



### Governing Board Capacity/Clarification Interview Rubric

DeKalb Agriculture Technology and Environment (DATE)

November 19, 2025

The Petition Review Committee will use the following criteria to rate the governing board capacity/clarification interview. Within each category, specific criteria define the expectations for a response that meets expectations. Reviewers will reach consensus when rating responses by applying the following guidance:

Rating	Characteristics
Meets the Standard	The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school operates and expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant’s capacity to carry out its plans effectively.
Partially Meets the Standard	The response meets the criteria in some respects but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.
Below the Standard	The response is wholly undeveloped, demonstrates lack of preparation, and/or is unsuited to the mission of the authorizer.
Far Below the Standard	The response is significantly incomplete, raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan and/or the applicant’s ability to carry it out.

Recommendations from the Petition Review Committee will be based on evaluation of the written petition (narrative and attachments), independent due diligence, and the governing board capacity interview.

Community Support and Need	Standard	Rating
<b>Clarifying Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe how various stakeholders (teachers, families, and community members) were involved in the renewal petition process. Additionally, how will these stakeholder groups continue to participate? - p. 14</li> <li>- Describe DATE’s efforts to ensure that the Parent/Community Engagement reflects the socioeconomic and cultural diversity of the student population and the surrounding community. – p. 34</li> <li>- Your petition mentions numerous school partnerships with local businesses. What do those partnerships look like? Describe the relationship(s). p. 15</li> <li>- What was the response rate for the survey or link "created to receive feedback on the petition?" What were key findings from this community feedback? Provide an example of integrating this feedback into the petition. - p. 12</li> </ul>	<p>The applicant makes a compelling case for why the school fills an unmet need in the DeKalb County School District. The applicant demonstrates an understanding of the community or communities the school serves or is likely to serve. The Board demonstrates cultural competency specific to the communities with whom it works or seeks to work, including the ability to articulate the root causes of the needs it seeks to fill.</p>	Meets the Standard
		Partially Meets the Standard
		Below the Standard
		Far Below the Standard

**Responses from Governing Board:**

- The Governing Board begins the process of gathering stakeholder input three months in advance of submitting the petition. Per the Governing Board Chair, additional data is collected during Board meetings.
- The Board Chair asserts that it is impossible to ensure that the socioeconomic diversity of the Board reflects the school community—a contractual obligation. Clarification was provided that Board membership is open. Additional funding has been put into ESOL. The school hosts cultural awareness nights. Parents are supported by connecting them to health resources, career development, and social services available in the broader county.
- DATE has a high level of parental involvement that provides multiple opportunities for participation.
- Examples of Community Partnerships – Home Depot (supplies for the garden and greenhouse); local nurseries; film companies (directors); Department of Water Management (field trips to water reservoirs); DeKalb Public Health (vaccinations, flu shots, adolescent health and youth development)
- Stakeholder Feedback – Respondents expressed the desire for a DATE high school.
- The school has a functioning farm on the property. This is a draw for families. Parents appreciate the hands-on application of theory.

**Review Committee’s Comments or Concerns:**

- In the Executive Summary, the total enrollment in the final column of the table (778) exceeds the total enrollment in the fourth question (770). What is the expected enrollment at the end of the charter term? - p. 11
- If verifiable, include this designation as a commendation in the initial memo and final recommendation: DATE "is the only K-8 charter school in Georgia, in the Southeastern Region, and even in the USA to have a Triple Integration Approach to education: Environmental, Agricultural, and Technological Sciences." - p. 11
- The petition exhibits do not include examples of MOUs with any of the entities listed on page 15 of the application--Georgia Perimeter College, Piedmont Technical College, Chattahoochee Nature Center, Stone Mountain Park, Arabia Mountain, Gwinnett Heritage Center, Dekalb Watershed Department, Honeywell, Home Depot, Miracle Grow, Costa Farms, STEAM Inc., and Sprouts. (p. 15) - Request examples in the Initial Clarification Memo.
- **The Governing Board did not provide specific examples of stakeholder feedback that was integrated into the petition.**
- **Efforts to engage the surrounding community in which the school is physically located were not clearly articulated.**

School Governance	Standard	Rating
<p>Clarifying Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To what extent has DATE achieved its mission/vision during the current charter term? What is the evidence that the Governing Board uses to evaluate this goal? P.11</li> <li>- <b>The school council and any personnel waivers (including due process) are within the broad flexibility granted through the charter contract. Clarify the specific waivers, if any, above and beyond</b></li> </ul>	<p>The governance structure is designed to (a) put students first, including being responsive to family and community input; (b) achieve the school’s mission and goals; and (c) ensure legal compliance, particularly in terms of proactively preventing financial fraud and</p>	<p>Meets the Standard</p> <hr/> <p><b>Partially Meets the Standard</b></p>

those granted by the charter and how they are utilized. - p. 13	ensuring the appropriate use of public funds. The governance structure will ensure an active, engaged, knowledgeable Board that has timely, deep, and broad knowledge of the school's operations, finances, and students' needs, and operates independently and autonomously.	Below the Standard
		Far Below the Standard

**Responses from Governing Board:**

- Currently, the Board is drawing parent representatives from its PTA/PTO.
- The Board has standards that it measures at each meeting—CCRPI, MAP data, and other KPIs. The Board measures the foci. The school's goal is to be one of the top 10 charter schools in the nation.
- Continuous improvement is always a focus. Teachers and staff participate in PD.
- The school strives to address bond covenant requirements and to manage debt.
- Waivers – The Board Chair articulated that the use of funding and staffing are two ways that waivers are utilized.

**Review Committee's Comments or Concerns:**

- The Governing Board did not describe the measures it uses to assess the school's "foci" or how it uses data in its decision-making processes.
- Though this assertion appears in the petition, the Governing Board did not identify waivers that it implements above and beyond what is granted in its charter contract.
- The Governing Board did not demonstrate deep and broad knowledge of the school's operations, finances, and students' needs, as several Board members were minimally engaged in responding to questions during the capacity interview.

Academic Performance/Plan	Standard	Rating
<p>Clarifying Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe the school's strategies for moving students from proficient to distinguished content mastery.</li> <li>- Please describe how the school actively uses the broad flexibility of waivers to support its academic and organizational model and identify which aspects of the school's structure or performance would be compromised if these waivers were not in place. – p. 13</li> <li>- What percentage of DATE's teachers are certified? – p. 16</li> <li>- Can you describe how the school monitors, evaluates, and improves the academics of students with disabilities? Specifically, what systems does the board have in place to ensure accountability for IEP implementation and or improving outcomes for this subgroup over time? - p. 27-29</li> <li>- What has DATE identified as the root cause of the progress scores' decreasing by 10.7 points from the 2023 to 2024? - p. 16</li> </ul>	<p>The applicant demonstrates the capability to design or select a comprehensive, high-quality curriculum (standards, resources, methods of instruction, and formative assessments for each core, electives, and mission-specific subjects). The curriculum is inherently inclusive and designed to be responsive to students' needs; clearly interrelated between its components; and directly aligned to the school's goals, mission, and educational philosophy.</p>	Meets the Standard
		Partially Meets the Standard
		Below the Standard
		Far Below the Standard

**Responses from Governing Board:**

- Innovation would be limited without access to waivers. The waivers allow the school to hire teachers with expertise in agriculture. The school has added engineers and artists to the staff.
- The certification rate is above 90%. Many teachers hold a gifted or ESOL endorsement.
- MAP assessment is in-house. The students are assessed within one week of school starting.
- Progress Score Decreases – The Board asserted that there is not a single, direct root cause. The school makes adjustments to staffing, as needed. MAP also drives other instructional shifts throughout the academic year. Accommodations such as small group instruction are implemented to support students.
- The Wonders curriculum is how the school is navigating the changes in the ELA standards. The Board allocated \$100,000 for the Wonders curriculum.
- SWD – The Board has a reporting system to ensure that there are not gaps for students with disabilities. If the school sees gaps, it remediates. The Board asserts that there are not gaps and that there are SOPs in place to address any gaps. Individual plans are built for students and systems are in place for teachers to monitor student progress. The percentage of SWD at DATE is about 2%.

**Review Committee’s Comments or Concerns:**

- The petition does not include an analysis of the cause(s) of academic success. (p. 18)
- The Governing Board did not demonstrate an understanding of the root causes of DATE’s successes or challenges.
- RDE and the Area Office affirmed that data used for the academic analysis and the data contained in Exhibit 5 is misleading as it is presented in the aggregate rather than by grade band. RDE will follow up with the school to address this discrepancy before the final petition is submitted.

Financial Performance/Plan	Standard	Rating
<p><b>Clarifying Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The petition states that “sound financial decisions and monitoring are implemented by both the governing board and school administrators.” Please describe the specific types of decision-making practices and monitoring activities carried out by the governing board and by school administrators that contribute to the strong financial stability DATE has demonstrated. p. 20</li> <li>- The petition notes concern regarding the upcoming balloon payment due on June 1, 2029. Can you clarify the board's plan for meeting this obligation, including any refinancing strategies, capital campaign efforts, or contingency measures in place to ensure full repayment of the remaining PFA Series A and B bond obligations? p.20</li> </ul>	<p>The financial and facilities plans, including the proposed budget, are thoroughly developed and aligned with the proposed school’s mission and education program. The budget is balanced and conservative; reflects all necessary outlays, including any unique programs described in the academic plan; ensures adequate levels on cash on hand, including cash reserves and/or contingencies for unexpected shortfalls; and contains no accounting errors. The revenue projections are realistic and sufficient to meet school expenditures. Both the finance and facilities plans are</p>	<p>Meets the Standard</p>
		<p>Partially Meets the Standard</p>
		<p>Below the Standard</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How does the five-year plan account for potential increases in major recurring expenses such as insurance, utilities, food services, and capital outlay, and what is the rationale for projecting an increase in Title I funding given the current economic and political climate? (page 478- 490)</li> <li>- Given DATE's strong financial performance indicators over the years, how has the governance board ensured financial resources are strategically allocated to sustain the instructional programs and staff capacity that drive these outcomes? (page 16)</li> </ul>	<p>realistic and informed by accurate assessment, including key funding opportunities and facilities availability.</p>	<p>Far Below the Standard</p>
<p><b>Responses from Governing Board:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The school has built a reserve over the course of 19 years. The school's current reserve is just under \$9 million. The afterschool program is a source of revenue. The school is targeting to increase fundraising by 15% over the next five years.</li> <li>- The PTO also raises funds for the school.</li> <li>- The Board has authorized payment of the bond balloon payment to take advantage of the interest savings. The Board is not concerned about the balloon payment at this time. The school will pay approximately \$3 million of the bond before it matures (by December 31). The DATE Foundation is raising money. The PTO may also contribute, or the school could tap into reserves as a backup plan.</li> </ul> <p><b>Review Committee's Comments or Concerns:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Though the petition indicates concerns over the bond, the Governing Board stated that it does not have concerns regarding its repayment schedule.</li> <li>- The school consistently meets short-term and long-term targets as outlined in Appendix A of its contract.</li> </ul>		
<p>Organizational Performance/Plan</p>	<p>Standard</p>	<p>Rating</p>
<p><b>Clarifying Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe DATE's staff retention initiatives. What supports has DATE put in place for staff members who lack certification? – Site Visit</li> <li>- According to the petition, "DATE's Board Governance Structure has been very effective in establishing a shared governance approach, with one voice and allegiance to the charter's mission, goals, and objectives." It is also noted that many board members have served multiple consecutive terms. How does the governing board ensure adherence to established term limits and implement a clear process for board members to complete their terms and transition off the board as intended? p.23, 25</li> </ul>	<p>The organizational plan aligns with and supports the school's mission and educational philosophy, is designed to support the school's goals and academic achievement expectations and is accurately reflected in the budget. The staffing and recruitment plan provides sufficient academic, non-academic, and mission-critical staff to cover all of the courses and programs described in the Academic Plan. The Board has all areas of knowledge and expertise necessary to operate a successful charter school, and the school leader(s) have or will have the expertise and resources to fulfill the school's mission and goals.</p>	<p>Meets the Standard</p> <p>Partially Meets the Standard</p> <p>Below the Standard</p> <p>Far Below the Standard</p>

**Responses from Governing Board:**

- The Board has staggered terms.
- The Board is challenged to find new members.
- New talent is being developed through the PTO as a transition plan.
- Through observation, PTO members are learning the various roles of the Board through mentorship.

**Review Committee’s Comments or Concerns:**

- The Governing Board does not have a have a clear succession plan and shared that it has difficulty recruiting new members due to the volunteer commitment.
- Though the Governing Board has staggered terms, some Board members have served for over a decade.

Performance Task	Standard	Rating
<p>Governing Board Performance Task: In reviewing DATE’s most recent academic performance data in the area of ELA PROGRESS over three years, you identify several concerning trends in the data set which need to be addressed.</p> <p><b>Questions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How would the Governing Board approach this challenge?</li> <li>b. What additional info would be helpful to deliver a quality analysis to the school community?</li> <li>c. How would you ensure that the needs of students subgroups (students with disabilities and ELs) are met?</li> <li>d. Which budget line items would you recommend revising in order to help achieve this solution? How would the Board determine the budget line items that are off limits for revision?</li> </ol>	<p>The Board demonstrates the capacity to confront potential pitfalls in opening and/or operating a school by identifying the root causes of plausible challenges and solutions to those challenges.</p>	Meets the Standard
		Partially Meets the Standard
		Below the Standard
		Far Below the Standard

**Responses from Governing Board:**

- The Board finds the data concerning. The Academic Committee has not yet put a plan in place.
- The Board would like to know what has contributed to the decline over the years.
- Questions – Have there been changes in the classroom in terms of teachers? Have teachers left in grades 3-5?
- The timeline of the data begins after COVID.
- More information is needed. The school would need to know all the variables that are contributing to the data trend. How is the school currently addressing the trend? What instructional materials are being used? Have the teachers been trained on the materials? Does this align to MAP data? Are there novice teachers in grades 3-5? How many students are new to the school.
- How successful is tutoring? Are resources available through Title I?
- Budget – The school would not have an issue addressing staffing needs.

**Review Committee’s Comments or Concerns:**

- Only two Board members participated in the performance task. Other members remained silent.
- The Board did not engage school administrators present on the call in its problem-solving process.

- The questions listed above addressed how the school would ensure that the needs of students and disabilities and ELs were met.
- The budget line items that might be impacted were not identified.