



Educational Vendor Policies and Procedures

The Cottonwood School (“Charter School”) is focused on “Personalized Learning”, a philosophy that puts every student first by supporting them in honoring and exploring their unique skills, special gifts, talents, and aspirations. In furtherance of this philosophy and Charter School’s educational mission, families and Charter School staff together carefully select educational items and services for students to fit their goals and education plan.

The purpose of The Cottonwood School Governing Board approving the Educational Vendor Policies and Procedures is to accomplish the key requirements detailed in this policy, including:

1. The Executive Director (as defined below) must approve all vendors before they can provide educational items or services to students.
2. The Homeschool Teacher (as defined below) and Executive Director (as defined below) must approve all requests for educational items or services to ensure they are aligned with the charter petition and student’s personalized learning curriculum.
3. No family may spend, or obligate the Charter School to spend, any Charter School monies on educational items and services. Charter School is responsible for making purchases of approved educational items and services.

VENDOR APPLICATION AND APPROVAL

1. **Educational Vendor Applications:** Charter School contracts with educational vendors who provide educational enrichment services (e.g., in-person educational activities) and items (e.g., textbooks, workbooks, etc.) to students. Vendors must submit an application to Charter School detailing critical information such as qualifications and services. Charter School shall carefully review Vendor’s application, website, available references, social media, and other pertinent information.

The Executive Director or his/her designee (“Executive Director”) must approve all educational vendors and enter into an agreement with approved vendors before a vendor can provide any educational services to students. The Executive Director may reject a vendor applicant or terminate vendor services for any reason. The Executive Director may delegate his/her authority to approve vendors as necessary to promote the effective operations of the Charter School. For educational products, parents may submit requests specific educational products from a particular vendor (e.g., pencils from an online store). The Charter School’s approval of the educational product request (approval process described below) serves as vendor approval.

2. **Vendor Guidelines:** The Executive Director is responsible for approving vendors, and

must ensure the vendor meets guidelines, including, but not limited to the following:

- Vendor must have the qualifications, skills and, if applicable, the certification and licenses necessary to perform the requested services in a competent and professional manner.
 - Vendor conducts background checks pursuant to Education Code section 45125.1 to ensure Vendor (if an individual), its employees, and agents who interact with students have not committed a serious or violent felony.
 - Vendor services and/or products must be non-sectarian. Vendor's services and products must not discriminate on the basis of disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or any other protected basis under California law.
 - Vendor must maintain adequate levels of insurance for its educational services.
 - Vendor must not be a private school offering services through a part-time program (e.g., after school programs) or a parent-organized group (also known as "co-op").
 - Vendors must qualify as independent contractors in accordance with applicable laws. This is determined by the Executive Director based on vendor representations and vetting by the Charter School or its service provider.
3. **Vendor Agreement:** Once the Executive Director has approved a vendor, the vendor and Charter School must enter into a vendor agreement before the school can order educational services from the vendor. Considering families may have one-off requests for educational products, a vendor agreement may not be necessary for the Charter School to purchase educational products (e.g., ordering pencils from an online store for one student). The vendor agreement will include protections set forth in this policy, including, but not limited to requiring background checks for staff interacting with students, prohibitions on non-sectarian/discriminatory items and services, insurance and indemnification provisions, and more.

REQUESTING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND ITEMS

1. **Requests:** Students make requests for educational services and items through the Enrichment ordering system. The Enrichment ordering system is accessible on the Charter School website and features a list of approved educational vendors. All requests for educational services and items must: (i) first be approved the credentialed teacher assigned to supervise student's independent study ("Homeschool Teacher"); and (ii) approved by the Executive Director or designee. The Executive Director may delegate his/her authority to approve parent requests for educational items and services as necessary to promote the effective operations of the Charter School.

The Executive Director can deny any request for educational items or services in his or her sole discretion for any reason. Families cannot directly purchase, or obligate the Charter School to purchase, any educational items or service without Charter School's approval.

The Charter School establishes a planning amount for students for educational items and services per full school year. Parents and students are not guaranteed to receive any educational items and services up to and equal to this planning amount, as a Homeschool Teacher and the Executive Director must approve all requests. The planning amount is also not a mandatory cap limiting the Charter School's ability provide necessary educational services to students (e.g., pursuant to a student's individualized education program). The Charter School developed this planning amount to help ensure the school provides educational items and services aligned with its budget and to help ensure fair and equal treatment of students, to the extent consistent with individual needs. Parents and students are not given access to direct or encumber planning amount funds. Parents are encouraged to work with their Homeschool Teacher to develop multi-year plans for their children because their educational needs may vary from year-to-year. While the Charter School does not guarantee any specific amount of funding for educational services and items, a multi-year plan empowers the Charter School and families to develop a personalized course of study suited to their children's needs and the Charter School to effectively budget for all students. The planning amount cannot be transferred to any other student.

The Homeschool Teacher and Executive Director are responsible for granting requests and allocating educational products and services in a nondiscriminatory manner. The Charter School shall seek to purchase cost-effective educational items and services. The Homeschool Teacher and Executive Director shall ensure purchased educational items and services meet the following requirements:

- From approved vendors only.
 - Support the requesting student's personalized curriculum and education plan.
 - Must be aligned with State standards, student's course of study (e.g., requested amount of fabric corresponds to length of course/project), or student's independent study master written agreement.
 - From a vendor who is not related to the Charter School family requesting the educational items or services and otherwise does not present conflict of interest concerns.
2. **Core Subject Curriculum:** The Homeschool Teacher and Executive Director must ensure students access all necessary "core subject curriculum" – education items/services necessary for the student to complete his/her State standards-aligned course of study – before approving any extracurricular activities or supplemental educational or enrichment items. Core subject curriculum includes physical curriculum like McGraw Hill Textbook Set and associated workbooks and access to digital educational platforms such as Odysseyware or StongMind Digital Learning.
 3. **Enrichment Certificates:** After the Homeschool Teacher and Executive Director approve

a request through the Enrichment ordering system, an “Enrichment Certificate” is created by Charter School. Charter School requests educational services and items from approved vendors through Enrichment Certificates. If necessary, Charter School may use an approved vendor’s purchase order form in lieu of an Enrichment Certificate. Certificates/purchase orders should include important information, including the requested educational services, dates of services, Enrichment Certificate/PO Number, and approved cost for services.

Vendors must receive an approved Enrichment Certificate/purchase order before providing educational services or items to students. Vendors must receive the Enrichment Certificate/purchase order and provide the requested education services before submitting an invoice to Charter School.

4. **Prohibited Requests:** Charter School students can only request education services and items available in the Enrichment ordering system. Homeschool Teachers and Executive Directors will only approve requests for educational items and services that are educational quality (e.g., not top of the line). Only basic items and services may be approved. Charter School will not approve educational items or services beyond what is needed to meet a student’s learning objectives.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of prohibited items and services:

- Backpacks
- Amusement park tickets
- Video game hardware or software
- Excessive quantities of any item or service (e.g., beyond student’s course of study).
- Non-educational household items (e.g., storage containers, organizational items (large or small items), picture frames, etc.)
- Bicycles, tricycles, scooters, skateboards, rollerblades, roller skates, wagons, etc.
- Live animals or animal supplies small insects/amphibians/worms as a part of a science class. Certain kit and supplies can be ordered by a student (e.g., praying mantis, caterpillars, ladybugs, or silkworms to study; ant farms; or tadpoles)
- Top of the line musical instruments (where more reasonably-priced options are available)
- Educational items and services must be nonsectarian
- Taxis/Uber/Lyft rides and other transportation costs

5. **Educational Field Trips:** While families are prohibited from requesting trips to non-educational venues, they can request to join educational field trips through the enrichment ordering system (e.g., museums, aquariums, libraries, etc.) The Executive Director and Homeschool Teacher shall carefully scrutinize each request to ensure the requested educational field trip aligns with the student’s course of study and furthers their education and that all participants are necessary for student transportation, safety and supervision.

In light of the Charter School providing an independent study program, it is anticipated that a parent/guardian may need to serve as chaperone and transport their children for approved educational field trips. The Charter School Board finds funding the actual, reasonable, and necessary costs for a chaperone to access the educational field trip (e.g., ticket to museum, embedded transportation costs) furthers public school purposes where necessary or desirable to allow students to participate in educational field trips.

6. Student and Family Responsibilities:

A. Returning Educational Products: All educational items requested through the Enrichment ordering system are the property of the Charter School. This includes any technology, textbooks, and other educational items. Families must return all educational products upon disenrollment or upon request by the Executive Director or Homeschool Teacher. In accordance with applicable law, parents are responsible for to replace lost, stolen, damage, or otherwise unreturned educational items.

- Certain items are “consumable”, meaning they are not functional after use (e.g., workbooks). These items can be discarded by families after use.

B. Damaged or Lost Educational Items: Parents are responsible for replacing lost, stolen, damage, or otherwise unreturned educational items to the extent allowed under applicable law. If an educational item is damaged, parents must immediately contact the Homeschool Teacher for support.

Required Attendance: Students must attend regular learning period meetings with their Homeschool Teacher to discuss progress, turn in quality work samples, and complete their Student Activity Logs (Attendance Logs) in order to make requests for extracurricular educational activities (e.g., non-core curriculum items) through enrichment ordering system.

7. Questions: If Charter School families have any questions about this policy or how to make requests for educational items and services, please contact Executive Director, Julie Haycock at julieh@inspireschools.org.