

Bear River Charter School

CHARTER

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1. Mission

The mission of the Bear River Charter School is to provide an outstanding educational and social experience for elementary and middle school students (K-8). This education will feature an educational program based on the individual needs of each student through a strong focus on basic skills in reading, spelling, writing and mathematics; extensive and diverse application of these basic skills to rich content areas, such as literature, writing, art, social studies and science with direct involvement in integrated field experiences. Across content areas, BRCS is committed to providing rich experiences that build cultural literacy and respect for diversity. BRCS is committed to a low student-to-teacher ratio and emphasis on basic societal values of respect, consideration, cooperation and honesty.

We aspire to serve a population that is diverse in learning needs, race/ethnicity, and language background. The Bear River Charter School will encourage and value parent involvement in school activities, governance, and program development. Staff will be supported and encouraged to take advantage of on-going professional development that expands their repertoire of educational knowledge and skills.

2. Core Values

The educational philosophy of the Bear River Charter School is that students should receive an education that is appropriate for their individual needs in each curricular area; that education should include basic skills, enriched content, and field experiences; that teachers are accountable for students' learning; and that students, parents, teachers, and staff are entitled to a positive learning/working environment. This philosophy will underlie every decision made at the school.

Every student should receive instruction that is appropriate for their individual needs. We welcome students with diverse learning needs, racial/ethnic/language backgrounds. We will consider each student's individual academic, emotional, and social needs in developing his/her program. Placement into instructional groups will be based on assessments of these characteristics. This allows every student, whether he/she is working at, above, or below grade level in a particular subject area, to receive appropriate instruction that is aligned with their social and emotional needs.

Education should include basic skills, enriched content, and field experiences. Every student needs and deserves (a) a strong foundation in the basic skills that will enabling him/her to become an independent learner, (b) understanding and skill in the content areas of literature, writing, social studies, sciences, and arts, (c) direct field experience with the subjects of the content areas, (d) rich experiences that build cultural literacy and respect for diversity.

Teachers are accountable for learning. We will use instructional methods that are effective for all students and closely monitor student progress. The school will use Direct Instruction to teach reading, spelling, writing, and mathematics. We will use the principles of Direct Instruction to guide our curriculum development in literature, language arts, science, social studies, and other content areas. If a student is having difficulty, the teacher must identify the cause of the difficulty, decide on a possible remedy, and evaluate the effectiveness of the remedy. The school will use frequent curriculum-based measures of student progress to enhance and evaluate the effectiveness of our teaching and provide the means for specific accountability.

Students, parents, teachers, and staff are entitled to a positive learning/working environment. To ensure that the school is a positive environment, we will use a management system based on the principles of applied behavior analysis and positive behavioral supports. This system allows us to build healthy attitudes and productive conduct through a positive approach. We invite all stakeholders to be active participants in building a positive educational and social experience at Bear River Charter School.

3. Curriculum and Instruction

The curriculum of the Bear River Charter School will be aligned with the Utah Core Standards at all grade levels. The style of instruction and curricular materials will, of course, vary across grade levels. The curriculum and instruction will be built around Direct Instruction programs supplemented by additional programs in areas of the Core Standards that are not sufficiently addressed by Direct Instruction. As students master basic skills in reading, spelling, writing and mathematics, instruction will be increasingly oriented to applying these basic skills to more complex situations. For example, once students have completed the third grade Direct Instruction reading program, they are able to read stories that are written for the sophistication of the plot, rather than being written with controlled decoding and vocabulary. The students' reading program will now focus on novels within various genres that have increasingly sophisticated vocabulary and plots. In addition, the students will engage in more challenging writing assignments which center around the novel. At all grade levels, students will gain field experiences within many of the subjects they are studying. For example, when the middle school students engage in nature writing, they may complete an expedition that will become the basis for an extensive paper. A science paper focusing on the salinity of the Great Salt Lake would involve an expedition to the Great Salt Lake, water sampling, journaling and photography.

Direct Instruction will be the foundation instruction at Bear River Charter School. Direct Instruction is a research-based and research-validated curricular and instructional system. Direct Instruction curriculum is organized to teach generalizable skills. Programs are designed to systematically build skills by carefully organizing lessons, sequencing skill introduction, gradually reducing supports for student performance, providing sufficient practice, and specifying teaching procedures in specific detail. Direct Instruction lessons feature active and productive engagement with tasks at an appropriate instructional level. In each core academic area, students will be placed into instructional groups based on placement tests (and student and parent input) and placement will remain flexible to accommodate students' changing needs. In addition to using the commercially available Direct Instruction programs in reading, spelling, writing, and mathematics, we will use the principles of Direct Instruction to guide our curriculum selection and development in literature, science, social studies, and other areas of the Utah Core Curriculum that are not addressed by existing Direct Instruction programs. The skills and strategies taught with Direct Instruction will be systematically expanded and applied in diverse situations in order to promote generalization and also as a means of teaching content. (For more information on Direct Instruction see Marchand-Martella, Slocum, & Martella, 2004.)

All Direct Instruction programs provide opportunities for frequent assessment throughout the school year. For example, Direct Instruction programs include mastery tests every 5-10 lessons. In the few instances where commercial tests are not available, teachers will develop their own rubric for evaluating student progress.

Cultural literacy and respect for diversity will be infused throughout the curriculum, most especially in literature, writing, social studies, and the arts. The goal is to treat cultural literacy

and respect for diversity not as an isolated subject area, but as perspectives and values that inform many curricular areas, as well as how we conduct ourselves as a community.

The middle school writing program extends students' writing into multiple genres and gives them extensive experience with long term projects that include research, working with feedback, and multiple drafts. Many of the writing projects are integrated with the science, social studies, and art curriculum, and emphasize cultural and linguistic diversity. For example, middle school students will engage in a nature writing experience in the fall of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade. The repetition of this assignment provides students with opportunities to improve their facility with this writing style. In this nature writing experience, students describe an "expedition" as a point of departure for writing about science. This assignment integrates science curriculum with writing, and gives students an opportunity to combine narrative and expository writing.

The social studies program, in addition to work in the classroom, will utilize community participation. Students will learn about community roles that we fulfill on local, national, and world levels, and specifically how history and culture influence those roles. This is accomplished through integration of textbook study with motivating experiences in and out of the classroom. The social studies faculty will actively seek experiences in the form of guest speakers, local or national events, museum visits, and other curriculum related activities. These experiences are meant to enhance student understanding of history's defining role in the communities of the world and the rich diversity of cultures that have shaped the world live in. For example, while studying the Great Depression students may visit a local assisted living facility to interview individuals who lived through the Depression. Another example is studying the history of immigration in which students focus on the challenges faced by new immigrants with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Students will also acquire a visual understanding of the political and geographical make-up of the world through map skills and cultural learning. Beginning with 5th grade studying the United States, each subsequent grade will study a geographical portion of the world.

The science curriculum will be based on the Utah State Core Curriculum with a strong emphasis on hands-on learning and field based instruction. Making connections between science concepts and real life experiences will be a focus. When possible, local resources will be utilized to broaden the students' experience and develop a strong sense of community. Examples of these resources include science collections and programs offered to local schools through Utah State University, visits to private, municipal, county, state and federal facilities such as landfills, recycling centers, hydroelectric facilities, technology industries like the Space Dynamics Laboratory, food manufacturing companies, dairies, and wildlife refuges. Classroom instruction will focus on developing observational and problem solving skills, scientific inquiry and good documentation. Students will also be involved in "real science" programs, for example the Bear River Watershed Education Project-watershed monitoring.

The physical education program will focus on introducing all students to a wide variety of physical activities that may become lifelong avocations and provide an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Examples of typical student experiences have included hiking, running, snowshoeing, skiing, and ice skating.

The art program will include both construction of art and understanding of art history. The construction component will feature careful selection of activities to provide students with sustained engagement with a variety of materials, techniques, genres, media, and elements. Art history will include historically varied and culturally diverse traditions. Each activity will be carefully designed to maximize success for every student.

Field experiences will integrate curricular areas including science, writing, art, and physical education. A typical field trip could include identification of water-dwelling insects to determine water quality, a hike, nature writing that evokes a sense of place, and art projects involving scientific illustration.

Positive behavioral supports and character education will be emphasized at each grade level. These will be based on basic values and commitments that we share as a community, including respect for the diversity that we each bring to the community. BRCS has a code of conduct for the elementary and middle school grades and teachers explicitly teach behavior expectations. When a social error occurs, the student will be prompted to stop, think, act and reflect on their behavior.

BRCS will also offer College and Career Awareness to students in 7th grade (full year, 1 credit). Students will explore their own values, skills, and aptitudes as they relate to the world of work and possible career paths. The course will focus on relations between the self (skills, values, aptitudes, abilities), the changing workplace (career opportunities and how the demands of the workplace are changing), and education. The course will include exploration of workplace tasks and concepts in agriculture, business, economics, family and consumer sciences, health sciences and technology, information technology, marketing, and pre-engineering/technical skills. The course will address the Intended Learning Outcomes and objectives described for College and Career Awareness by the Utah State Office of Education.

4. Assessment and Problem Solving

Bear River Charter School is committed to academic success for all students. We believe that ongoing assessment problem solving based on ongoing assessments is critical to achieving our goal of providing an educational experience that is targeted to the level and needs of each student. The following outline of goals, objectives, and criteria reflects our aspirations for student achievement. In addition to SAGE, pupil learning is measured with frequent mastery tests that are closely aligned with the specific instructional programs. We have intentionally set high goals for performance on standardized tests. We see these as “aspirational goals” that we may not achieve in every case, but which will keep us focused on problem solving, continuous improvement, and high standards for all students.

Mastery tests are listed among the measurement instruments in numerous places. Mastery tests are tests that focus on the specific concepts that were taught in a unit of instruction. They are often supplied with curricular materials (e.g., mastery tests are included every 10 lessons in many Direct Instruction programs and Saxon math programs) and are developed by teachers in the few areas where they do not already exist. They will provide for ongoing progress monitoring and timely responses to problems. Valid and reliable curriculum based measures of academic performance will be administered in the early grades (K-3). These measures will be used to identify students in need of supplemental instruction as well as to judge the effectiveness of the instructional program.

Goal 1: Improve Student Learning

Objective 1.a. Reading: Students will demonstrate reading proficiency at their grade level.

Measurement Criteria:

- 1.a.1. Students will score at least 80% on reading/literature mastery tests.
- 1.a.2. Students will attain benchmark on DIBELS (K-3 only)
- 1.a.3. At each grade level (3-8), 90% of the school’s students will score at a proficient level on the reading portion of the SAGE.

Objective 1.b. Writing: Students will demonstrate writing proficiency at their grade level.

Measurement Criteria:

- 1.b.1. Students will score at least 80% on writing mastery tests.
- 1.b.2. Student will score at least 80% proficiency on each major component of long-term writing projects. (4-8 only)
- 1.b.3. At each grade level (3-8), 90% of the school’s students will score at a proficient level on the writing portion of SAGE .

Objective 1.c. Mathematics: Students will demonstrate mathematics proficiency at their grade level.

Measurement Criteria:

1.c.1. Students will score at least 80% on mathematics mastery tests.

1.c.2. At each grade level (3-8), 90% of the school's students will score at a proficient level on the mathematics portion of SAGE.

Objective 1.d. Science: Students will demonstrate science proficiency at their grade level.

Measurement Criteria:

1.d.1. Students will score at least 80% on unit projects. (4-5 only)

1.d.2. Students will score at least 80% on science mastery tests. (6-8 only)

1.d.3. At each grade level (4-8), 90% of the school's students will score at a proficient level on the science portion of SAGE.

Objective 1.e. Social Studies: Students will demonstrate social studies proficiency at their grade level.

Measurement Criteria:

1.e.1. Evaluation of unit projects: Students will score at least 80% on unit projects. (4-5 only)

1.e.2. Students will score at least 80% on social studies mastery tests. (4-8 only)

Goal 2. Improve student responsibility and citizenship, develop social skills, and promote healthy lifestyles

Objective 2.a. Student will demonstrate responsibility by completing assignments on time.

Measurement Criteria:

2.a. Students will submit 95% of homework and long-term assignments on-time.

Objective 2.b. Students will demonstrate responsibility by completing assigned classroom jobs.

Measurement Criteria:

2.b. Students will complete assigned classroom jobs 100% of the time.

Objective 2.c. Students will demonstrate cultural literacy, respect for diversity, kindness, cooperation and honesty in their interactions with other students, faculty, staff, and parents.

Measurement Criteria:

2.c. All students will earn a satisfactory citizenship grade, based on a social interaction inventory conducted on an annual basis as well as engagement in cultural literacy activities, events, assignments, etc.

Objective 2.d. Students will demonstrate healthy lifestyles by participating in regular physical activity.

Measurement Criteria:

2.d. All students will achieve a satisfactory grade in the physical education program.

Goal 3. Provide a positive and supportive social environment for students, families, faculty, and staff.

Objective 3.a. Students, families, faculty, and staff perceive the school social environment as supportive and positive.

Measurement Criteria:

3.a. An annual social environment survey of each group will show that 90% of each group is highly satisfied with the social environment at the school.

Goal 4. Promote parent involvement

Objective 4.a. Families will be provided with opportunities to participate in school activities and decision making in ways that are compatible with their skills, time availability and preferences. The school will strive to have substantial parent involvement in school activities and decision making.

Measurement Criteria:

4.b. The board will make an annual review of parental involvement and set appropriate goals for the following year.

Goal 5. Promote continual professional development

Objective 5.a. All faculty will meet Utah's definition of professionally qualified.

Measurement Criteria:

5.a. All faculty will maintain appropriate Utah licenses or be enrolled and progressing in an Alternative Route to Licensing.

Objective 5.b. All faculty will engage in professional development.

Measurement Criteria:

5.b. All faculty will keep a record of their professional development activities that will demonstrate annual professional development activities and accomplishments.

5. Parent Involvement

Parents will be strongly encouraged to take advantage of opportunities for involvement in school activities and governance; however, parental involvement will be strictly voluntary.

Three principles will guide our support of parent involvement: (1) provide specific opportunities for meaningful participation, (2) be flexible and responsive to unanticipated kinds of participation and input (parents do not have to fit into our pre-conceived ideas), (3) honor parent participation by making sure that their activities are meaningful and their input is taken seriously. Our view is that the strongest encouragement for parent participation in activities is to provide meaningful and important activities and to assure that volunteers understand how important they are to a successful school. Similarly, the strongest encouragement to parent input in decision-making and governance is to take parental input seriously and to assure that parents understand that their input has made an impact on the governance of the school.

Parental involvement in school governance will be facilitated through both formal and informal channels. The governing board will include at least two current parents who, in addition to representing their own perspectives, will be designated as parent liaisons. These parent liaisons will be responsible for soliciting and monitoring parent opinions on all aspects of the school's functioning, and presenting these perspectives to the board. In addition, parents will be invited to attend and participate in board meetings. Each board meeting will include a standing agenda item for the consideration of parental input. Under this agenda item, any parent may raise issues and make suggestions for changes.

6. Admissions Procedures

It is a goal of the school to enroll a student body that is diverse with respect to learning needs, race/ethnicity, and language background. This will be promoted through widespread outreach and support for application by members of traditionally underrepresented groups.

The school will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, or national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, or programs. No person shall, on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, age, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program offered by the school.

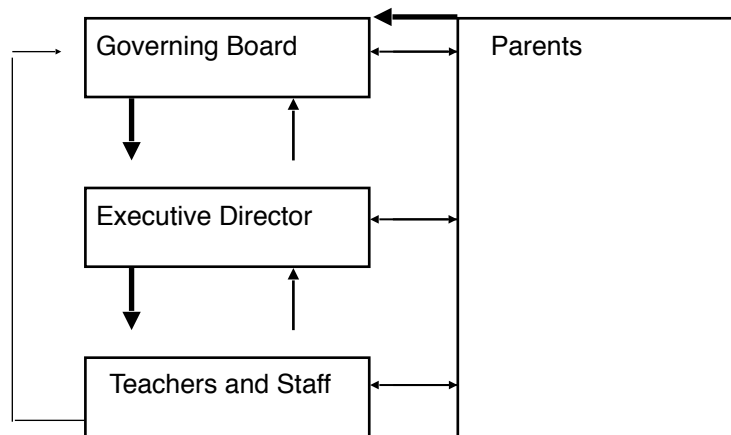
In all aspects of selection and enrollment of students, the school will comply with Utah Code Section 53A-1a-506. In addition, the school's admissions practices will comply with Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Federal civil rights laws, including, but not limited to, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as applicable.

Enrollment priority will be given to siblings of enrolled students and then children of employees.

7. Organizational Structure, Roles, and Competencies

A. Organizational Structure

Bear River Charter School will depend on active participation in the governance, administrative, and teaching process by four groups of stakeholders: Governing Board, Executive Director, Teachers and Staff, and Parents. Relations among those groups is diagrammed below.



The bold arrows indicate direct supervisory or control relationships and plain arrows indicate interaction and informal influence. The bold arrow from parents to the Board of Directors reflects the fact that parents elect two members of the Board and those Parent Representatives are then a part of the nomination and election process for all open Board positions. The Board of Directors supervises the Executive Director who supervises teachers and staff. Parents also interact directly with the director, teachers, and staff.

B. Governing Board

1) Board Authority

Roles and responsibilities of the governing board of Bear River Charter School include, but are not limited to:

- a) Protect the legal interests of the charter school
- b) Determine the vision/mission and set policy
- c) Exercise sound legal and ethical practices and policies
- d) Manage liabilities wisely
- e) Advocate good external relations with the community, school districts, media, neighbors, parents, and students
- f) Hire and evaluate the administrator

- g) Practice strategic planning
- h) Ensure adequate resources and manage them effectively
- i) Assess the organization's performance

The Board will have ultimate authority for running the school and will delegate responsibility for day-to-day operations to the Executive Director. The Board will have the following primary responsibilities:

- a) Hire/dismiss, supervise, and evaluate the performance of the school's Director,
- b) Hire/dismiss staff based upon recommendations from the Director,
- c) Promote the mission of the school,
- d) Oversee the raising of school funds,
- e) Oversee and evaluate educational programs and operations in coordination with the Executive Director,
- f) Assure financial responsibility and accountability by:
 - a. Approving the budget and overseeing adherence,
 - b. Contracting for and approving an independent audit,
 - c. Controlling investments of capitol funds.

2) Make-up of the Board and Roles of Officers

The governing Board will consist of at least seven members, including a President, Treasurer, Secretary, and two elected parent representatives. Details on how the Governing Board will be constituted and run, as well as detailed statements of roles and responsibilities are described in the BRCS by-laws.

C. Executive Director

The Director will manage the educational, operational, and financial day-to-day operation of the school; and make recommendations to the Board regarding personnel and policy. The Director will also maintain open lines of communication and work collaboratively with faculty, staff, and parents; and will inform the Board of issues raised by these groups.

The Director will carry out duties including, but not limited to:

- 1) Educational Leadership:
 - a) Instructional and curriculum leadership,
 - b) Supervision, support, and improvement of:
 - placement and grouping of students,
 - classroom instruction,

- ongoing monitoring of student academic progress,
- proactive development of positive social behavior and positive behavior management systems,
- resolution of discipline problems,

- c) Interpretation, explanation, and dissemination of measures of student and school performance,
 - d) Supervise, evaluate, and support teachers and other staff,
 - e) Supervise professional development,
 - f) Supervise all aspects of special education services,
 - g) Supervise student access to counseling services as needed,
 - h) Maintain frequent contact with students and staff,
 - i) Communicate effectively with students and teachers.
- 2) Community Relations:
- a) Promote parent and community participation in the operation and governance of the school,
 - b) Publicize the existence, mission, and outcomes of the school,
 - c) Maintain positive working relations with local school districts (Cache and Logan).
- 3) Managerial:
- a) Exercise a participatory management style with staff, parents, and the community,
 - b) Manage and oversee expenditures within the context of the budget and fiscal procedures developed by the Board,
 - c) Make recommendations to the Board regarding employment issues,
 - d) Oversee the operation and maintenance of the school plant,
 - e) Oversee the management of school equipment and supplies,
 - f) Prepare federal and state reports,
 - g) Make recommendations to the Board on any and all policy issues that effect the successful operation of the school,
 - h) Supervise organization and maintenance of employment and educational records,
 - i) Serve as the Section 504/ADA coordinator.

D. Educator Qualifications

Bear River Charter School is committed to hiring only the highest qualified teachers. Qualifications will include:

- a) hold a bachelor's or higher degree,
- b) be licensed in the area of teaching assignment; or on the basis of demonstrated competency, would qualify to teach under alternative certification or authorization programs as specified in R277-520.
- c) be highly qualified to teach the grade level and subject matter to which they are assigned as specified in R277-510 (this includes passing the USOE designated subject area test (e.g., Praxis 0014) or Level 2 license with appropriate documentation) ,

Teachers will carry out duties including, but not limited to:

- a) demonstrate a willingness and ability to support the mission, values, and goals of the school,
- b) demonstrate effectiveness in teaching the curriculum and using the instructional methods described in the mission and comprehensive program of instruction,
- c) demonstrate a desire and ability to communicate clearly with parents and support parent participation,
- d) treat students, parents and other teachers with respect and warmth.