

## **THE CASE**

### ***1. Why do you want a charter?***

W.B. Yeats said that “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” In our original charter, this was the introduction to our vision. After ten years, with commitment and passion, we have forged our mission, molded our school culture, and created a lasting institution of excellence for our community.

***The mission of Brighten Academy is to provide a productive learning environment with a highly qualified staff committed to using an innovative, research-based instructional model that produces measured growth in every student, every year.***

The mission alone represents our motivation, purpose, and commitment to our community. Simply stated, we seek to contribute the best possible learning environment to our Douglas County Public School System.

Over our ten-year history, our school has transformed from a fledgling, young school creating and defining policies, culture, and instructional practices into a school that is refining and modeling best practices in high quality education. We are continuously reflecting, evaluating, and raising the bar for our standards of excellence. This growth mindset is reflective in not only our mission, but through our school’s history.

In our original charter, the students and staff selected “Blaze”, a fiery sun, as a mascot, as all of us saw ourselves blazing new paths in education. In our second charter term, as our school evolved and expanded, the middle grade students sought out a mascot that represented our growth and progress. Blaze

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was transformed into the Phoenix. The symbolism of this mythical creature was not lost on the students or staff. It was they who identified the qualities of the Phoenix and how they represented our school. It seems appropriate to reflect upon and reference some of these qualities as we prepare for renewal.

- **LIFE AND LONGEVITY**

In Greek and Roman culture, the Phoenix is often representative of life and longevity. Certainly, over the almost 10 years we have been in operation, there have been several occasions when challenges, financial and operational, have caused us to pause, refocus, and reprioritize in order to stay financially sustainable and operational. It has been this growth mindset focused on honest self-reflection, working through challenges, creatively and critically thinking about how we educate students and operate the school, and seeking out partnerships and relationships with our school district and other community organizations that has helped us to form a stable foundation that will last the test of time.

- **CREATIVITY**

A popular symbol of creativity is the Phoenix, which represents creative energy flowing upwards from a source. The privilege of a charter enables the school to achieve its mission in a variety of ways. With the flexibility afforded through The Charter Schools Act, Brighten is able to uniquely design its instructional model around the 7 Cs and to implement project-based learning. We are able to design our school calendar and daily schedule around the instructional program that allows for collaborative planning and long blocks of uninterrupted instructional time and integrated learning. Freedom to select text books and instructional materials not on the state text book list helps us to ensure alignment with state standards and ensure fidelity to our instructional philosophy and approach to teaching. The waivers we exercise related to categorical spending enable us to deploy funds towards priority areas of the school that support our programming. Our staffing model uniquely fits the needs of our school program and allows us to operate efficiently.

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Operating under the authority of a governing board that we select based on a set of established criteria keeps us accountable to our stakeholders and ensures that our school has a qualified slate of individuals with the skills, experience, and commitment to effectively govern. Brighten has become what it is through the exercise of waivers.

- **ACCOMPLISHMENT OF A FORMIDABLE TASKS**

In Eastern culture, the Phoenix, in one of its forms, is viewed as the accomplishment of a formidable task. As a charter school, we are tasked with an extremely high bar for academic achievement and growth, as well as fiscal accountability and operational excellence. Brighten has demonstrably achieved these formidable tasks in a variety of ways.

### **ACADEMIC**

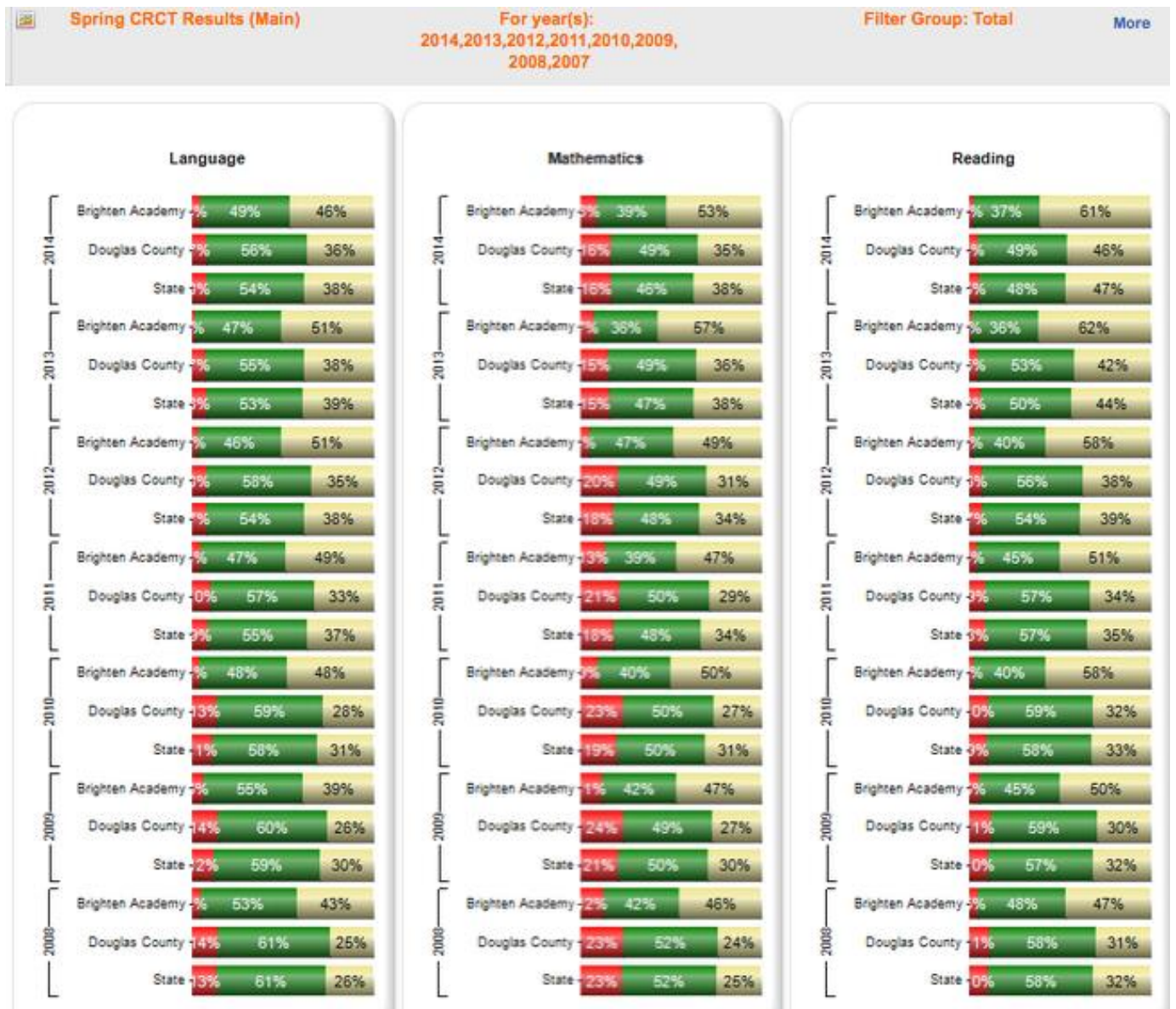
- As evidenced in the State's Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) data below, Brighten has continued to not only meet and exceed academic excellence, but it has continued to raise the bar in this area. In the first charter term, our focus was on meeting and exceeding state and local achievement. During this first term, our school demographics were less diverse, with a high number of gifted students and a low population of special education and socio-economically disadvantaged students. Over the years, our gifted population has decreased, our population of socio-economically disadvantaged students has more than tripled, and our numbers of students eligible for special education services has drastically increased. Even with these shifting demographics, we have continued to move students from meeting to exceeding on the CRCT and Milestones assessments. The graphs below demonstrate our success in educating a diverse population of students and continuing to increase our effectiveness. Our mission is based on measured growth. Each year, we have been able to demonstrate measured growth in the achievement levels of our students.

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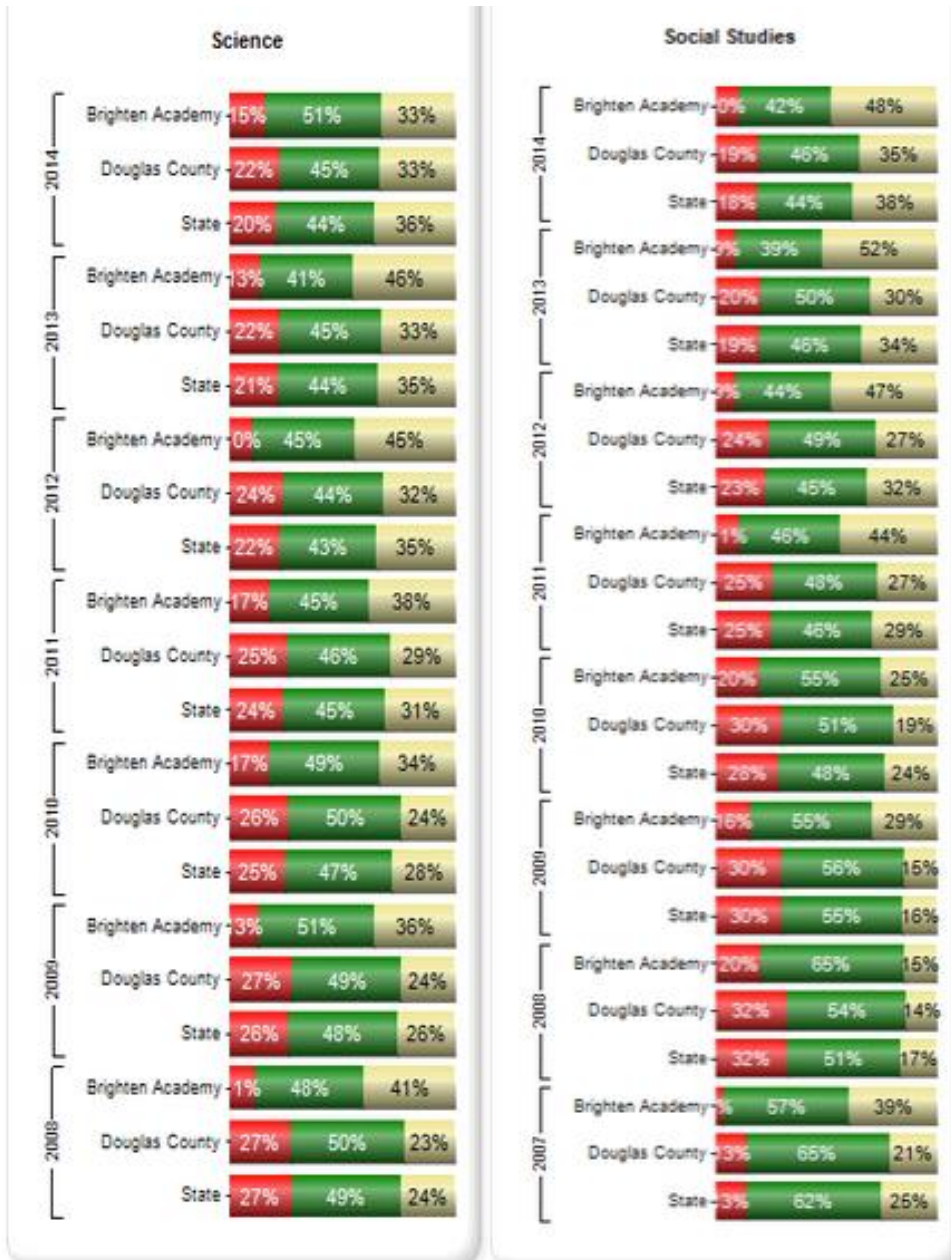
As we continue to grow and transform, our focus is now shifting on not only growth in levels of achievement, but also growth as reflected in the Student Growth Percentiles. This new focus is reflected in the charter goals set forth for the proposed charter term.

## Spring CRCT Results Brighten Academy 2007-2014; School, County, State Comparison

(Source SLDS)



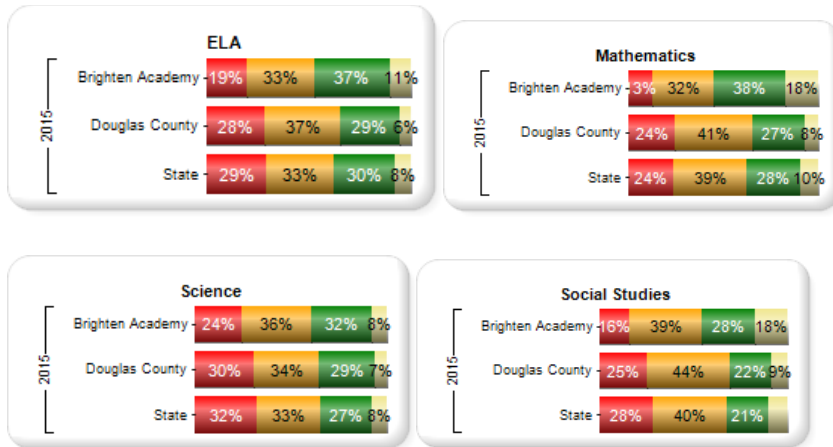
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## Spring 2015 Georgia Milestone Scores Brighten Academy, School, County, State Comparison

(Source: SLDS)



### FINANCIAL

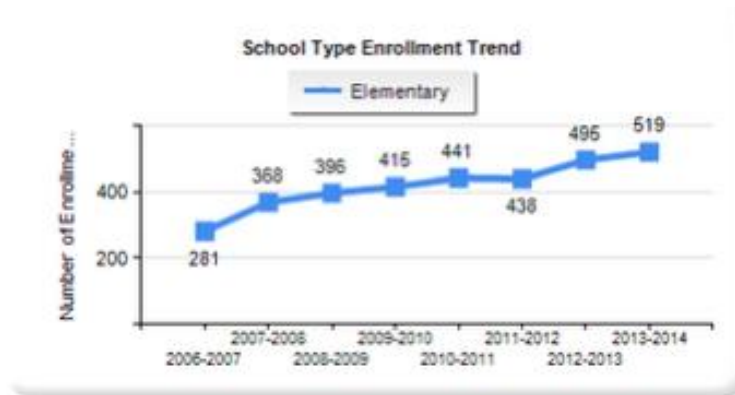
- ◇ Brighten has received an unqualified audit every year since inception.
- ◇ We work closely with our auditors and local school district authorizer to address any findings and to continually assess and refine financial policies, practices, and transparency.
- ◇ Brighten has utilized our reserve cash funds and access to SPLOST funds through the Douglas County School District to purchase our newest facility. In addition, our financial sustainability and business model passed the financial stress test required to obtain bond financing to expand and renovate the procured property and facility which supports our growth.

### OPERATIONAL

- ◇ Charter schools are dependent on successful attraction and retention of students and staff. Both of these are influenced by effective operations.
- ◇ It is clear from the SLDS data below that Brighten has been able to attract and retain its student population over time. Each year, enrollment has increased, and

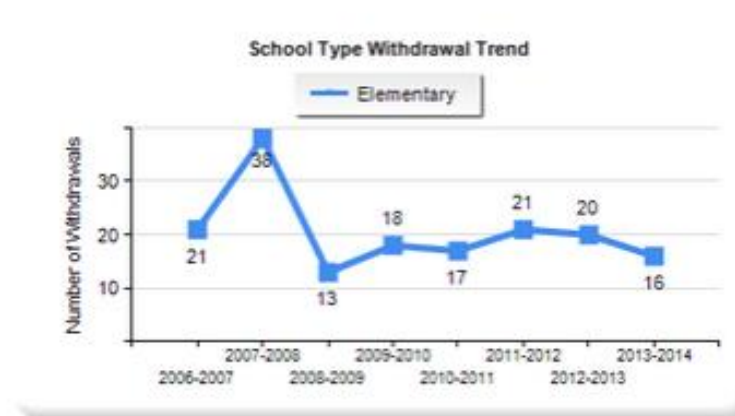
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after the first year, the withdrawal rates have been low annually. In addition, our wait list has continuously increased over time, with our most recent wait list more than tripling available openings and representing 75% of our total enrollment.



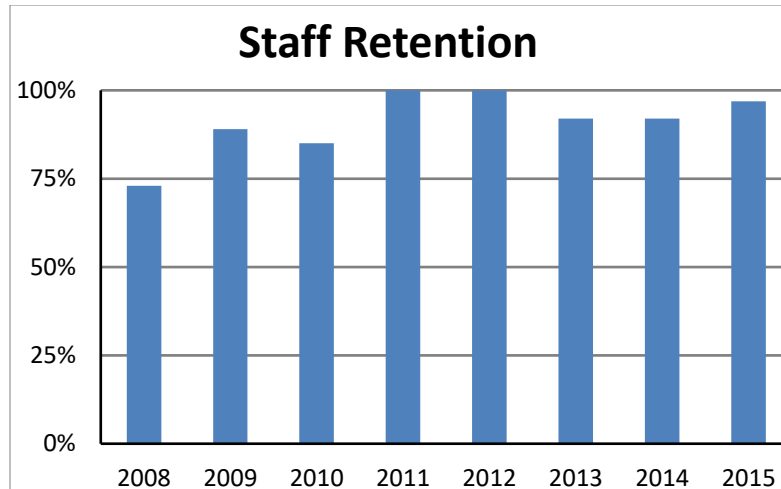
of enrollment and withdrawal records submitted in Student Record (SR)

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- ◇ Brighten has sustained its highly qualified staff. Included in our last charter objectives, we committed to retaining at least 85% of certified staff, and have well exceeded this commitment.





- ◇ We believe that the staff and parent engagement that is imbedded in our governance and operations has been key in creating ownership and commitment to our school. The school’s organizational structure includes avenues for staff engagement and voice across the school through tiered leadership opportunities, the succession plan, committees, and focus groups.
- ◇ The parent engagement model promotes active parent participation through student led conferences, classroom and school wide events, and volunteer opportunities. In addition, parents play an integral part of important processes such as selecting a qualified governing board and providing input via surveys and focus groups for our school improvement planning and strategic planning. Each year, 98% or more of our parents have achieved their parent involvement commitment.

Perhaps the greatest testaments to the achievement of all three of these pillars of success, a formidable task indeed, include: award of SACS accreditation in 2011, achievement of the \$10.5 million dollar facility bond, which is very rare in Georgia and nationally in the charter sector, and finally, 2014 Georgia Charter School of the Year and the 2014-2015 Charter School Leader of the Year awards. Each of these distinctions were granted by committees including members in the



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charter, higher education, and financial and business sectors after a rigorous review through interviews, observations, and review of:

- o **Instructional** practices, fidelity to the charter, and academic achievement and growth outcomes;
  - o **Financial** stability, budgets, and long term financial plans; and
  - o **Operational** practices as evidenced in sound policy enforcement, effective and efficient procedures, staff retention and qualifications, student retention, board strength and capacity, community and parental engagement, and parent and staff satisfaction.
- **TRANSFORMATION**

According to the most widely read book of the Middle Ages, *Physiologus*, the Phoenix of India represents renewal of self and transformation into something more beautiful. Brighten has morphed itself every year into something stronger, more sustainable, and more effective. One of the hallmarks of effective growth and transformation is in consistent reflection on practices and data and willingness to make changes that matter. Below are some ways we accomplish this:

### **BOARD**

- ◇ Assessment of the school leader is a reflective tool utilizing charter goal data, surveys, standards outlined in LKES, and observations. This data is used in professional goal setting and influences the strategic and school improvement plan.
- ◇ The board periodically reviews and monitors charter assessment and financial data.
- ◇ Succession planning is an integral part of the board election process and committee work.
- ◇ The board monitors the progress of the strategic plan purposefully through dialogue and data with leadership, staff, and parents.

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The board's reflection and continued commitment to growing the school's effectiveness is evidenced in our board minutes, training participation, and outreach with our school district and other schools.

### **LEADERSHIP**

- ◇ We believe strongly that participation locally, statewide, and nationally with professional organizations and with other educational entities, such as traditional public, charter public, and even private, help us to stay fresh with best practices. We have presented at national and state leadership conferences, have worked collaboratively with the Chamber of Commerce, have participated in programs offered through our state universities, and mentored other leaders in the charter sector. Likewise, we have received wonderful advice, training, and expertise by partnering with our local school district, state charter association, Department of Education, and through participation in Leadership Douglas, which three of our leadership team members have attended. This commitment to giving and receiving best practices helps us to remain continually reflective and transformative.
- ◇ Systematic academic, financial, and operational data analysis helps to ensure we make measured growth as promised. The leadership of Brighten creates purposeful opportunities for this analysis with calendarized data dialogues and reports to the board.
- ◇ Instructional leadership is at the forefront of every decision. The Instructional leadership team continually monitors our mission and fidelity to our instructional model. We have always been a project-based school, but it was the Instructional Leadership Team that identified the need to propel us in our efforts to increase teaching with inquiry and authentic student learning. The nationally acclaimed model of Expeditionary Learning was identified as the framework to continue this transformation. This has required significant commitment to reviewing and modifying our instructional practices to meet the rigorous demands required

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in the EL model. It has also required a large investment in staff development funds and academic time to successfully implement the model.

- ◇ The Leadership Team monitors the effectiveness of the school and pace of transformation through student, staff, and parent surveys multiple times throughout the year.

### **STAFF**

- ◇ Collaboration is non-negotiable and is purposefully planned for in the school's calendar.
- ◇ Instructional staff provides weekly reflections to the administration on instructional and school wide progress and needs.
- ◇ Every staff member is required to extend beyond the classroom into other areas that enhance the overall school program. These contributions remain dynamic, as our staff continues to grow personally and professionally.
- ◇ Our focus on increasing staff capacity has made a tremendous difference in our ability to meet the changing needs of our school. Gifted certification levels have increased to more than 75% of staff. 100 percent of our middle school team can teach multiple subjects at multiple grade levels. Six of our staff members have reading endorsement certifications and serve as reading specialists. Four staff members are certified to teach special education, and two teachers are ESOL certified. Leadership degrees held by five of our staff members prepare us for succession.

This renewal request provides the perfect platform to implement our next strategic plan, which is focused on expanding our project-based instructional model and aligned culture to an even more consistent, pervasive, and replicable model.

- **CLARITY**

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And finally, the Phoenix, symbolized by the sun, is also representative of clarity. For Brighten, that is clarity in who we are as a school community and what we aim to do in our next charter term. We have, over the last two charter terms, evolved into a school that is strategic and purposeful. We have fully realized our school's culture and identity to maximize our contributions to public education in Georgia. Further, we've been deemed a model charter school in our state. In our next charter term, as codified in our strategic plan, it is clear that we must extend our reach to become a national model of school reform. We aim to continue "enlightening minds and brightening the future" on a broader scale.

### **ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS**

#### ***2. What are your school's performance objectives for the proposed charter term?***

As a school with a growth mind-set, we have established the academic objectives for the proposed charter term based on past performance and opportunities for growth. We have purposefully shifted from merely focusing on achievement growth to measuring student academic growth, as this supports the direction of the state with public school accountability.

- **Goal 1. For each year of the charter, Brighten Academy shall "beat the odds" as measured by a formula measuring expected student growth.**
- **Goal 2. For each year of the charter, Brighten Academy will demonstrate proficiency and/or improvement on the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI).**

In analysis of CCRPI data over the past two years, Brighten has maximized its achievement points in the areas of reading and math. Opportunities to improve are noted in science and social studies in

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most grades. As the number of students not meeting standards at the school is very low, the greatest opportunity for growth is in the exceeds category.

Brighten has demonstrated high achievement with its gifted population annually; however, our goal is now to focus on the growth of this population as measured by SGPs and RIT scores.

A review of achievement gap data shows the need to target achievement for our students with disabilities cohort so that the score is closer to the state average.

**o Measure 1.** For each year of the charter term, Brighten Academy's CCRPI score shall be higher than both the state and the local district.

**o Measure 2.** For each year of the charter term, Brighten Academy will increase *achievement* in Social Studies and Science:

- 2015-2016 will provide a baseline, and for each year of the charter term thereafter, the number of students earning a proficient and distinguished score shall increase until the percentage of students at these two levels is at 55% or above.

**o Measure 3.** For each year of the charter term, utilizing 2015-2016 as a baseline, Brighten Academy will increase *growth* of gifted students.

- Baseline data and future data will be calculated using the average percent of gifted students across grade levels and subjects who have a Student Growth Percentile (SGP) meeting typical and high growth targets.

**o Measure 4.** For each year of the charter term, utilizing 2015-2016 as a baseline, Brighten Academy will *close the achievement gap* by reducing the gap size or increasing the gap change in its students with disabilities cohort.

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**o Measure 5.** For each year of the charter term, utilizing 2015-2016 as a baseline, Brighten Academy will increase the percent of students who meet or exceed their projected RIT score by 1.5% of the prior year as measured by the NWEA MAP Assessment.

To effectuate change in the target areas of achievement in science and social studies, progress of gifted students, and closing the gap with students with disabilities, Brighten will implement the following:

CCRPI Domain	Target Area	Activity	Expected Outcome
Achievement	Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beginning in 2016-17 fully explore the proposed changes to the GA Standards; Complete integrated curriculum maps to meet the new standards by 2017-18</li> <li>Beginning in 2016-2017, Plan authentic, integrated, inquiry-based learning centered on the core social studies concepts and informational reading and writing at each grade level.</li> <li>Beginning in 2017-2018, fully implement student engaged assessment and activities to promote a growth mindset through the use of pre-post test data and common grade assessments</li> </ul>	<p>Re-evaluate pacing and instructional planning to meet the changing curricular needs based on revised standards</p> <p>Utilize formative assessment available through the DOE (GOFAR) aligned with state standards to create pre and post tests for each core standard.</p> <p><b>80 % of students will demonstrate proficiency at or above 85% on the post assessments.</b></p>
	Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beginning in 2016-17 fully explore the proposed changes to the GA Standards; Complete integrated curriculum maps to meet the new standards by 2017-18</li> <li>Beginning 2016-17 develop interactive STEM based labs to correlate with each grade level and standard that can be implemented in the classroom,</li> </ul>	<p>Re-evaluate pacing and instructional planning to meet the changing curricular needs based on revised standards</p> <p>Extend resources for inquiry based lessons in a user-friendly, more accessible way</p>

		<p>afterschool program, and as activities for the 7Cs Deck</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning in 2016-2017, Plan authentic, integrated, inquiry-based learning centered on the core science concepts and informational reading and writing at each grade levels.</li> <li>• Beginning in 2017-2018, fully implement student engaged assessment and activities to promote a growth mindset through the use of pre-post test data and common grade assessments</li> </ul>	<p>Utilize formative assessment available through the DOE (GOFAR) aligned with state standards to create pre and post tests for each core standard.</p> <p><b>Students will demonstrate proficiency at or above 85% on the post assessments.</b></p>
<p><b>Progress</b></p>	<p>Gifted Cohort</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within 3 years of being hired, content area teachers will attain gifted certification.</li> <li>• By the end of 2017-2018, expand the use of student-engaged assessment to include student led conferences in grades K-8 and transfer the responsibility of learning to the student by student maintained data binders and learning and work habit portfolios.</li> <li>• Annually beginning in 2017-2018, each grade level will create a flexible group plan based on student RIT scores from the NWEA MAP assessment and will differentiate accordingly.</li> <li>• By 2018-2019, require gifted students to participate in a state or national competition or learning initiative such as Odyssey of the Mind, Lego Robotics, Math Olympics, science fair, spelling or geography bees, Duke TIP, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Utilize norm-referenced data through the MAP assessment to monitor and measure progress from Fall to Winter and Winter to Spring.</p> <p><b>Students will meet or exceed projected growth scores for Winter and Spring.</b></p> <p>Students not meeting growth scores will receive additional interventions to stimulate growth in targeted areas.</p>



<p><b>Close the Gap</b></p>	<p>Special Education Cohort</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By the end of 2016-2017, create a school wide intervention time that utilizes all available staff to help remediate and preview standards.</li> <li>• Annually beginning in 2017-2018, each grade level will create a flexible group plan based on student RIT scores from the NWEA MAP assessment and will differentiate accordingly.</li> <li>• By the end of 2018-2019, utilize computer-based adapted interventions such as IXL, TenMarks, Read Theory, and RAZ Kids to remediate and preview during the after school program.</li> </ul>	<p>Utilize norm-referenced data through the MAP assessment to monitor and measure progress from Fall to Winter and Winter to Spring.</p> <p><b>Students will meet or exceed projected growth scores for Winter and Spring.</b></p> <p>Students not meeting growth scores will receive additional interventions to stimulate growth in targeted areas.</p>
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***3. How will the charter school governing board, management, instructional leadership, faculty and staff know that students are on track to meet these academic goals?***

Brighten Academy is committed to ensuring that students make measured growth each year. The school already has systematic processes in place for collecting, monitoring and reporting data on charter goals to its stakeholders. In order to measure progress towards our goals, we will utilize the following assessments to obtain formative and summative data for each student:

- DIBELS for SLOs (grades K-5)
- NWEA Map Assessment three times annually to monitor growth (grades K-8)
- Benchmark assessments (grades K-8)
- Disaggregation of state assessment data annually (grades K-8)
- BRIGANCE annually (students with special needs)

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- Formative assessments such as pre and post-tests, rubrics, observations, running records, etc. daily (grades K-8)

Norm referenced baseline achievement data will be obtained through fall administration of the MAP Assessment. This test will be given each year within the first four weeks of school and will serve as a tool for flexible grouping, intervention, and acceleration. The students' RIT scores, National Percentile Rank (NPR) and Lexile scores will be determined in this initial assessment. Criterion referenced baseline achievement data will be obtained from Georgia's Milestones Assessment System beginning with data from the 2015-2016 testing administration.

The norm referenced MAP Assessment will be benchmarked by comparing data from two years of assessment, Fall to Winter growth compared to the following Fall to Winter growth. This information will be compared to the projected RIT scores to guide us in establishing growth targets. In order to benchmark growth on the Georgia Milestones Assessment System at least two years of assessment data will be needed. Using the school wide growth over two years and comparing data with the predicted SGPs will give us an initial metric to set growth targets for each year thereafter. As the Georgia Milestones Assessment evolves, Brighten will modify its growth targets accordingly to ensure it continues to Beat the Odds and meets and exceeds expectations on CCRPI.

Brighten Academy will work collaboratively with the Douglas County School System to ensure that all state and federal academic mandates are met related to testing. The Douglas County School System has agreed to provide testing materials for all mandated standardized tests. Brighten will participate in all district or state led testing trainings and security briefings and will follow the Douglas County School System's testing procedures and schedule.

***4. What specific actions will the school's management, instructional leadership, faculty, and staff take to ensure student performance objectives are met during the proposed charter term?***

Brighten Academy is committed to ensuring students meet or exceed the Georgia Standards for Excellence (Reading and Math) and the Georgia Performance Standards for Science and Social Studies by providing an enriching educational experience for all of its K-8 students, through a rigorous, project-based learning environment where students are actively engaged in authentic learning experiences, solving meaningful problems, and developing habits of scholarship and personal accountability for learning. Teachers act in a facilitative role, assisting children through challenging and engaging problems and explorations.

Brighten, in its upcoming charter term, proposes a number of innovative changes that we feel will ensure consistent, pervasive, and replicable instructional practices that will lead to continued high achievement and deeper learning:

- We have partnered to become a member school of EL Education (formerly known as Expeditionary Learning) and will integrate the Design Principles into the school's established 7 C's. The design principles lead to five key dimensions with innovative practices in each:
  - o ***Curriculum*** – Standards in Georgia's curriculum will be connected to real world issues and needs through the use of learning expeditions, case studies, projects, fieldwork, and service learning provided to authentic audiences. Students will be trained to think and work as professionals contributing high quality work to audiences beyond the classroom.
  - o ***Instruction*** – Through the use of learning targets, established protocols, teaching reading and writing across disciplines, reflection, self-assessment, and collaboration, students will learn to think deeper and apply their learning in meaningful ways. Teachers act in a facilitative role, pushing students to be leaders of their own learning. Collaborative

instructional planning, data analysis, review of student work, communication, procedures, and our school improvement plan are made a priority in the school's calendar and feedback loops.

- o **Assessment** – Brighten will utilize state assessments, as well as NWEA's MAP Assessment. The main driver of achievement, however, will be in developing students who take accountability for their learning. Our leaders, teachers, and students embrace the power of student engaged assessment practices, which is key to driving achievement and ensuring educational equity. Brighten will purposefully teach students to continually assess and improve the quality of their work through the use of exemplars, reflection, critiques, and work with experts. Students and teachers will both collect and monitor learning data to recognize gaps in achievement and to set and monitor goals. Student-led conferences in grades K-8, Individual Learning Plans that are tied to MAP data and habits of scholarship, as well as portfolios, will also be used to communicate and celebrate student progress and achievement. By the 2018-2019 school year, Brighten will also shift to Presentations of Learning that require students in grades 5 and 8 to provide evidence in all dimensions of achievement readiness to matriculate to middle and high school. Passages may include evidence such as articulation of current levels of achievement, exemplary work from varying subjects, sharing artistic, athletic, technological, or other accomplishments, and growth and proficiency with the habits of scholarship.

- o **Culture and Character** – Brighten's instructional model was developed around the 7 C's which included: Character, Commitment, Community, Critical thinking, Creativity, Culture, and Curiosity. With the partnership with Expeditionary Learning, Brighten has reflected upon the original 7 Cs and made some meaningful changes to better align with our project-based model. First, Character, which truly encapsulates all of the 7 Cs, has been replaced by Craftsmanship, which supports the innovations in assessment and

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curriculum. Secondly, the school has adopted Habits of Scholarship and created a rubric to measure growth and progress using evidence-based data. School structures and traditions such as Crew, community meetings, exhibitions, and displays of student work, ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult, student leadership is nurtured, and contributions to the school and world are celebrated.

- o **Leadership** – Every member of the staff is given a leadership responsibility (instructional or operational). This promotes cohesiveness, shared accountability, and continued focus on a growth mindset in every area of the school. Staff members are required to extend their expertise and interests beyond the classroom to enhance the whole school program and to contribute more broadly to our community.

Student to teacher ratios at Brighten Academy fall within statewide averages and vary throughout the day. As a fiscally responsible business, we acknowledge the fact that our enrollment may need to vary to offset variance in funding. Currently, our lowest homeroom class size is 22 students in Kindergarten with a full-time paraprofessional who works alongside the certified teacher. Grades 1-3 range from 22-24 students; Grades 4-5 range from 24-27 students; and Middle school ranges from 27-30 students. Push-in support and pull-out remediation and gifted models reduce homeroom class sizes periodically through the day and week. Brighten’s targeted student to teacher ratios maximize instruction, classroom management and administration, as well as fiscal sustainability for operation of quality programs.

### ***5: What are the school’s plans for educating special populations?***

Brighten Academy is designed to support and enhance the social and emotional development of all its students, as well as their academic growth. Teachers trained to differentiate instruction for a range of diverse students will teach students with special needs. The IEP committee, which may include one

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representative from the Douglas County School System, will determine the least restrictive environment when deciding on placement of a student.

Brighten Academy will comply with all regulatory requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Brighten will work collaboratively with the Douglas County School System to maintain a system that meets the needs of the students and provides them with services from licensed/certified staff or consultants in a manner consistent with state and federal law. To go above and beyond compliance, Brighten will utilize the MAPS assessment and other tools to identify opportunities for additional remediation and previewing to close skill gaps by deploying all available staff during a designated intervention period of the day. When feasible, scheduling of resource classes will take place so that students can receive additional grade level instruction in academic content areas of deficit. The Special Education teacher will collaboratively plan with an assigned vertical team.

### **Early Identification, Evaluation, and Placement**

Early identification of students with learning, physical, or behavioral/emotional impairments is crucial to ensuring appropriate programming is in place to promote academic success.

**Existing IEPs:** Post lottery, and as soon as practicable after enrollment, there will be a transfer of records and a thorough review to ensure proper placement and that IEP requirements are met.

When possible, the Least Restrictive Environment (less restrictive settings such as co-teaching, supportive instruction, and collaboration) will be employed. The Special Education teacher may also provide resource time and provide consultative assistance to the regular education teacher as provided for in the student's IEP. As our LEA, the Douglas County School System will provide special education services to low incidence populations including, but not limited to hearing or vision impaired students, students requiring full-time or significant medical care, and students eligible for supplemental Special Education

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Services such as speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, behavior therapy, school psychologist, and audiologist services in the same manner as other public schools under its authority. In exchange, the Douglas County School District will retain all special education federal funds and a portion of the authorizer fee negotiated to support the cost of oversight and education of low incidence populations and students requiring supplemental services.

**Pre-referral:** The faculty will focus on adapting/modifying instructional/management techniques to meet a child's needs before he/she is evaluated for specialized services. Tier II processes that include universal screeners and data-based interventions will be employed. Students who fail to adequately progress with the intervention will be referred to the Student Support Team (Tier III).

**Student Support Team (SST)/Referral:** In compliance with IDEA guidelines and No Child Left Behind, including employment of the Response to Intervention Model, Brighten Academy will identify a Student Support Team (SST) to review an individual student's strengths and areas of concerns. This multidisciplinary-team will plan research and evidence-based strategies and organize resources for addressing problems and concerns about a student. Stakeholders such as parents, educational specialists, regular education teachers, administrators, and other advocates will be invited to participate in various capacities throughout the SST process.

Implementation of the Pyramid of Intervention/Response to Intervention Model shall precede student referrals for comprehensive educational evaluation to determine eligibility and the need for special education, unless an obvious disability is noted.

**Assessment/Evaluation:** Once a student is referred to special education from the Student Support Team (SST) or other appropriate source, the evaluation and placement process shall be completed without undue delay and in accordance with district protocols, state rules, and federal



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regulations. Prior to conducting an initial evaluation, a school representative will contact the parent/guardian and schedule a conference regarding the following:

- The reasons for assessment
- To describe the materials and procedures that will be used to obtain information about the student
- To explain the rights of the parents/guardian and school district related to assessment
- To determine the student's primary language and proficiency
- To describe alternate means as appropriate
- To obtain written consent for release of confidential information from a third party when appropriate
- To obtain written consent to perform the assessment/evaluation

Parents are strongly encouraged to participate and contribute pertinent information during this period.

Their perspectives and experiences with the student are of great value and will be considered throughout the evaluation process. Licensed staff and/or consultants will perform the evaluation and share the results with parents and other faculty members. The conference can be held in conjunction with the SST meeting when the assessment is recommended if the parent is in attendance.

In accordance with state rule 160-4-7-.05, Brighten Academy parents will receive a copy of their Procedural Safeguards/Parent Rights in the following circumstances:

1. Every time an IEP meeting is held;
2. Upon initial referral or parent request for evaluation;
3. Upon the receipt of the first state complaint in a school year;
4. Upon receipt of the first request for a due process hearing in a school year;
5. Upon notification by the LEA to the parent of the decision to remove the child from his or her current placement and the removal constitutes a change of placement under the discipline provisions of IDEA and state rules because of a violation of a code of student conduct; and

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### 6. Upon request by parent.

Parent rights must be explained orally, in the parent/guardian's native language, or in their natural mode of communication. Parents are encouraged to join in the identification and referral process. Parents of a Brighten Academy student who are questioning their child's progress, either developmentally or academically, should first request a conference with their child's teacher. At any time, parents may request an evaluation by submitting a written request for evaluation to the school.

Brighten Academy shall ensure that all evaluation procedures and eligibility determinations are established and implemented in accordance with state rule 160-4-7-.07.

**Individual Education Plan:** If the eligibility team determines that the student meets eligibility criteria established under the IDEA Categories of Eligibility section (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-150; 20-2-152; 20-2-160; 20-2-161; 20-2-168; 20-2-1160) and is in need of special education services, the student, parent(s) and staff will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to address the area(s) of deficit in accordance with the required procedures.

The student's parents are an equal member of the child's IEP Committee which also includes: the regular education teacher, the special education teacher and/or coordinator, the school administrator, the assessment team members, and possibly a representative from Douglas County School System. Other members as required will be present such as the test administrator when the student is limited English Proficient, the student when appropriate, and other related service personnel or individuals that the parent or school deems appropriate to be present.

The IEP will state what special education and related services Brighten Academy will provide, and when and where those services will be provided. The IEP will be reviewed and revised at least every year.

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An IEP form will be completed describing the special educational services. Implementation will begin as described in the IEP.

**Review/Re-evaluation:** The IEP will be reviewed at least annually and re-evaluation will be considered at least every three years.

### **Assurances**

Brighten Academy hereby provides the following assurances:

1. Brighten Academy or the Douglas County School System (as provided by law) will provide appropriately licensed/certified personnel for all students with disabilities.
2. Brighten Academy will implement the same identification, evaluation, placement, reporting, and due process procedures and use the same or equivalent special education forms as other schools in the System and provide copies of all IEPs to the School System.
3. Brighten Academy will submit to program review by state and local officials to the same extent required of other schools in the System.
4. All Brighten Academy teachers will be required to participate in workshops, in-service programs, and/or training offered by the Special Education Department to the same extent required of other teachers in the System.
5. Students identified with disabilities who require more intensive services other than interrelated will be served at the appropriate school according to the IEP within the Douglas County School System.
6. Discipline issues regarding special education students will be handled in accordance with state rules and federal regulations.

**Intermittent Home Services and Homebound Services**

Brighten Academy recognizes its responsibility to provide a public education program for students who have a medically diagnosed condition that may result in frequent, intermittent absences that may significantly impact their academic performance. Once a medical diagnosis is determined, the parent, teachers, and administration will work collaboratively to develop an educational plan that meets the needs of the student. To be eligible for intermittent home services, a medical form with a specific diagnosis must be completed and signed by a licensed physician and submitted to the school. A Homebound Committee will be convened to review the medical documentation and educational impact. Instruction will be provided as determined by the Homebound Committee and may be offered in a variety of settings. Homebound services will be determined and provided by Brighten Academy.

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

Brighten Academy was founded on the belief that education is a means by which each individual has the opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential. All students have a right to educational experiences that challenge their individual development whether it is below, at, or beyond the level of their age peers. In accordance with this philosophy, Brighten Academy has made and will continue to make provisions for the special needs of gifted and talented learners.

Brighten Academy is committed to ensuring a quality program. Reciprocity will be granted, upon proper identification, to all county and in-state transfers. An outline of the referral, eligibility, and methods of delivery is provided below.

**Referral Process:**

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- Referrals can be initiated by parents, teachers, or students (self). Automatic referrals occur when a student scores at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher in total mathematics, total reading, or composite scores on a norm-referenced test (including the MAP Assessment, MAP Assessment for Primary Grades).
- Supporting documentation is collected on the student (work samples, anecdotes, test scores, report cards)
- An eligibility team composed of the gifted educator, an administrator, and an additional staff member meet to decide if child should be referred for testing.
- Parents are notified, by writing, if testing is to be pursued.

### **Testing/ Eligibility Process**

- Written permission must be received to test the child and proceed with the referral.
- Students will be evaluated by a certified gifted teacher or psychometrist using the SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 for eligibility (mental ability, achievement, motivation, and creativity). Brighten Academy will use the same tests and measures as the Douglas County School System, with the addition of the NWEA MAP and MPG Assessments, to ensure quality and continuity within the county.
- Gifted certified teachers or psychometrists will score tests and measures.
- Students will be retested, using an alternate measure of assessment, in mental ability and achievement if they are within 7% points of qualifying.
- The gifted teacher will determine eligibility based on SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 or the psychometric rule.
- The gifted teacher will notify parent(s) in writing of eligibility status.

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### **Delivery Models**

- Collaboration and resources class will be primarily used for students K-1. The certified gifted teacher will work with the student, parent(s), and classroom teacher to develop challenging assignments which enhance and expand the core curriculum areas the gifted student has already mastered. A detailed plan will be included in the student's Individualized Learning Plan and a communication log will be maintained to document the collaborative process between the gifted specialist and classroom teacher.
- Resource classes will be utilized primarily in grades 2-5. Instruction will have an academic content foundation, but it will focus on interdisciplinary enrichment activities.
- Cluster Grouping and/or accelerated content classes will be utilized in grades 6-8, in addition to resource and collaborative models.
- Brighten Academy seeks to have 100% of its educators receive the gifted endorsement. Under this model, small groups of students will be served within the regular classroom by using a documented, differentiated curriculum. This model will be used in addition to other models in all grade levels.
- Mentorship and internships will be used to help academically and creatively talented students flourish. The certified gifted teacher will work closely with the mentor and student to ensure that acceptable progress toward the student's individual learning goals is met.
- Brighten Academy reserves the right to design and implement an approved innovative model if the need arises.
- All students will be served by a certified gifted teacher for a minimum of 5 segments per week.

### **English as a Second Language Program (ESOL/ELL)**

Brighten Academy is committed to meeting each child's individual educational needs; therefore, the school will implement an English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program to provide additional

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assistance for limited English proficiency speakers. Through the ESOL/ELL program, students with limited English proficiency will acquire skills in verbal and written English language through “structured immersion” in the classroom, with additional support provided as needed to assist students in becoming proficient. Brighten Academy will create its curriculum around the WIDA ELP Standards which are aligned to Georgia’s Performance Standards for language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. These ELP standards will serve as the anchor for the assessment, curriculum, and instruction. The WIDA standards are:

The five overarching ELP standards are:

### English Language Proficiency Standard 1:

English language learners communicate in English for SOCIAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL purposes within the school setting.

### English Language Proficiency Standard 2:

English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of LANGUAGE ARTS.

### English Language Proficiency Standard 3:

English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of MATHEMATICS.

### English Language Proficiency Standard 4:

English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of SCIENCE.

### English Language Proficiency Standard 5:

English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of SOCIAL STUDIES.

Brighten Academy will provide in-service for teachers to support the needs of these students. Brighten Academy will contract out ESOL services or hire certified and endorsed ESOL staff if needed.

Brighten Academy, in compliance with Federal, State and Douglas County laws and regulations, will utilize the WIDA *Access for ELLs* Test to determine eligibility for the ESOL program. In addition to the



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full assessment, we will utilize the W-APT (WIDA-ACCESS Proficiency Test) as our official screening tool. Brighten Academy will follow all state and federal policies, rules, and regulations throughout the charter term related to the identification, placement, service delivery, and exiting of students in the ESOL program.

### **Remedial Educational Services**

In accordance with SBOE Rule 160-4-5-.01 Brighten Academy will offer remedial services to all eligible students in grades 6-8. Brighten Academy will offer a variety of direct and indirect remedial services to better meet the needs of our individual services. A remedial plan will be documented through the student's ILP (Individualized Learning Plan), Tier 2 Educational Plans, or SST (Student Support Team) educational plans.

Direct remedial services may include:

- Computerized Learning Paths that self-adjust to meet student's instructional level
- Small group teaching that includes research based curriculum such as *SRA Corrective Reading*, *TouchMath*, and *Reading Express*.
- Additional remedial classes in reading, math, and written expression offered as an elective
- Additional remediation and previewing by all available staff at a designated intervention time during the day
- Increased progress monitoring (in area of deficit) to insure intervention and educational plan is working
- Attend guided instruction in a different grade level to address specific skill gap  
(Ex: a second grader may attend a phonics mini-lesson in a first grade class)

Indirect remedial services may include:

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- Collaboration from a variety of educational providers to support regular education classroom
- Peer and adult tutoring
- Collaboration with community mentors and outside tutoring agencies
- Student contracts and self-monitoring of instruction (graphing progress)

Brighten Academy also plans to provide remedial services to all students who need additional support through peer tutoring, online interventions, flexible grouping, teacher collaboration, and differentiated instruction. Brighten Academy will follow all provided state guidelines for eligibility.

### ***7. Which of the specific actions in the academic plan require a waiver of state law, rule, or guidelines?***

Our school model truly maximizes the privilege of the waivers provided in The Charter Schools Act in our instructional programming. Below is a summary of some of the key waivers we exercise.

- The waivers obtained through **scheduling and seat time (SBOE Rule 160-5-1-.02)** enable us to individualize instruction for students and increase professional development and collaboration for our staff. Teachers have the flexibility to organize their day based on student need for remediation or acceleration and to integrate subject matter in a manner that provides more authentic learning experiences. Our school day has been extended four days per week to allow for an early release at 1:00 every Wednesday. Wednesdays are devoted to professional development and collaboration in a variety of formats including committees, vertical teaming, horizontal teaming, data analysis, integrated project planning, and leadership development and planning.

- o The ability to **select instructional materials and textbooks** that align with our instructional programming has enabled us to keep a laser-like focus on the match between student and outcomes, as well as remain fiscally responsible.
  
- o Waivers of certain **program guidelines** (State Board Rules 160-4-2-.17, 160-4-5-.01, 160-4-5-.02, 160-4-2-.38, and O.C.G.A. 20-2-153, 20-2-154, 20-2-156) in areas such as early intervention, remedial, and gifted enable us to use blended models that work in a small school setting and maximize instructional opportunity and staffing.
  
- o With respect to **placement and retention** (State Board Rule 160-4-2-.11, O.C.G.A. 20-2-282 and 20-2-284), we have developed our own readiness indicators for placement and promotion. In our charter innovations for the proposed charter term, we will utilize this waiver to implement Presentations of Learning for passage in grades 5 and 8.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS**

### ***8. State the school's Organizational Goals and Measures.***

- **Goal 1. Brighten Academy will promote student engagement in the community and parental engagement in the school.**

Both students and parents are part of our school's crew and are strengthened by consequential acts of service to others. Commensurate with our 7 Cs and the EL Design Principles, we seek to prepare students with attitudes and skills to learn from and to be of service to others in the community.

Parental engagement is a critical component of a healthy school culture as well. Children thrive when

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parents are involved, and the school depends on all parents contributing to its success in a variety of ways.

**Measure 1.** Each year of the charter term, students will participate in a minimum of two service learning projects or case studies centered on relevant issues facing the community.

**Measure 2.** Each year of the charter term, Brighten Academy will increase or reach 95% parent participation of parents who attend student-led conferences.

- **Goal 2. Brighten Academy will attract and retain a highly qualified and highly effective faculty and staff.**

Brighten's mission includes provision of a highly qualified staff. We extend our commitment to not only highly qualified, but also highly effective to ensure that the school meets its commitments academically, operationally, and financially. We will maintain a work environment that is professionally rewarding, challenging, and that values the contributions of all. We will also maintain a work environment that fosters high expectations of and accountability for all members of the staff.

**Measure 1.** Each year of the charter term, 88% of Brighten's staff offered a contract or position continuation will choose to renew their contracts and continue employment with the school (not withstanding unavoidable circumstances such as spouse relocation, medical condition, retirement, birth/adoption, death.).

**Measure 2.** Each year of the charter term on at least one survey, 85% or more of staff members will agree that they are satisfied with their working environment.

- **Goal 3. Brighten Academy will increase community and private sector support.**

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Increasing community and private sector support increases the viability and diversity of programming, the sustainability of the school, and the credibility of the charter and public education in Douglas County.

**Measure 1.** Each year of the charter term, Brighten will increase its external support and/or financial/in-kind contributions by 2%.

- **Goal 4. Brighten Academy will increase parent satisfaction and student retention.**

As a school of choice, Brighten is accountable to its stakeholders and depends upon the satisfaction of parents to sustain enrollment.

**Measure 1.** Each year of the charter term on at least one survey, 85% or more of parents will agree that they are satisfied with the school's programming.

- **Goal 5. Brighten Academy will maintain a highly qualified and highly effective governing board.**

Charter schools are not only public academic institutions, but also non-profit businesses. To be effective in both areas, charters need a governing board with the capacity to appropriately establish and enforce policy and to oversee these areas. A diverse, well-trained board is critical to the success of the school leader and of the whole school. Charter schools are often plagued by board members who are too closely affiliated with the school as parents or spouses to make objective decisions in the best interest of the school. Ensuring there is a balance of membership that brings a fresh perspective without potential conflicts of interest is critical to growing the school.

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**Measure 1.** Each year of the charter term, governing board members will participate in the state mandated number of hours of professional development (as described by law) or higher on topics relevant such as charter school governance, public school finance and oversight, leadership, school safety, legal and regulatory compliance, and instructional best practices.

**Measure 2.** Each year of the charter term, the school will increase or maintain the number of non-affiliated community members serving on the board in a voting or committee capacity up to 1/3 of the total board membership.

***9. What Specific Actions will the school take to achieve its organizational performance objectives?***

Target Area	Target Area Activity	Expected Outcomes
<b>Student Engagement in the Community; Parental Engagement in the School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beginning in 2016-2017, Brighten will fully implement the EL model that centers on service learning.</li> <li>Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, the school will provide multiple opportunities for involvement including home activities, Saturdays, weekday early mornings, days, and evenings.</li> <li>Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, the school will publish an Expert Speaker list of parents and community partners to serve as a resource for instructional programs.</li> </ul>	<p>The number of service learning projects or case studies will be documented.</p> <p>Parent engagement hours will be tracked quarterly and reported to the board.</p> <p>The Expert Speaker list will not only be published, but teachers and club sponsors will utilize the list in lesson planning and activities.</p>

<p><b>Highly qualified and highly effective faculty and staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, the school will provide/implement:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Meaningful and relevant professional development</li> <li>○ Teacher mentors and/or coaches</li> <li>○ New Teacher Academy</li> <li>○ Common planning time</li> <li>○ Continued feedback loops through the weekly reflection</li> <li>○ Consistent, transparent communication</li> <li>○ Annual surveys of satisfaction</li> <li>○ Exit interviews</li> <li>○ Goal setting conferences</li> <li>○ Learning walks</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Professional development surveys and feedback mechanisms will be provided.</p> <p>Mentoring and coaching logs will document areas of focus and type of communication.</p> <p>Documented reflection sheets will provide evidence of ongoing satisfaction, growth, and transparent communication.</p> <p>Exit interview and annual surveys will provide evidence of satisfaction and areas of opportunity for improvement.</p> <p>The TKES platform will document goal setting conference and learning walk data.</p>
<p><b>Community and private sector support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning in 2016-2017, the school will attend State Board of Education meetings at least twice annually.</li> <li>• Annually beginning in 2016-2017, the school will visit members of the General Assembly to educate them about the school and to advocate for charter and public school initiatives, laws, and appropriations.</li> <li>• Beginning in the 2017-2018, members of the board and leadership will attend Douglas County Chamber of Commerce events and professional development opportunities.</li> <li>• Each year of the charter, the school will reach out to individuals and organizations external to the Douglas County Community for sponsorship of signature events.</li> </ul>	<p>Anecdotal evidence of attendance and documentation of agenda and minutes will demonstrate participation with Chamber events and attendance at State Board meetings and meetings with the General Assembly members.</p> <p>Sponsorship documentation from signature events will be maintained.</p>



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<p><b>Parent satisfaction and student retention</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brighten will survey parents annually and use the data to create or revise the school improvement plan and strategic plan.</li> <li>• Beginning in 2016-2017, the school will offer a variety of focus group opportunities for parents to provide input.</li> <li>• Beginning in 2016-2017, the school will conduct exit interviews with departing students’ parents and utilize information to improve programming.</li> <li>• The school will work collaboratively with the Parent Teacher Organization to promote parental engagement.</li> </ul>	<p>Survey data will be collected, disaggregated, and disseminated.</p> <p>Focus group meeting minutes will provide evidence of parental engagement.</p> <p>Exit interview data will be collected and disseminated.</p> <p>The PTO membership list, survey, and volunteer list will provide evidence of sustained or increased parental involvement.</p>
<p><b>Board training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each year of the charter term, the Brighten board will conduct an annual self-assessment to determine training needs.</li> <li>• Each year of the charter term, funds will be allotted in the operational budget for board training both on and off site through state approved vendors, conferences, seminars, webinars, and guest speakers.</li> <li>• Beginning in 2016-2017, Brighten’s board will utilize the GCSA Board Bank, networking with the Chamber of Commerce, as well as media outlets to recruit non-Brighten affiliated board members.</li> </ul>	<p>The self-assessment will be documented and training will be aligned with the assessment.</p> <p>The school’s budget will include a line item for board training and development.</p> <p>The number of non-Brighten affiliate applicants for a board position and/or the composition of the board will demonstrate that the outreach and networking were successful.</p>

***10. Which of the specific actions in the organizational plan require a waiver of state law, rule, or guidance?***

Although Brighten exercises many waivers of State Board Rule and state statute in its operations related to discipline, staffing requirements, salary schedule, and others, below are examples of key waivers utilized in operations and how the Charter Schools Act enables us to effectively function.

- o The **waiver for certification** (O.C.G.A. 20-2-200) has been utilized to attract and retain qualified teachers and leaders. We've had many instances in the core content areas, fine arts areas, and leadership where individuals with multi-faceted talents, course study and content expertise, and relevant professional experience added immense value to our programming and operations. In truth, this is essential for the survival and success of any non-profit, and particularly a school.
  
- o A project-based environment requires **professional development** that differs from the local school system's professional development needs, and thus waivers of State Board Rules or state statute would be exercised (O.C.G.A. 20-2-201). As innovation is a requirement of a charter school, the school plans to continue developing its own professional development courses and apply operational funds and the proportionate share of Title II funds towards development of courses, programs, and opportunities that best align with the school's instructional program. Brighten Academy will continue to participate in training offered by the school district that is related to compliance matters such as testing or Special Education, and funds negotiated in the authorizer fee will cover the cost of these compliance trainings.

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- o Brighten’s **governance model**, allowable through The Charter Schools Act, undergirds the whole school structure of accountability and stakeholder engagement. One of the key practices Brighten employs is a board recruitment and succession process that specifically targets areas such as instruction, finance, marketing, legal, fundraising, and other disciplines required to effectively operate a high performing school and non-profit business. We’ve attracted both business and educational leaders from within our community and beyond it. Our parents select from a qualified slate of candidates, thus obtaining buy-in from those most impacted by the governance of the school. This governing body has ensured we have achieved our charter goal commitments through effective oversight and have navigated economic downturns through effective budgeting.

## **GOVERNANCE**

### ***II. Describe how an autonomous governing board will make decisions for the school.***

An autonomous governing board will continue to govern all decisions related to instruction, human resources, finances, and operations of Brighten Academy. The Governing Board will operate in accordance with the Brighten Academy bylaws, non-profit requirements, the charter contract, policies, and applicable laws relevant to public charter school boards. The board will be subject to provisions of O.C.G.A. 50-14-1 et seq. (Open Public Meetings) and O.C.G.A. 50-18-70 et seq. (Inspections of Public Records) in a manner consistent with the Charter Schools Act of 1998, as amended, and in accordance with the Constitution of the State of Georgia.

Brighten’s Governing Board shall have governing and policy-making authority for the school and

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continue to exercise duties and responsibilities including but not limited to:

- o Ensure that the school meets its mission, vision, and performance goals and objectives outlined within the Charter;
- o Review and utilize various forms of academic, financial, and demographic data for decision-making;
- o Negotiate, when applicable, and ensure proper compliance with, and execution of, the terms of the charter (the contract);
- o Conduct itself in accordance with its duly-adopted bylaws;
- o Develop and monitor the school's annual budget, and oversee the fiscal health of the school, including approving significant fiscal expenditures;
- o Recruit, hire, monitor, develop, support, and evaluate the School Director;
- o Provide for succession pathways and/or school leadership;
- o Select and hire the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and monitor, support, and evaluate the performance of such CFO;
- o Establish and maintain all policies governing the operation of the school;
- o Maintain in good standing accreditation of the school by an applicable, permitted accrediting organization;
- o Facilitate and support school-level authorizations or certifications from outside entities such as, but not exclusively, Expeditionary Learning;
- o Ensure that the school adheres to applicable local, state, and federal law, regulation, and policy;
- o Render final approval regarding personnel, including hiring and termination, based upon the recommendation of the School Director;
- o Render final approval of school improvement plans, based upon the recommendation of

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the School Director;

- o Hear and act upon student, parent/guardian, and employee grievances, where policy requires;
- o Negotiate and enter into significant contracts with outside entities for goods or services;
- o Provide legal and risk-management oversight for the school;
- o Provide support to the school for additional fundraising, marketing, and other services as needs arise and coordinate board level fundraising from sources other than state and local government (e.g., federal charter school grant program, philanthropic foundations dedicated to innovation and excellence in public K-12 education);
- o Hear and render decisions on issues brought to the Board's attention and within the Board's scope of authority;
- o Advocate on behalf of the school by working to establish partnerships with authorizers and community organizations, institutions of higher education, governmental agencies, nonprofit entities, and corporate entities that support education through noncommercial relationships;
- o Develop, monitor, and assure fulfillment of the school's strategic plan;
- o Ensure open, ample, and meaningful communication with all stakeholders and act as ambassadors for the school in the broader community.

The Governing Board shall consist of four primary officers including a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer whose roles are defined within the school's bylaws and will also contain no more than seven additional members. The Governing Board will represent a broad population of parents and experienced professionals to govern the school including, but not limited to: educators, financial, marketing, legal, fundraising, real-estate, or other business professionals. The Governing Board shall consist of parents of students attending Brighten Academy, educators, business leaders, and members of

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the community. Members of the Brighten Academy Governing Board will serve in a voluntary capacity and will not be paid for their service except for reasonable costs incurred for exercising board duties. Board members will be fingerprinted and have criminal backgrounds checks, and the Treasurer of the board will have a financial background check. All new board members will be communicated to the Douglas County School System and be updated with Georgia Secretary of State by way of corporate annual registration.

Each April, a Governing Board election will take place to fill any existing or upcoming vacancies. The open positions will be filled with members of the community, educators, business leaders, and parents of students attending Brighten Academy. Members shall serve three-year terms. An open seat special election may be held when the governing board deems necessary due to a vacancy of a number of governing board positions. To maintain continuity, the Governing Board must, to the extent it is possible, contain at least two members of the preceding Governing Board. If for some reason all eleven-board positions will be eligible for vacancy, any preceding Governing Board members must go through the election process. The election process will be as follows:

- o The Governing Board will determine the qualifications needed of candidates.
- o Once the qualifications have been determined, the openings will be posted to begin accepting nominees' letters of interest including qualifications.
- o Nominees may be self-nominated or nominated by others.
- o A Governing Board member, a school administrator, and a PTO representative will form a nominee review committee in order to verify the qualifications of the nominees and to narrow down to no more than three qualified nominees for each open position.
- o A Governing Board member, a school administrator, and a PTO representative will form a selection committee in order to formally interview the nominees as recommended by

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the nominee review committee. Nominees will be selected from this panel to proceed to the election process. The selection committee shall have the discretion to determine the structure of the ballot. The selection committee shall have the option to request additional qualified candidates from the nominee review committee.

- o At the designated board meeting, the selected nominees will be introduced and may speak on their behalf as well as answer any questions from the board and audience participants. At the appointed board meeting, the election process will begin after introductions and questions. The current Governing Board members and any current members of the Brighten Academy PTO may vote by ballot; each member may only vote once.
- o Nominated candidates will not receive ballots.
- o One Governing Board Member, one PTO Representative and one school administrator will tally the votes.
- o In case of a tie, the Governing Board will decide the outcome by majority vote.
- o Any open officer positions will be nominated and elected by a majority vote of the newly elected Governing Board at the scheduled meeting that serves as the beginning of the new members' term.
- o Interim officer positions may be appointed by a majority vote of the current Governing Board in the case of any officer position being vacated during the remainder of the year. In addition to elected members, the school administration and the immediate past governing board president will serve in ex-officio members in an advisory capacity to the Governing Board.

Within 30 days, or according to availability of training opportunities, new members of The Governing Board shall be formally oriented. All members of the Governing Board will receive training on fiduciary

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and governance duties within the first two months of each fiscal year. All Governing Board members will complete a yearly self-assessment that will influence the specific board development plan for the upcoming year. The Governing Board shall be formally trained at least once yearly on its responsibilities and on legal and regulatory matters pertaining to public school governance, as required by law, by an approved state governance training provider. Information related to this training shall be documented and included in the school's annual report to the Douglas County School District. The Governing Board shall participate in on-going professional development including, but not limited to: conferences, speakers, professional articles, and strategic planning priorities as determined necessary by the board self-evaluation or other tools. For example, in the upcoming strategic planning cycle, advocacy has been identified as a strategic planning priority, and thus, relevant training or development will be sought. These development opportunities shall be documented and provided in the school's annual report to the school district. The operating budget shall include development funds for The Governing Board. The board's proposed training plan is as follows:

Training	Date	Hours	Trainer
Governance Training	September	4	Certified Provider
School Finance Training	January	2	Executive Director
Board Self- Evaluations/ Strategic Planning	July	3	Member of Admin Team/Strategic Planning Committee
Board Orientation Pt 1 For new members	May	4	Executive Director
Board Orientation Pt 2 For new members	July	2	Executive Director



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A member of the Governing Board may resign at any time by giving written notice, preferably via their Brighten Academy email, to an officer. Unless otherwise specified in the notice, the resignation shall take effect immediately upon receipt thereof by the officer. Members of the Governing Board may be removed by a majority vote of the remaining members for such reasons that include, but are not limited to: absence from Governing Board meetings without notice or just cause, not fulfilling duties as defined in the corporation's by-laws, not acting in accordance with the mission and core beliefs of Brighten Academy, acting negligently or against the laws of the state of Georgia when representing the corporation. The Governing Board shall provide a minimum of 7 calendar days' notice prior to a public vote in the upcoming regularly scheduled board meeting. If the removed Board member is a Board officer, the vacated officer position shall be filled at that same regularly scheduled meeting, by nomination and majority vote of the remaining members.

The current board composition as is follows:

Board Member	Primary Role	Area of Expertise	Personal Affiliation
Coriya Falker	Board President	Executive Level Marketing and Communication	Parent
Jason Maddox	Vice President	Executive Level Technology and Network Design Marketing	Parent
Matt Markel	Board Member	Executive Level Business and Finance	Parent
Kimberly Sanders	Secretary	Engineer and Project Management	Community Member
Heather Shirley	Board member	Sales, Project Management	Community Member
Jaime Holvey	Chair, Special Events	Fundraising	Parent

Nick Smith	Treasurer	CPA, Finance	Parent
Pamela Lee	Chair, Policy Committee	Attorney	Parent
Melissa Wallis	Chair, Academic and Governance Oversight	Business Owner, Educator	Parent
Open Position		Business Development, Advocacy	

**CONTRACTS WITH EDUCATIONAL SERVICE PROVIDERS OR OTHER CHARTER PARTNERS**

*12. Does the charter school intend to contract, or has the school contracted, with an education service provider (ESP) or other charter partner, to provide management or consulting services? If so, please complete this and include a signed, operationalized agreement submitted as an exhibit.*

Brighten does not utilize nor plan to contract with an Education Service Provider. The school does, however, have two contracts with service providers, which are explained below.

**EL Education (Formerly Expeditionary Learning)**

In an effort to better brand our school, ensure that Brighten continues to raise the bar with innovative practices, and to support the significant growth plan by providing a consistent model and professional development, in 2013 a focus group from Brighten’s board, including the School Director, began exploring school reform models. A number of models/initiatives were explored and researched including the Museum School Model, Core Knowledge, the Teach for America Reform Initiative, and Expeditionary Learning. Expeditionary Learning was selected, as it best aligned with our school’s educational philosophy, project-based learning model, had Habits of Scholarship that align with our 7Cs,

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and provides significant, meaningful professional development. In addition, the model was gaining traction as a national model for school reform. Another benefit of Expeditionary Learning was the rigorous selection process for EL schools, meaning that Brighten would be among peers of high caliber. And finally, the EL model's efficacy has been supported by research:

- o Mathematica Policy Research found that Expeditionary Learning middle school students perform better in reading and math than their counterparts in other public schools. The study team examined student performance on the existing state reading and math assessments up to three years after students enrolled in five Expeditionary Learning middle schools and found positive impacts in both reading and math of a significant magnitude (between an extra three and five months of instruction gained).
- o A 2011 study of Expeditionary Learning schools in Rochester, NY compared students from Expeditionary Learning elementary and middle schools to their peers in the city's non-Expeditionary Learning schools over two years. Researchers found that Expeditionary Learning schools provided significant achievement advantages for elementary students in English language arts and math and for middle school students in English language arts.
- o Also in 2011, researchers examined the progress made by Expeditionary Learning schools in New York City and Rochester, NY between 2006 and 2010 in closing achievement gaps. Their analysis found that Expeditionary Learning schools closed gaps in English language arts for African-American, Hispanic, and low-income students and English language learners in both cities.
- o In "Comprehensive School Reform and Student Achievement: A Meta-Analysis," researchers from the University of Wisconsin, John Hopkins University, and the University of North Carolina looked at twenty-nine Comprehensive School Reform

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models including Expeditionary Learning. The study looked at the research base, design characteristics, and student achievement results for each of the models. The report's conclusions were, among others, that "the overall effects of CSR are statistically significant, meaningful, and appear to be greater than the effects of other interventions that have been designed to serve similar purposes and student and school populations," (p.34) and that model effects were strongest for schools in their fifth year of implementation. The report characterized Expeditionary Learning's research base as showing "highly promising evidence of effectiveness." Only three of the twenty-nine other CRS models received higher ratings.

Expeditionary Learning fees are established, and the Governing Board authorized the School Director to contract with EL for services for a period of 3 years (with a required annual review), with opportunity for contract renewal after review of prior services. Service contracted through EL includes professional development, academic monitoring for fidelity to the work plan, school improvement plan monitoring, and leadership and instructional coaching. The Board also authorized the School Director to negotiate the design contact hours in conjunction with EL and the school's Leadership Team following a set of menu options available for the contracted rate approved. The School's Director has developed the school's work plan with EL, and the Governing Board's responsibility will be to ensure that EL meets its contract obligations and responsibilities outlined within the work plan, based on input by the School's Director.

### **SLA Management**

Prior to 2013, Brighten Academy has contracted with the Douglas County School System for provision of school breakfast and lunch services. With the growth of the school and movement to a new facility in 2014-2015, this arrangement became no longer administratively feasible or safe. Therefore, Brighten contacted the Department of Education's Department of School Nutrition for guidance on appropriate

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processes, rules, regulations, and training to become a school nutrition provider and to select a food service contracted provider. Under the guidance of the GaDOE, Brighten published an RFPQ. A number of nutrition providers responded to the RFPQ. After review of the proposals and due diligence with references and company history review, Brighten's Board selected SLA Management.

SLA Management is a Florida-based nutrition service provider with a successful track record for serving the charter sector and nearby private schools in Georgia. Brighten's board received favorable recommendations from the neighboring private schools. The benefits of SLA Management that significantly contributed to the decision to contract for services include the lowest bid price per meal and provision of kitchen equipment, a café manager, and nutrition software. In addition, the company provides a revenue positive or neutral program. The contract for services with SLA Management extends over a one year period with opportunity for renewal after review of prior service. The Governing Board has authorized the School Director to manage SLA Management's contract, and the School Director will report to the board performance against the contract. Furthermore, the board will review the financial impact of the contract to ensure that provision of services remain revenue positive or neutral as promised.

Brighten maintains a policy related to vendor selection and bids in its policy manual, and all such decisions are made in a public forum in a regularly scheduled meeting of the Governing Board and documented and published accordingly in board minutes.

## **FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES, PLANS, AND WAIVERS**

### ***13. State the school's Financial Goals and Measures.***

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Brighten Academy is committed to operating the school as a business, practicing fiscal responsibility and making sensible decisions regarding operations to ensure ongoing success of the school and expansion of its programs.

The Governing Board is and shall always be well balanced in its representation of business members with experience in a variety of fields including business and finance. Furthermore, the school's CFO will be appropriately credentialed according to State Board Rule Guidance.

The goals established below will ensure that Brighten will remain sustainable and able to effectively implement and maintain its programming. In addition, it will ensure integrity and transparency in processes, which is a key tenant of our core beliefs.

- **Goal 1. Brighten Academy will operate using sound business and instructional practices that ensure sustainability and continuation of quality programming.**

One of Brighten's core beliefs is that the school should operate as a business and practice fiscal responsibility.

**Measure 1.** Each year of the charter term, the school will operate in a fiscally sound manner meeting all Generally Accepted Government Accounting Standards (GAGAS) as demonstrated by an external, annual audit report.

**Measure 2.** Each year of the charter term, Brighten Academy will maintain a 95% of capacity or greater enrollment rate as measured using the average of the March and October FTE counts.

**Measure 3.** Each year of the charter term, the actual and proposed budget will demonstrate effective allocation of resources.

**Measure 4.** Each year of the charter term, the school will meet all financial reporting deadlines set by the Georgia Department of Education.

*14. What specific actions will the school take to achieve the financial performance objectives?*

Target Area	Target Area Activity	Expected Outcomes
<p><b>Sound business practices ensuring sustainability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brighten will ensure a qualified CFO manages the financial affairs of the organization and prepares standard financial reports for board approval and Douglas County School System to review monthly.</li> <li>• Brighten’s Governing Board will periodically review financial policies and make amendments as necessary.</li> <li>• Each month or periodically as determined by the Governing Board, the Business Manager will report enrollment data to the Governing Board and the board will determine possible fiscal impact and respond accordingly.</li> <li>• The school will follow a systematic process and timeline for budget and audit preparation and reporting to stakeholders and authorizers that will be overseen by the Finance Committee.</li> <li>• The School Director will notify the board annually or as appropriate of demographic shifts or other events occurring in the Douglas County School System that may have a significant current or future financial impact.</li> <li>• Brighten will maintain a relevant and reasonable contingency plan to be accessed in the case of unforeseen circumstances that put the sustainability of the school in financial jeopardy.</li> </ul>	<p>Board minutes will reflect review and approval of financials.</p> <p>Financials and audit will demonstrate a positive cash flow and an unqualified opinion.</p> <p>Reports of enrollment and related decisions will be reflected in board minutes.</p> <p>An unqualified audit will indicate that financial controls are in place and policies and standard financial operating procedures are being enforced and followed with fidelity.</p> <p>The school will be able to proactively prepare for and respond to demographic shifts and/or events that could actually or potentially impact enrollment or sustainability without undue financial hardship to the school.</p>

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### **Budget**

Pursuant to the Charter Schools Act of 1998, State Board Rule 160-4-9-.06 and related guidelines, and the LUA Manual, the Douglas County School System will provide Brighten Academy with its allotment of Quality Basic Education earnings, applicable QBE grants, applicable non-QBE state grants, which includes a proportionate share of transportation and applicable federal grants, including the proportionate share of Title II funds. The District intends to use funds from the Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax ("ESPLOST V") to pay for capital outlay projects, technology, and/or instructional supplies for Brighten's benefit to the full extent of the law, and to treat Brighten as equitably as possible in the allocation of ESPLOST V funds. Accordingly, prior to each school year, starting with the 2016-2017 school year, Brighten requests an annual meeting to discuss allocation of ESPLOST funds for technology, capital outlay projects, and curriculum as included in the ESPLOST V Referendum.

Brighten Academy will continue to be provided its allotment of QBE funds and other local funds monthly. The school will receive funding for teaching and experience based on what the school earns, but not less than provided for by the Charter Schools Act or State Board Rule. In addition, pursuant to requirements in the Charter Schools Act of 1998, State Board Rule 160-4-9-.06 and related guidelines, and the LUA Manual, Brighten will earn funding for students in the current year where significant growth occurs, such as substantial increase of a grade level or overall school size. Brighten Academy will be responsible for ensuring timely payment to the Douglas County School System for agreed upon contracted services (such as reimbursement for healthcare costs) provided by the county on a monthly or quarterly basis as agreed upon.

### **Additional Sources of Revenue: Grants and Fundraising**



## Brighten Academy Charter School

Brighten Academy plans to continue supplementing revenue by aggressively pursuing a variety of public and private grants and charitable donations, and by implementing an on-going fundraising campaign. The Governing Board and School Director will be primarily responsible for applying for grants and soliciting charitable donations; however, instructional staff, as well as other school personnel, may also seek grant opportunities to benefit the school's instructional programs. The Governing Board and established parent/teacher organization will work collaboratively to generate funds through various fundraising programs.

### Contingency Plans

Given the recent expansion of the school and procurement of a larger facility, as well as other possible unanticipated circumstances, the board is cognizant of potential dangers to the school's sustainability, and thus, has established a contingency plan to proactively prepare for unexpected expenses. This contingency plan may be altered from time to time as appropriate to the circumstance:

#### ***14. What specific actions will the school take to achieve the financial performance objectives?***

Unexpected Financial Risk	Contingency Action
Enrollment is less than projected enrollment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce or restructure staff</li><li>• Reduce contracted services</li><li>• Lessen build-out of facility for classroom space</li><li>• Rely on parent volunteers to assist in non-instructional roles</li><li>• Increase fundraising efforts</li><li>• Utilize contingency funds allocated</li><li>• Reduce stipend amounts</li><li>• Request flexibility in expenditure for reserved funds provided by private donors or philanthropic organizations</li></ul>

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<p>Special needs population is above the budgeted amount or special needs instructional services/materials/equipment is more than budgeted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce or restructure staff</li> <li>• Reduce contracted services</li> <li>• Lessen build-out of facility for classroom space</li> <li>• Rely on parent volunteers to assist in non-instructional roles</li> <li>• Increase fundraising efforts</li> <li>• Contract with Douglas County to share services, materials, and equipment</li> <li>• Utilize contingency funds allocated</li> <li>• Reduce stipend amounts</li> <li>• Request flexibility in expenditure for reserved funds provided by private donors or philanthropic organizations</li> </ul>
<p>Facility maintenance or future growth build-out costs exceed projections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce or consolidate contracted services</li> <li>• Increase fundraising for capital funds</li> <li>• Non-instructional staff reduction</li> <li>• Rely on parent volunteers to assist in non-instructional roles</li> <li>• Utilize contingency funds allocated</li> <li>• Reduce stipend amounts</li> <li>• Request flexibility in expenditure for reserved funds provided by private donors or philanthropic organizations</li> </ul>

### **Financial Policies and Procedures**

Brighten Academy will follow all Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. The Governing Board, in collaboration with the School Director, will develop, modify, and monitor compliance of all financial policies.

### **Audits**

The budget includes the procurement of an independent Certified Public Accountant to oversee financial processes and to provide yearly audits of Brighten Academy's financial practices. At least one audit per annum, as standard for all public school systems in Georgia, will be conducted by a Certified Public Accountant on the fiscal processes and finances of Brighten Academy.

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The audit report, along with other financial data, will be provided to the Douglas County School System within 180 calendar days of the end of the charter school's fiscal year or as soon as practicable. The cost of the independent audit will be borne by Brighten Academy unless the Douglas County School System allows Brighten to be a part of their annual audit. The Douglas County School System's Internal Audit Department will be permitted to audit Brighten Academy annually or at such other intervals as the School System deems appropriate.

In addition, the school will provide the School System with a monthly financial report in a format acceptable to the School System by an agreed upon date each month unless otherwise agreed upon by both parties. Any surplus funds remaining at the end of one fiscal year will be used to enhance Brighten Academy's academic program the following year. Brighten Academy will use its contingency plans should a deficit occur during or at the end of the fiscal year. In case of a budget shortfall, no School System funds will be allocated to Brighten Academy for the next fiscal year until the Superintendent or designee approves such a plan. Brighten Academy will be solely responsible for all debts it incurs and contracts it makes.

The Governing Board of Brighten Academy will notify the Douglas County School System immediately if the charter school is contemplating cessation of operations, and will cooperate with the School System to the extent necessary to provide an orderly return of the students to their local schools. If Brighten Academy ceases operations for any reason, the school and the Governing Board will be responsible for appropriately safeguarding and distributing the school's assets and winding up the school's business and affairs. All assets and unencumbered funds remaining when the charter school ceases operations will revert to the Douglas County School Board for local funds and to the Office of the Treasury for federal funds as soon as the school has attended to all outstanding business. If Brighten Academy does not have sufficient funds to pay all outstanding obligations at the time it ceases operation, the Douglas County School system will not be responsible for the charter school's unpaid bills.

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Brighten Academy utilizes Quick Books, which enables Brighten Academy, Inc. to stay abreast of all tax law changes and to ensure consistency of financial processes. Brighten Academy's fiscal year will continue to be from July 1 – June 30 of each year, which is consistent with the Douglas County School System's fiscal year.

### **Procurement**

With respect to procurement, Brighten Academy, Inc.'s by-laws and policies contain detailed information about procurement practices. Brighten Academy will follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles with respect to procurement. The Governing Board, in collaboration with the School Director, will develop, modify, and monitor all procurement policies and procedures.

Brighten Academy reserves the right as a public school to obtain state bid pricing and access to surplus equipment, technology, and materials from the Douglas County School System or other public institutions.

### ***15. Which of the specific actions in the financial plan require a waiver of state law, rule, or guidelines?***

The Brighten Academy Board will retain full autonomy over financial decisions, policies, and budgeting in accordance with the request for a broad flexibility waiver.

- o One key waiver we employ is **flexibility over resource allocation (O.C.G.A. 20-2-167)**. Each year, the Governing Board, School Leadership, and Teacher Leadership Team review data and areas of focus in the School Improvement Plan and Strategic Plan and develop a budget aligned with key areas of priority. For example, we've been able to

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deploy the additional money we've earned through having a high number of gifted certified teachers to support the fine arts and the middle school programs, both areas identified in parent and staff surveys and through the strategic planning process as areas of need.

- o Yet another related waiver exercised pertains to the **required school year and school day (O.C.G.A. 20-2-168)**. Brighten aligns its calendar and daily schedule, which has financial implications, based on the instructional program needs, and thus, this waiver is critical for success of our school model.
  
- o The Governing Board assumes any powers enumerated to the county school system **in O.C.G.A. 20-2-395 and 396 related to notes for money borrowed and its use**. Having recently procured and built a new facility, Brighten's board is responsible for the financial obligations of the school.
  
- o Brighten exercises its right to waive **O.C.G.A. 20-2-962** and develop its own **financial reporting processes and procedures**, following GAAPS and auditor guidance. Brighten has a different organizational structure which is much smaller than a system finance department and the school is not an LEA. Thus, the process must be different.
  
- o **School size**, as required by **SBOE Rule 160-5-4-.08**, requires flexibility to ensure the culture envisioned for the school can be maintained and the school remains financial sustainable.

## **STUDENT ADMISSIONS**

***16. How will students be admitted to the charter school?***

Since Brighten has opened, we have been able to maintain full classes in grades K-8 with active waitlists. Our most current wait list included 468 applicants, more than triple the number of available slots, even with addition of several new classrooms. Our waitlists help to prove there is high demand in the Douglas County School System for a public school option, which Brighten fulfills to a large degree.

In addition to the existing public schools in the area, there are a number of private Christian schools that compete for the students in the district. Some schools are overcrowded, as the system enrollment continues to increase annually. The private schools charge tuition ranging from 4,000-12,000 annually that many parents cannot or will not pay. Brighten provides a viable, public school option and supports the work and mission of the Douglas County School District to provide a quality education for all students in a safe, orderly environment.

**Admissions**

The school will remain open to all students who reside in Douglas County and any student of a faculty or staff member living in a neighboring district with which the Douglas County School district provides reciprocity for enrollment of faculty and staff member's children.

The school will not discriminate on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, disability, proficiency in English, or any other basis prohibited by law. Students will not be required to complete any test or measure in order to be enrolled in Brighten Academy. Following Brighten's Placement Policy, after official registration, formal and informal assessments will be administered to determine the most appropriate instructional plan and grade placement for each student.

**Admissions and Registration**

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Brighten Academy's open admissions period is from February 1 until February 15 of each calendar year for the following school year. Any admission forms received outside of this time frame will not be eligible to participate in lottery drawing (if needed). No admission forms will be received prior to February 1. A copy of our admission and registration forms are included as part of the appendices. Proofs of residency are required documentation which must be included as part of registration.

Regardless of when mailed, all registration and required residency documentation for Brighten Academy must be physically present in the administrative office of Brighten Academy, located at 5897 Prestley Mill Road, Douglasville, Georgia 30135, on or before 4:00 p.m. February 15. In the event Brighten Academy is closed on February 15<sup>th</sup>, all registrations must be received by 4:00 p.m. the following business day that the school's administrative offices are open. All admission forms must be complete. Regardless of reason, failure to have a completed admission form in the office of Brighten Academy by this deadline will constitute a waiver of inclusion in any upcoming lottery. The school strongly encourages all applicants to hand deliver their application to the administrative offices of Brighten Academy. Admission forms that are received in a timely manner but are incomplete due to circumstances beyond the control of the applicant will be included in the lottery at the discretion of the School Director or designee with a right of appeal within 3 days to the Governing Board.

In order to complete the admissions process and formally register, the following must be received by Brighten Academy: a completed admission application (including all required and applicable supporting documentation such as birth certificate, social security card, proof of residency, immunizations, academic and discipline records).

Brighten Academy will publish information about admissions on the Brighten Academy website and at the school in a prominent location where public information is posted. In addition, information may be published in the legal organ of Douglas County and other public locations.

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A register of all completed and timely received applications will be kept in the office of Brighten Academy for review by applicants following all FERPA regulations. Applicants are required to assure their application is registered prior to the deadline.

### **Priority Registration**

Priority for registration for each academic year will be given in the following order:

1. Children of staff and Governing Board members
2. Siblings of students already enrolled.

Once a student has been registered, the siblings will be immediately placed on the sibling waitlist. Board members who join the board after the admissions period will be eligible for priority status in the next admissions period.

Students who reside outside of Douglas County will not be registered at Brighten Academy, except those students whose parents are employed by Brighten Academy.

### **Lottery**

Brighten Academy will hold one public lottery per annual admissions cycle.

Currently registered students in good standing will fill all openings first. In the event there are more returning students than openings, a lottery will be conducted for currently registered students. Once all currently registered students have been placed, students of currently hired full-time faculty and staff will fill any open allotments. Students of current Governing Board members will next take any open



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allotments. If there are more priority applicants than available slots, a lottery will take place to determine placement on the waitlists.

If students of teachers, staff, board members, and siblings of students do not fill the open allotments, then other open allotments will be filled by conducting a lottery of all non-priority admission forms received by the admissions deadline. All applicants not placed in a class will be put on a general, non-priority waitlist in the order they were selected in the lottery.

Siblings in the same grade (e.g., twins, triplets, etc.) will be given 1 lottery ticket and all same grade siblings will be placed in the next slots available or on the waitlist in the order pulled if there are no slots available. If the last slot pulled is a multiple siblings' ticket, all siblings on the ticket will be enrolled.

Lottery positions and waitlist positions will not be secured from year to year. Those offered the opportunity to register from the waitlist will have three days to complete the registration process before the opening will be offered to the next student on the waitlist.

The school reserves the right to temporarily hold a maximum of two slots in each grade level in the event retention or acceleration of a student is determined to be in the best academic and social interests of the child. Placement decisions will follow the school's Placement Policy, which provides for a collaborative committee of the child's parents, teachers, and administrators to make placement decisions. Temporarily held slots not filled by students retained or accelerated by the Placement Committee will be filled in a timely manner by students on the waitlist in the order in which they were drawn in the lottery.

The school also reserves the right to increase class size to accommodate mid-year placement decisions of currently enrolled students if the increase in size does not compromise the school's ability to meet its mission and is practical given the size of the facility and available staff.

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Brighten Academy will provide the names and addresses of all registered students to the Douglas County School System no later than May 15. Brighten Academy will also provide any necessary data for state funding reports and registration monitoring. As part of the authorizer fee, The Douglas County School System will provide Brighten Academy access to all functionality and support (as available for other schools) for the student information system being utilized for grades K-8.

### **Marketing Strategy**

Recruitment of students is the responsibility of Brighten Academy. Public notices will be made regarding a pre-admissions period. During the recruitment process, Brighten Academy will provide parents of potential students with accurate information about the programs, services, and amenities available.

The school hopes to continue to serve a student body whose demographics are representative of the Douglas County community. Brighten's current demographics closely mirror the county's demographics as reported in the most recent Census Bureau report with respect to ethnicity, and serves a higher population of students who are socio-economically disadvantaged than the Census Bureau reports from 2009-2013. Brighten's ethnicity is balanced among the two majority ethnicities served in the Douglas County School System. The school's population of socio-economically diverse students compared to the entire district is lower, but aligns with one of the district's elementary schools and one of the district's middle schools. Brighten's efforts to market to a diverse population of students have been successful, and the school will endeavor to continue with these efforts.

## **FACILITIES**

*17. Describe the school facility that the charter school proposes to use.*

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With the award of a \$10.5 million bond, Brighten Academy has procured land and constructed a state-of-the-art classroom building at 5897 Prestley Mill Road, Douglasville, Douglas County, Georgia. The full school provides 75,000 square feet of classroom and administrative space and includes a full gymnasium with a stage, lunchroom, and media center.

The school maintains Certificates of Occupancy on the two main buildings. The structures are in full compliance with all building code standards and regulations for fire, safety, environmental, and accessibility requirements set forth by the Georgia Department of Education and the State of Georgia. Professional architects and engineers that were registered, licensed, and insured in the state of Georgia and experienced in their respective disciplines provided services including:

- o Preparing schematic designs and complete construction documents in compliance with all applicable building codes and the requirements of all applicable code-enforcing agencies having jurisdiction over the project
- o Obtaining full permits for land disturbance, erosion, and sediment control, traffic control measures, civil, structural, architectural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, and fire protection, etc., as required by the scope of work necessary to obtain from the appropriate jurisdiction a valid Certificate of Occupancy for the intended educational use
- o Providing full “contract administration services” (e.g., oversight of the construction project from conceptual design through issuance of the final Certificate of Occupancy)

The new facility currently meets our needs, but there is additional space available for expansion and growth. All renovations will be conducted by experienced and appropriately licensed and instructed construction professionals in accordance with the construction specifications, drawings, and other documents provided by the Governing Board and the architect. Prior to the school’s occupation of the

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facility, certification that the facility was in full compliance with all building code standards and regulations and fire, safety, environmental and accessibility requirements were submitted to the Douglas County School System.

Copies of all deeds, leases, construction contracts, drawings, and other documents related to the facility will be submitted to the Douglas County School System.

To assure the safety of the students, staff, and school assets, Brighten Academy will maintain the services of a security monitoring company.

Maintenance of the current school facility will be the obligation of Brighten Academy, unless otherwise arranged with the Douglas County School System or prescribed by law. The Douglas County School System has the right to inspect the facility during regular school hours upon reasonable notice of no less than 24 hours.

Brighten Academy currently remains the owner of the land and buildings previously occupied at 3264 Brookmont Parkway, Douglasville, Georgia, and intends to lease or sell this property at the earliest possible opportunity.

***18. Does the charter school have an MOU for the facility pending charter and facility approval?***

No, Brighten Academy does not have an MOU.

***19. Does the charter school have a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) for the proposed facility?***

Yes, Brighten has a CO and it is provided as exhibit \_Q\_.

*20. Does the charter school have an emergency safety plan pursuant to O.C.G.A. 20-2-1185 for the proposed facility?*

Yes, Brighten Academy maintains an emergency safety plan, and it is provided as exhibit \_O\_.