the process of exploring a relationship include Georgia Tech, Theater Emory at Emory University, Shenanigans Improv,

Main Street School of Art, Learning on the Log, Sensations TheraFun, and Muse for Life.

63. Attach an official copy of the certificate of incorporation for the required Georgia nonprofit corporation from the Georgia Secretary of State, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(b)(4)]

See Appendix A for the Tapestry certificate of incorporation (Appendix B for Articles of Incorporation). Tapestry shall at all times maintain itself as a Georgia not-for-profit corporation, capable of exercising the functions of a charter school under the laws of the state of Georgia, shall remain in good standing under the laws of the state of Georgia, and shall make all required filings with the Georgia Secretary of State in a timely manner.

64. Please provide a copy of the by-laws for the nonprofit corporation, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2- 2065(b)(4)]. (Conversion Charter Schools do not need to provide certificates of incorporation; however the by-laws to be used by the governing board are still required).

See Appendix C for the Tapestry bylaws.

65. Please provide a complete and signed conflict of interest for each proposed founding board member (see DCSD Guidelines for Charter School Petitions 2012 for this form).

See Appendix D for a signed Conflict of Interest form for each board member.

66. Please provide a resume for each governing board member that explains what role they will play on the board and why they were chosen to participate in the founding group.

See Appendix E for a resume and biography for each founding board member. A summary of each board member's skills and experience is included in the board analysis in the same appendix item. More than half of the board members are residents of DeKalb County who live within the DCSD attendance zone, eight have children on the autism spectrum, and one is an adult with Asperger's Syndrome (an ASD). The robust combination of personal and professional experience on the board leverages a level of commitment and expertise unparalleled. Further, Tapestry also benefits from a large, committed advisory council comprised of individuals who bring not only experience and expertise, but also partnerships and relationships with service providers, businesses, and research facilities. This body, which will continue to support the mission and work of Tapestry throughout its charter, provides a means for interested supporters to lend their expertise to the school without committing to a governance role. Although future board candidates may be vetted through their participation in the council, it serves as a support entity in an advisory capacity and is not a decision-making body. The roster of current advisory council members and their affiliations, which continues to grow, is included in Appendix G.

67. Please provide a brief plan for continuous governance training, recruitment and retention of high quality governing board members.

New Director Training

As detailed herein, the nominating committee oversees the on-boarding process for new directors. An appropriate collection of best practices around board participation, information

about the school and its mission, minutes from most recent meetings, and other information helpful to new members will be made available upon election. As part of the instatement process, each new director will meet with a member of the nominating committee to receive one-on-one training to support his/her effective participation on the board.

On-Going Board Development

Tapestry is an organization dedicated to constant improvement, and it is the vision of the founding team that the school stay abreast of developments in educational innovations, especially as they may apply to the effective operation of the school and successful outcomes of Tapestry students. To this end, the executive committee will initiate an annual self-evaluation process that will highlight key board priorities for the subsequent year. Annual performance data provided by the principal that include student assessment outcomes, staff and parent survey data, and key operational outcomes, will supplement this self-evaluation, providing a blueprint for the executive committee's training plan for the board the following year. At a minimum, this plan will include an annual board retreat and semesterly reviews of an organizational dashboard that includes key data.

At present, the founding board is a member of the Georgia Charter Schools Association and has participated in this entity's board training. Additionally, board members have participated in GDOE and DCSD charter trainings, as well as relevant trainings provided by entities with expertise in matters relevant to the mission and model of Tapestry. The board has also joined "The High Bar"²⁶ (a charter board online support tool and development service) and is using the best practices and training provided through this service to establish board policies, practices, and templates. The board has also participated in a number of USDOE Charter Schools webinars to date, and the board chairs make these opportunities available to all board members as they arise. The support of a number of partners will make additional professional development available to board members, who will be invited to attend special sessions as applicable.

68. Describe the governing board's role in resolving teacher, parent, and student grievances and other conflicts.

As described in greater detail in Question 30, the board will be the ultimate authority in resolving grievances that cannot be resolved at the school site for both parents and staff.

XIII. Statement on Annual Report

69. State that the charter school shall, by October 1st, submit an annual report to the Georgia Department of Education, the DeKalb County Board of Education and parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school. This report shall include all state-mandated assessment and accountability scores and complies with all requirements set out in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2067.1(c)(1)-(6). Charter schools must use the template provided by the Department of Education to complete the report.

Tapestry shall, by October 1 of each year, submit an annual report to the GDOE, DCBOE, and parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school. This report shall include performance

²⁶ www.reachthehighbar.com.

outcomes against charter goals articulated herein, including performance on state-mandated assessments, accountability scores, and any other information required as part of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2067.1(c)(1)-(6). This annual report will be organized in the template provided by the GADOE.

70. Please provide information on the charter board's legal counsel and how the proposed school will ensure compliance with the requirements of law with respect to legal issues.

Legal counsel for the school is and will be provided (pro bono) by Shuli L. Green, Esq. (see Appendix K for this MOU and contact information and Appendix G for her biography and relevant experience). In addition to the services of Ms. Green, the governing board and advisory council have secured the expertise and experience of several lawyers, including Dana Maine, a partner with Freeman, Mathis, and Gary who specializes in land use and zoning, law enforcement, civil rights and professional liability.

The legal counsel will meet with the board upon request to review legal issues as they arise, and the lawyer representation on the board and advisory council will identify issues that require legal review.

71. Please complete the insurance/indemnification clause as stated (see DCSD Guidelines for Charter School Petitions 2012 for required wording).

See Appendix U for this insurance/indemnification clause.

72. Please include the Indemnification and insurance requirements to be met by charter petitioner. The statement that must be included can be found in the DeKalb County Schools Charter Schools Guidance. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(b)(5), each insurance policy required by the DeKalb County Board of Education for every charter school shall contain a statement that the DeKalb County Board of Education be included as an additional insured. Copies of each policy shall be provided to the DeKalb Charter Schools Office prior to the opening of school, the charter petition shall include a statement that the charter school shall hold harmless and indemnify DeKalb County School District, the board of education, its members, officers and employees for every liability, claim or demand upon the charter school; and the charter school petition shall contain a statement that the charter school agrees to defend and indemnify the DeKalb County Board of Education in any action from the charter school's activities. Required insurance coverages are as follows with coverage amounts as written:

- a. General Liability*
- b. Errors or Omissions*
- c. Property/Lease Insurance*
- d. Auto Liability*
- e. Worker's Compensation*
- f. Theft*

Each insurance policy required by the DeKalb County Board of Education for every charter school shall contain a statement that the DeKalb County Board of Education be included as an additional insured. Copies of each policy shall be provided to the DeKalb Charter Schools Office

prior to the opening of school; the charter petition shall include a statement that the charter school shall hold harmless and indemnify DeKalb County School District, the board of education, its members, officers, and employees for every liability, claim, or demand upon the charter school; and the charter school petition shall contain a statement that the charter school agrees to defend and indemnify the DeKalb County Board of Education in any action from the charter school's activities. See Appendix U for required language and a proposal for coverages from a vendor candidate.

XIV. Required Assurances

Academics and Assessments

- The charter school understands that as a public school, it cannot charge tuition or fees for attendance.
- The charter will adhere to all assessment guidelines and procedures as outlined by the State Assessment Handbook, the State Accommodations Manual, and other state and local guidance on assessment.
- The charter school agrees to unannounced visits and announced instructional audits conducted by the DeKalb School District's Instructional Audit Team as needed and as determined by the Charter School Office.

Student Support Services

- "The provision of services and due process procedures will be implemented for students with disabilities and English Language Learners in accordance with all relevant Federal and State laws, rules, and regulations."
- Establish a Student Support Team (SST) in accordance with state guidelines and local school board policies and use DCSD forms for SST.
- Establish a Section 504 team in accordance with state guidelines and local school board policies
- Use DCSD forms for Section 504, special education, counseling services, psychological services, social services and health services.
- Handle all discipline issues regarding Section 504 students in accordance with federal regulations, state guidelines, and local school board policies
- Comply with Section 504 by providing the appropriate accommodations and equipment
- Immediately notify the DCSD Director of Support Services upon receipt of a complaint made by a parent/guardian or student concerning Section 504, furnish a copy of such complaint, and cooperate fully in the investigation, defense and resolution of such complaint.
- Hire or contract Certified Special Education teacher(s), a licensed school counselor, a licensed certified school psychologist or a licensed clinical psychologist, a licensed school social worker and a licensed school nurse and provide services to eligible students (in accordance with State guidelines and DCSD policy).
- Develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each student identified as needing special education services, with the full participation of the DCSD Program for Exceptional Children staff.
- Employ substitute teachers as required by state guidelines until certified teachers are hired

if the charter school does not have certified staff.

- Handle discipline issues regarding special education students in accordance with federal guidelines, state rules and DCSD policy.
- Immediately notify the Director of Special Services upon receipt of a complaint made by a parent/guardian or student concerning the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, furnish a copy of such complaint and cooperate fully in the investigation, defense and resolution of such complaint.
- Report all allegations of child abuse and/or neglect to the charter school social worker and to the persons required to receive such reports pursuant to state law.

Facilities

- The school will comply with the Uniform Building Code Inspection and the Standard Building Code, Standard Plumbing Code, Standard Mechanical Gas Code, federal Americans with Disabilities (ADA) access requirements and other applicable fire, health and structural safety requirements, local state, and federal laws.
- The charter school will meet all applicable codes for sanitation, fire, construction, stability, temperature, ventilation, and suitability of physical space. The charter school will maintain a certificate of occupancy from the required government agency. The charter school will grant access to local health and fire department officials for inspection of the premises or operations of the school for purposes of ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of students and employees pursuant to Georgia Statutes and National Fire Protection Association Life Safety Code, N.F.P.A. 101.
- The charter school is subject to all federal, state, and local rules, regulations, court orders, and statutes relating to civil rights; insurance; the protection of physical health and safety of school students, employees and visitors; conflicting interest transactions; and the prevention of unlawful conduct.

Financial

- Any surplus funds remaining at the close of each fiscal year will be used to enhance the charter school's academic program the following year.
- The charter school's annual audit will meet GASB guidelines and will contain a complete asset inventory.
- The charter school agrees to submit monthly financial statements to the DCSD Charter Schools Office.
- The charter school is subject to an audit by the District's Internal Audits Department.
- Any deficit occurring during or at the end of a fiscal year shall be eliminated by funds to be provided by the petitioner. The charter school shall not request any additional funds from the DCSD to cover any deficit created by the charter school and the DCSD shall not allocate funds for the charter school for the next fiscal year until the deficit has been eliminated.
- The charter school is solely responsible for all debts incurred by the charter school and its governing body, and the DCSD shall not be contractually bound to the charter school or to any third party with whom the charter school has a contract or from whom the charter school has purchased goods or services, except as otherwise agreed in the charter contract.
- The charter will provide evidence that it has obtained appropriate bonding of the governing

board and administrators by October 1st of its first year of operation.

- In the event the charter school ceases operation for any reason, the charter school and its governing body shall be responsible for closing out the business affairs of the charter school. The charter school shall cooperate with the DCSD to the extent necessary to provide an orderly return of the students to the appropriate schools for which they are zoned.
- If the charter plans to cease operation, the school will notify the DCSD Charter Office with 24 hours of the governing board's decision and include the name and contact information for the person responsible for the closing procedures. Any surplus remaining at the time any charter school ceases operations shall be remitted to the DCSD. The charter school shall submit a financial audit for the final year of operation, prepared by an independent Georgia-licensed certified public accountant. This audit shall include a detailed inventory of all assets. Any furniture and equipment purchased with DCSD funds shall be delivered to the school system. Further, should the charter school not have sufficient funds to pay all of its bills, invoices, or other evidence of indebtedness at the time it ceases operation, the DCSD shall not be responsible for any debts incurred or contracts signed by the charter school.

Personnel

- The charter school shall submit certified personnel information (CPI) to the DeKalb County School System's Human Resources Department no later than October 1, May 1 and July 1 and other times upon request by Human Resources personnel.
- The charter school will provide documented annual professional development for all instructional staff.
- The faculty, instructional staff, and all other personnel necessary for the operation of the Charter School shall be employees of the Charter School. Charter School instructors of core subjects shall be certified in those subjects by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission as defined in Section 1119 of the No Child Left Behind Act, unless a waiver of this requirement is requested. If this requirement is waived, teachers will meet all other GAPSC requirements for highly qualified teachers working at charter schools. Paraprofessionals with instructional support duties will meet guidelines of Section 1119 of the No Child Left Behind Act and ESEA.

Governance

- The local governance of the charter school shall operate under a structure that retains a local school level governance body of parents, teachers, administrators, and others who are involved in school level governance within the charter. The operation and support of the charter school under the control and management of DCSD will be the sole function of the local school level governance body.
- The charter school board members will not constitute a voting majority on any other charter school board, will be voluntary and fully insured and bonded prior to final approval of the charter, and will maintain fully bonded status throughout the term of the charter.
- No petitioner and no member of the governing board of the petitioner or the charter school shall sell, lease, or receive payment for providing textbooks, supplies, services, equipment, facilities, or land to a charter school or other public school in this school

system. Nor will the board members receive payment for services as board members.

- All meetings of the charter governance board are subject to the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq. (Open and Public Meetings) and O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq. (Inspection of Public Records).

Administrative

- Representatives from the charter school will attend all workshops, in-services, and/or training and other meetings requested by DeKalb County Schools. Charter school administrators are responsible for informing the charter staff of all required meetings. Charter school administrators will use the school system's email system and will check the email system daily to ensure they stay informed on all required events and information by DCSD, as this will be DCSD's primary means of communication with the schools.
- No administrator will be directly responsible for the supervision or evaluation of a member of his/her immediate family.
- The charter school shall report daily attendance to the DeKalb County School System (DCSD) using the standard, approved method of data collection. Master schedules and student schedules must exist for students in grades K-12, as well as final marks for each course after each semester. DCSD will provide the necessary software and training for the Student Information System (eSIS) application while the charter school shall provide hardware and the necessary Internet service connection. The DCSD Student Information System is to be used for the collection of all data and information required by O.C.G.A. 20-2-320 for mandatory reporting to the State Department of Education (SDOE) and federal agencies (example: discipline). The method of data collection will be that which is currently in use by DCSD and may be changed from time to time based on technology currently in use. Existing periodic and end-of-year checklists provided by DCSD will be used to define when progress reports, report cards, and other verifications are to be produced.
- The charter school shall maintain all student records in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, regulations, rules, and policies. The charter school shall maintain all student records on behalf of the Board during each student's enrollment in the charter school. Upon a student's withdrawal or other matriculation from the charter school, the student's educational records shall be returned within ten (10) business days to the Board's student records center for retention. The charter school shall maintain and ensure the privacy and confidentiality of each student's educational record in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g, and shall not disclose to any unauthorized third party any personally identifiable information concerning any student enrolled in the charter school without first obtaining prior written parental permission.

Other

- The charter will comply with all legal and regulatory local, state, and federal laws or court orders requirements, including those outlined in DeKalb County Board of Education Charter School Guidelines. Failure to comply with any and all recommendations or directions of the DCSD Board Of Education with respect to the operation of the charter school may result in termination of the charter.

- The charter school will observe a brief period of quiet reflection in compliance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1050.
- The Charter School is subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school.
- The charter school will not waive and is not exempt from the Federal law, including the following:
 - School Accountability Provisions, Part 3 of Article 2 of Chapter 14 of Title 20 O.C.G.A. 20-14-30 through O.C.G.A. 20-14-41
 - Shall Not Charge Tuition, O.C.G.A. 20-2-133
 - Unlawful Conduct in or near a Public School, O.C.G.A. 20-2-1180 through O.C.G.A. 20-2-1182
 - Reporting Requirements – Student Data Collection, O.C.G.A. 20-2-320
 - Brief Period of Quiet Reflection, O.C.G.A. 20-2-1050, 20-2-1051
 - Open and Public Meetings, O.C.G.A. 50-14-1 et seq.
 - Inspection of Public Records, O.C.G.A. 50-18-70 et seq.
 - Fingerprinting and Criminal Record Check of All Personnel Employed by the Charter School, O.C.G.A. 20-2-211
- The charter school will provide documentation that the school has applied for accreditation and received probationary status by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), Georgia Accrediting Commission (GAC), or other recognized accrediting commission approved by the State Board of Education no later than October 1st of its first year of operation. The charter school understands that a school not able to receive full accreditation by the end of its second year of operation shall forfeit their charter.
- The charter school will comply with all federal, state, and local laws, policies, procedures, and requirements unless specifically waived in the charter. The charter understands that DCSD will not accept the “blanket waiver” but requires specific waivers and the rationale for each waiver.
- The charter agrees to complete registration for the upcoming school year and provide the names, addresses, and home school of all accepted students to DCSD no later than April 1st annually. It is understood that the school can continue to accept students after this date and will continue to update the system on the number of students registered and all other student information as requested. If the charter school does not meet its projected enrollment within twenty percent (20%), the charter may be terminated. If the enrollment levels create a financial hardship that puts student achievement in jeopardy, the charter may be terminated unless it can document additional independent financial support.
- The charter school shall provide an electronic copy of the complete charter school petition and contract to every parent as a part of the student enrollment procedures.