



Start·a·School

AN EDUCATION FREEDOM FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

Ohio

Charter Schools (Community Schools)

Ohio's community schools offer additional choices for families seeking nontraditional, K-12 public educational settings for their children. Tuition-free for Ohio students, these learning institutions are public, nonprofit, nonreligious schools that receive state and federal funds but are independent of traditional school districts.

Community schools, which are often called charter schools nationally and in other states, are public schools created in Ohio law; are independent of any school district; and are part of the state's education program. Community schools are public schools of choice and are state and federally funded. There are two types of community schools in Ohio: start-up community schools and conversion community schools.

Virtual Charters

Internet Computer-based Community Schools: These are community schools, also known as [eSchools](#), where enrolled students work primarily from their residences. Students work on assignments in non-classroom-based learning opportunities provided via an Internet or other computer-based instructional method that does not rely on regular classroom instruction or via comprehensive instructional methods that include Internet-based, other computer-based and non-computer-based learning opportunities. Opening a new eSchool is limited to developers and authorizers being approved by the department through a separate application process.

[Ohio Revised Code 3314.013](#) allows for no more than five new internet- or computer-based community schools to open per year. All new internet- or computer-based community schools or existing community schools wishing to begin operation as an internet- or computer-based community school must receive approval from the superintendent of public instruction based on measures prescribed in [Ohio Administrative Code 3301-102-09](#), unless a sponsor rated "Exemplary" on its most recent sponsor evaluation is seeking to open a new internet-or computer-based community school that will primarily serve students enrolled in a dropout prevention and recovery program.

Citations: [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3314.013](#), [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3314.02](#), [Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3314.03](#)

Steps to Start a Community School

1. Develop Your Vision and Plan
 - **Define Your Mission:** Decide on the educational focus (e.g., STEM, arts, dropout recovery) and the community you aim to serve.
 - **Research Needs:** Assess the demand for your proposed school in the target area. Look at local demographics, existing school performance, and community input.
 - **Create a Preliminary Plan:** Outline your school's goals, curriculum, target student population, and operational structure (e.g., brick-and-mortar or virtual).
2. Form a Founding Team
 - Assemble a group of committed individuals with diverse skills (e.g., education, finance, legal, administration) to serve as your governing board or planning committee.
 - Ensure your team understands Ohio's legal and operational requirements for community schools.
3. Select a name for your school. You will need to verify that the name is available by researching the name availability on your state's Division of Corporations website.
4. Plan to retain this name throughout the duration of the school's operation.
5. Designate a lead administrative officer. Select a title, such as Director, Principal, Superintendent, etc.
6. [Start a Nonprofit Organization in Ohio](#)
7. A Federal Employer Identification Number (FEI/EIN) will be required after registering as a company. Apply with the IRS online at:
<https://sa.www4.irs.gov/modiein/individual/index.jsp>
8. Since the school will be a non-profit LLC, you must file a [IRS form 1023 online](#).
9. Find a Sponsor (Authorizer)
 - In Ohio, community schools must be authorized by a sponsor, which could be a nonprofit organization, educational service center, or another entity approved by the ODE.
 - Research potential sponsors, such as the Ohio Council of Community Schools (OCCS) or the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio (ESC). Check their websites (e.g., ohioschools.org) for application processes and deadlines.
 - Contact sponsors to discuss your vision and confirm their requirements. Sponsors typically expect at least a year of planning before a school opens.
10. Submit a Proposal and Application
 - **Initial Proposal:** Many sponsors, like OCCS, require a proposal by a specific deadline (e.g., July 1 for opening the following year). This includes your school's mission, educational plan, and evidence of community support.
 - **Full Application:** If the proposal is approved, submit a detailed New School Application (often due by September 1 for the next year). This includes:
 - A comprehensive education plan (curriculum, teaching methods, assessment strategies).
 - A budget and financial plan.
 - Governance structure and policies.

- Facility plans (location, safety compliance).
 - Staffing and leadership details.
 - Sponsors provide technical assistance and templates to guide this process.
11. Secure Funding and Resources
- Community schools receive state and federal funding based on enrollment, but startup costs (e.g., facilities, materials) may require additional resources.
 - Explore grants, such as those offered by sponsors like OCCS, or federal startup funds for charter schools.
 - Develop a five-year financial forecast, as required by the ODE.

[New Internet- or Computer-Based Community School Charter School](#)

Applicants should note the sample timeline listed below:

- January 15: The applicant must work closely with a sponsor and operator to complete the application. Sponsors are required to submit the completed form electronically via Epicenter by 11:59 p.m. on the due date to receive consideration. Only complete applications will be considered. The Department will not review any late or incomplete applications after the deadline.
- February 15: The applicant will receive a decision from the Department on the status of its application.
- February 28: The Department will post application results on its website, along with a list of applications and their review and outcome status.

Submission Instructions

Sponsors are required to submit the [internet- or computer-based community school application](#), all required documents and supporting materials to the Office of Community Schools via Epicenter.

Instructions for Submitting Application in Epicenter:

- 1) Log onto Epicenter at epicenternow.org
- 2) Click the Sign In link at the top of the screen.
- 3) Enter your username and password.
- 4) Click on Document Center.
- 5) On the Document Center page, click the Submission Upload button.
- 6) For Entity Type, select school.
- 7) For Submission Type, select Internet- or Computer-Based Community School Application.
- 8) For Entities, select appropriate sponsor by checking box next to the sponsor's name.
- 9) Enter required information.
- 10) Click the Upload New File button to upload your document.
- 11) (Optional) Type a brief message to the reviewer.
- 12) Click Submit

If you have questions about the application, please email community.schools@education.ohio.gov.

New Community School

New start-up community schools are established in a contract between a sponsoring/authorizing entity established by statute or approved by the Ohio Department of Education and the governing body of the community school. The four types of sponsors are listed below:

- 501(c)3 Sponsors
- State University Sponsors
- State Agency Sponsors
- School District Sponsors

First Critical Steps

A community school is created when an eligible sponsor/authorizer enters into a community school contract with a governing authority. There is a statutory sequence for certain actions:

1. The developers must enter into a **Preliminary Agreement** with the sponsor/authorizer. The Preliminary Agreement is a legally recognized declaration that both the sponsor/authorizer and the developers agree to work in good faith toward the successful execution of a community school contract. A Preliminary Agreement is a required step; it precedes the community school contract. The term of the Preliminary Agreement may begin in a year prior to the school's proposed opening year and should extend past the anticipated contract execution date. The Preliminary Agreement does not replace the requirement for a contract to be adopted between the developer and sponsor/authorizer by March 15.
2. A **contract adoption** must occur by March 15 in the year the school is to open. The contract adoption is represented by a sponsor/authorizer's approved board resolution, stating the sponsor/authorizer's intent to enter into the community school contract or a sponsor/authorizer's signed board minutes summarizing that action.

At least a draft version of the community school contract should exist at the time the sponsor/authorizer and school take action to formally adopt the contract. The contract adoption must be completed by March 15 of the year the school is to open. For Education Service Center's (ESC) authorizing conversion community schools, documentation that the ESC owns or operates the building proposed to be converted should be in place by March 15 of the year the school is to open, as well.

The following items must be submitted to the Ohio Department of Education's Office of Community Schools within 10 days of such action:

- signed preliminary agreement; and
- sponsor/authorizer's approved board resolution, stating the sponsor/authorizer's intent to enter into the community school contract; or

- sponsor/authorizer’s signed board minutes summarizing the above action.
3. A **contract execution** occurs when the community school contract is signed by both the governing authority and the sponsor/authorizer. A contract must be signed (executed) by both parties no later than May 15 of the calendar year prior to the school’s planned opening.

For a new community school contract to remain valid, unless the mission of the school is solely to serve dropouts, the community school must be open for operation by Sept. 30 of the calendar year in which the contract is executed. If school has not opened by Sept. 30 in the calendar year in which the contract is signed, the contract becomes void by operation of law. If the contract is for a drop-out recovery school, it remains valid for 12 months after it is signed and school may open later in the school year.

If a contract, which meets the department’s legal sufficiency requirements, is executed for a new start-up school proposed to open in a school district which meets the definition of *challenged* by March 15, the contract is considered valid and the school can open even if the district’s academic local report card rating improves and thus removes it from the *challenged* district list.

[501\(c\)3 Sponsors Startup Process](#)

Use the links below to review each sponsor application process.

[Buckeye Community Hope Foundation](#)

Please contact Jason Moore with any questions jmoore@buckeyehope.org.

[Educational Resource Consultants of Ohio](#)

Please review the following:

- [Start-Up Application](#)
- [Start-Up Evaluation Rubric](#)
- [Start-Up Application Timeline](#)
- [Things You Need to Know Guidance](#)

[Richland Academy](#)

Below are links to our policies and procedures.

- [New Governing Authority Board Member Approval Policy](#)

- [Community School Application Approval Policy](#)
- [Overseeing Community School Closure Policy](#)
- [System of Oversight and Evaluation Policy](#)
- [Community School Roles and Responsibilities Policy](#)
- [Sponsor Suspension, Non-renewal and Termination of a Community School Contract](#)
- [Contract Between Sponsor and Governing Authority Policy](#)
- [Conflict of Interest Policy & Form](#)
- [Onsite Review Process Policy](#)
- [Community School Intervention Policy & CAP](#)
- [Roles & Responsibilities of Ohio Community School Sponsors, Schools, and Governing Authorities](#)

To apply, please contact Sheri Hughes at shughes@richlandacademy.com to request one or more of the following applications:

- New Start-up School Pre-Application
- New Start-up School Application
- Transfer School Pre-Application
- Transfer School Application
- Replicator School Pre-Application
- Replicator School Application
- Contract Renewal Application
- Contract Renewal Scoring Rubric
- Application Timelines

[St Aloysius Orphanage](#)

Review the [Charter School Specialist website](#).

All applicants must complete the Notice of Intent to Apply prior to submitting an application for sponsorship with St. Aloysius.

[Notice of Intent to Apply](#)

Location of School:

Please note the location of all St. Aloysius sponsored schools that can be viewed [here](#) as you are searching for a suitable facility.

New School Application:

Please review the [Charter School Specialist website](#) for instructions on completing and submitting the New School Application, training video, and the following information:

- Application Timeline
- Attachment List
- Education Plan Template
- New School Application Rubric

[Thomas B. Fordham Foundation](#)

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, rated "Effective" by the Ohio Department of Education, is an authorizer of “community” schools—which is this state’s term for charter schools. In addition to the dozen charters that we currently sponsor, we are eager to work with individuals and organizations that have the capacity to start and sustain more academically strong schools in underserved communities. Ohio needs many more such schools, and our application window is wide open—but please understand that we will only authorize schools that serve kids well.

[Read more to submit the application](#)

Ohio Council of Community Schools

The Ohio Council of Community Schools accepts proposals and completed New School Applications on a rolling basis throughout the year. The Council expects at least one year of planning for new school partners. In order to be considered for opening the next year, the proposal must be received by July 1 and the New School Application must be received by September 1 of the current year.

- [2024 New School Request for Proposal \(RFP\)](#)
- [2024 New School Application](#)
- [2024 New School Timeline](#)

State University Sponsor

[Bowling Green State University](#)

Currently, BGSU is the proud sponsor of one community school, Toledo School for the Arts (TSA).

Applications for School Sponsorship:

Step One: Application for Sponsorship for guidance on the proper format, submission procedures, and deadlines.

New Community School Sponsorship Documents:

- [New Community School Sponsorship- Instructions & Timeline \(Contract Start Date: July 1, 2025\)](#)
- [New Community School Sponsorship- Application & Rubric \(Contract Start Date: July 1, 2025\)](#)

State Agency Sponsor

Office of School Sponsorship

The Office of School Sponsorship is the office within the Ohio Department of Education that serves as a direct sponsor of community schools.

- [New School Application 2025-2026](#)

State Contact

SchoolSponsorship@education.ohio.gov

Phone: (614) 728-7739

Toll Free: (877) 644-6338

School District Sponsors

Use the links below to review each district application process.

[Cleveland Municipal School District](#)

[ESC of Central Ohio School District](#)

- Not currently accepting applications regarding the sponsorship of new schools.

[ESC of Lake Erie West School District](#)

[Findlay City School District](#)

[Margaretta Local School District](#)

[Maysville Local School District](#)

[Mid-Ohio ESC School District](#)

[New Philadelphia City School District](#)

[North Central Ohio ESC School District](#)

[Tri-Rivers School District](#)

Statutes and Rules

- [Section 3314.032 | Contents of contract between governing authority and operator](#)
- [Section 3314.01 | Creation of community school - general powers.](#)
- [Section 3314.011 | Designated fiscal officer - bond - licensing.](#)
- [Section 3314.012 | Development of report cards.](#)
- [Section 3314.013 | Limits on internet- or computer-based community schools.](#)
- [Section 3314.015 | Oversight of sponsors.](#)
- [Section 3314.016 | Community school sponsor evaluations; sponsoring additional schools.](#)
- [Section 3314.017 | Academic performance rating and report card system.](#)
- [Section 3314.018 | Pooling agreements between community schools.](#)
- [Section 3314.019 | Communication with state auditor.](#)
- [Section 3314.0110 | Computer science and technology fund.](#)
- [Section 3314.02 | Establishment of community school - conversion and start-up.](#)
- [Section 3314.021 | Requirements for sponsorship.](#)
- [Section 3314.022 | Contract for provisions of services for disabled student.](#)
- [Section 3314.023 | Monitoring, oversight, and technical assistance; school closure.](#)
- [Section 3314.024 | Detailed accounting by management company; categories of expenses.](#)
- [Section 3314.025 | Report on expenditures to provide monitoring, oversight, and technical assistance.](#)
- [Section 3314.027 | Community school sponsorship.](#)
- [Section 3314.028 | Conditions for continued operation.](#)
- [Section 3314.029 | Ohio school sponsorship program.](#)
- [Section 3314.0210 | Property purchased by operator or management company.](#)
- [Section 3314.0211 | Eligibility for merger.](#)
- [Section 3314.03 | Specifications of contract between sponsor and governing authority - specifications of comprehensive plan.](#)

- [Section 3314.031 | Publication of information regarding management or operation of community schools.](#)
- [Section 3314.032 | Contents of contract between governing authority and operator.](#)
- [Section 3314.034 | Conditions which would prohibit contract with new sponsor.](#)
- [Section 3314.035 | Publication of names of members of governing authority.](#)
- [Section 3314.036 | Employment of attorney.](#)
- [Section 3314.037 | Training on public records and open meetings laws.](#)
- [Section 3314.038 | Children residing in residential center; reporting.](#)
- [Section 3314.039 | Compilation and publication of information on community schools.](#)
- [Section 3314.0310 | Child sexual abuse prevention.](#)
- [Section 3314.04 | Exemption from state laws and rules.](#)
- [Section 3314.041 | Distributing statement concerning state-prescribed testing and compulsory attendance law to parents.](#)
- [Section 3314.042 | Compliance with standards of financial reporting.](#)
- [Section 3314.043 | Indemnification from management companies for losses due to conflict of interest.](#)
- [Section 3314.05 | Specification of use and acquisition of facilities.](#)
- [Section 3314.051 | Disposal of real property acquired from school district.](#)
- [Section 3314.06 | Admission procedures.](#)
- [Section 3314.061 | Community schools serving autistic and nondisabled students.](#)
- [Section 3314.07 | Expiration, termination or nonrenewal of contract for community school.](#)
- [Section 3314.071 | Liability on contracts.](#)
- [Section 3314.072 | Suspending operation of noncomplying school.](#)
- [Section 3314.073 | Declaring school to be in probationary status.](#)
- [Section 3314.074 | Distributing assets of school permanently closed.](#)
- [Section 3314.08 | Annual enrollment reports; payments from department.](#)
- [Section 3314.081 | Annual allocation of federal moneys.](#)
- [Section 3314.082 | Community schools; application for funds.](#)

- [Section 3314.083 | Deducting excess costs of providing special education and related services to student with a disability.](#)
- [Section 3314.084 | Reporting rules for community school students living in home.](#)
- [Section 3314.086 | Community schools; career-technical education.](#)
- [Section 3314.087 | Simultaneous enrollment in career-technical program.](#)
- [Section 3314.089 | Community school career-technical education spending.](#)
- [Section 3314.09 | Transportation of native students provided by board of each school district.](#)
- [Section 3314.091 | Transportation of native students provided by community school - agreement.](#)
- [Section 3314.092 | Consultation with board regarding changes in schedule.](#)
- [Section 3314.10 | Teachers and nonteaching employees](#)
- [Section 3314.101 | Suspension of employee pending criminal action.](#)
- [Section 3314.102 | Removal of conversion community school employees from collective bargaining unit.](#)
- [Section 3314.103 | Termination of contract prior to termination of annual session.](#)
- [Section 3314.104 | Prohibition of employment of person with permanently revoked or denied educator license.](#)
- [Section 3314.11 | Verification of residency.](#)
- [Section 3314.12 | Sponsor to submit annual report of services and expenditures.](#)
- [Section 3314.13 | Community school employees; liability.](#)
- [Section 3314.14 | Possession and use of inhalers by student - school and employees not liable.](#)
- [Section 3314.141 | No civil liability for prohibition of use of autoinjector.](#)
- [Section 3314.142 | Liability for damages due to concussions.](#)
- [Section 3314.143 | Procurement of epinephrine autoinjectors for community schools.](#)
- [Section 3314.144 | Procurement of inhalers by community school.](#)
- [Section 3314.145 | Liability pertaining to sudden cardiac arrest.](#)
- [Section 3314.146 | Civil immunity, decisions not to provide mental health services.](#)
- [Section 3314.147 | Procurement of glucagon, qualified immunity.](#)

- [Section 3314.15 | Body mass index and weight status category screening.](#)
- [Section 3314.16 | Placement of automatic external defibrillator in schools - staff training - qualified immunity.](#)
- [Section 3314.17 | Statewide education management information system.](#)
- [Section 3314.18 | Breakfast and lunch programs - Summer extension.](#)
- [Section 3314.19 | Annual assurances by community school sponsor.](#)
- [Section 3314.191 | Prerequisites for payments from department.](#)
- [Section 3314.20 | Enrollment limits for internet- or computer-based schools.](#)
- [Section 3314.21 | Internet- or computer-based schools.](#)
- [Section 3314.22 | Child entitled to computer supplied by school.](#)
- [Section 3314.23 | Compliance with standards.](#)
- [Section 3314.232 | Standards for learning management software.](#)
- [Section 3314.24 | Contracts for facility space.](#)
- [Section 3314.25 | Computer-based schools to provide location for statewide tests.](#)
- [Section 3314.251 | Locations for counseling, instructional coaching, and testing assistance.](#)
- [Section 3314.26 | Withdrawal of computer-based school student not taking tests.](#)
- [Section 3314.261 | Internet- or computer-based school attendance.](#)
- [Section 3314.262 | Internet- or computer-based community school student automatic withdrawal.](#)
- [Section 3314.27 | Maximum daily hours by computer-based school student.](#)
- [Section 3314.271 | Orientation course.](#)
- [Section 3314.28 | Plan by computer-based schools for services to disabled students.](#)
- [Section 3314.29 | Division of certain internet- or computer-based community school.](#)
- [Section 3314.35 | Permanent closure; criteria.](#)
- [Section 3314.351 | Closure of certain community schools.](#)
- [Section 3314.352 | Reopening under new name.](#)
- [Section 3314.353 | Publication of school closures and closure risks.](#)
- [Section 3314.354 | Submission of data regarding schools at risk of permanent closure.](#)
- [Section 3314.355 | Community school closure safe harbor.](#)

- [Section 3314.36 | Applicability of RC 3314.35 closure rule.](#)
- [Section 3314.361 | Operation of drug recovery program.](#)
- [Section 3314.38 | Enrollment in dropout prevention and recovery program.](#)
- [Section 3314.381 | Dropout recovery community school advisory council.](#)
- [Section 3314.382 | Rules for dropout recovery community schools.](#)
- [Section 3314.40 | Report of employee conviction or alternative disposition.](#)
- [Section 3314.401 | Employee investigation report kept in personnel file.](#)
- [Section 3314.402 | Application of collective bargaining agreement.](#)
- [Section 3314.403 | False report of employee misconduct prohibited.](#)
- [Section 3314.41 | Criminal records check of private contract employee.](#)
- [Section 3314.44 | Collection and transmittal of school records after closing; Compliance; Penalty.](#)
- [Section 3314.46 | Sponsors; sales of goods or services prohibited.](#)
- [Section 3314.50 | Community school; bond.](#)
- [Section 3314.51 | Unauditable community school.](#)
- [Section 3314.52 | Policies for use of credit card accounts.](#)
- [Section 3314.99 | Penalty.](#)

Resources

- [3314.28 Guidance for e-school Special Education plan - \(Fillable\)](#)
- [3314.28 Sponsor Certification for e-school Special Education Plan - \(Fillable\)](#)
- [Application for Recognition of Exemption](#)
- [Blended Learning Guidance](#)
- [Career Tech in Community Schools](#)
- [Community School Annual Budget](#)
- [Community School Annual Budget Guidance](#)
- [Community School Contracts](#)
- [Community School Documents](#)

- [Community School Forms](#)
- [Community School Funding](#)
- [Community School Report Cards](#)
- [CTE-26 Application and Resources](#)
- [Dropout Prevention & Recovery](#)
- [Establishing a New Community Schools in OEDS](#)
- [ODE Report - FTE Definitions - \(related to online learning\)](#)
- [Online Orientation Guidance](#)
- [OSS Roles and Responsibilities Summary](#)
- [Request for Approval of New Internet-based or Computer-based Community School](#)
- [Standards for K-12 Online Learning](#)
- [Start a Nonprofit Organization in Ohio](#)
- [Student Attendance Requirements at Internet-or Computer-Based Community Schools](#)
- [Value Added Results for E-schools in Ohio](#)

Contact Information

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