

UNCHARTED SHORES ACADEMY CHARTER



Crescent City, California

Charting New Educational Waters

www.ShoresAcademy.com

Revised for 2012-2017 Term

UNCHARTED SHORES ACADEMY
CHARTER DOCUMENT
212 E Washington Blvd
Crescent City, CA

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I. Founding of the School

Uncharted Shores Academy began with a group of homeschooling parents who wanted more support and opportunities offered to their children than is currently instituted by the independent study schools now in operation. They envisioned a learning environment which provided explorative, family-style education emphasizing character development as an extension of the student's home studies. The vision has since grown to include a commitment to all K-8 students in Del Norte County who enjoy and can benefit from an interactive learning environment which focuses on building student's character.

Margie Rouge, the founder of Uncharted Shores Academy and the school's first Executive Director, designed the school's educational concept. The effectiveness of explorative education using project-based assessment was proven through various studies which were researched during Ms. Rouge's studies to obtain a Masters Degree in Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning. These studies and educational authorities who support the concept are available to the general public on the school's website (www.shoresacademy.com) on the "Concept" page.

Shari Smithson, an elementary teacher with over 30 years of classroom experience, came on board as Co-Director for the program during the school's first year of operation to implement the vision of explorative learning in the classroom and train teachers in the concept. Together, the directors have built a program which offers three unique advantages:

- 1) *Thematic, integrated-subject lessons*, materials, and resources structured by teachers to assist students in taking **responsibility** for organizing, interpreting, and presenting their understanding of the standards.
- 2) *Interactive learning* using classroom experiences, home explorations, and the entire community to encourage student **resourcefulness**. USA involves students in field trips, student presentations, competitions, programs, activities, contests, and events as an integral part of the student's educational experience.
- 3) *Family-style educational experiences, including character education*, in multi-age, family-size learning groups, with parents continuing the learning experiences at home and in the community in order to build student **respect** for themselves, others, and their own education.

Del Norte County already has an excellent array of educational opportunities for K-8 students: traditional elementary schools, the middle school, and the charter school independent study. Additionally, there are several private schools for K-8 in our county. However, none of these schools offer all of the three advantages discussed above on a continuing basis. The families of the students attending the school have agreed that these elements have afforded their children educational opportunities not found elsewhere in Del Norte County, and are the elements most important to a positive, enduring learning experience which will produce responsible, resourceful, respectful citizens of tomorrow.

II. Educational Philosophy and Program

A. Mission

The mission of *Uncharted Shores Academy* is to promote a learning environment which will enable students to become contributing members to our society in the 21st century. In every society, that is the basic purpose of education, and a person that is truly educated is one who is able to be an asset to the society in which he/she lives. We believe that there are three traits which will prepare our students to succeed in our fast-paced, ever-changing, complicated 21st century world: **Responsibility, Respectfulness, and Resourcefulness.**

In the 21st century, information changes too fast for students to learn all they need to know for the rest of their life, so students must take **responsibility** for their own education and continue to learn throughout their lives. Therefore, it is the mission of USA to produce self-motivated students who are able to *independently conduct inquiries, investigations, and research* to stay abreast of changing information throughout their lives.

We also believe that students must be **respectful** of themselves, others, and the world in which we live in order to become a positive member of society. It is the mission of USA to enable students to *generate positive social and emotional character traits* which will allow them to present themselves well, become an asset to their employer, and cooperate with others.

Finally, students must be **resourceful** in their use of the information and the knowledge they attain in their education. In order to be a competent member of society, a person cannot simply learn information, but must also be able to use that information creatively and productively. USA's mission is to promote both creative critical thinking skills and presentation skills which will allow students to better understand subject matter information and the world around them, as well as to become adults who are able to initiate change and be competitive in the workplace.

To accomplish these objectives, *Uncharted Shores Academy* provides thematic, interactive, family-style education implemented using hands-on explorative activities, facilitated through teacher-developed resources, extended with individual student inquiry, and supported by parent participation in the education process. USA has termed this educational process ***Explorative Learning***, which embodies the mission of students becoming productive citizens of society through the exploration of their full potential.

Studies have shown that thematic, integrated subject education assists our students in assimilating core concepts and gain competency in understanding the subject. Independent, self-motivated education can take place as students gain the ability to assimilate knowledge and ensures that students take **responsibility** for their education. Studies have also shown that interactive learning allows students to **resourcefully** use their education in the real world as students learn to think critically, logically, and creatively. Additionally, it is evident that family-style, parent-supported education will

create **respectful** adults as we assist our students in building positive life-long learning attitudes, values, and character traits.

B. Definition of Terms:

Thematic: *Integrated subject learning*, with subjects taught using *a single thematic strand* based upon specific content standards. Literature, writing, social science, art, music, and technology are all addressed in the course of the *history thematic units* while math, science, language arts, technology, art, and health are addressed in the correlating *science thematic units*.

Interactive: Student *interaction with the subject* is the primary mode of instruction. Students use *experiential learning* both at school and in the community to complete projects, activities, and research concerning the themes. Student instruction is *activity based* rather than textbook based. Textbooks are used as reference and support, but will not be the only source of information for the subjects. The visual and performing arts (including music and drama), as well as multi-media technology, are used as a means to *express and interpret the information* learned in the academic subjects. Student assessment uses various means, including *presentations, projects, and portfolios*. Additionally, students are encouraged to *participate in field trips, academic competitions, programs, activities, and contests* as a part of their education.

Family Style: Standards-based subject matter is taught in *family-size, multi-age groups*. All lessons incorporate character training as a primary objective, *similar to parenting objectives*. Students enrolled in the school may *complete projects as a cooperative group (as in a family)* rather than individually. This *family-style atmosphere*, with students taught by the same group of teachers over a period of years, *allows instructors to mentor students* in building positive relationships and desirable character traits. Students also *serve as role models to peers* as they practice leadership roles and teamwork in this cooperative learning environment. Furthermore, *families are involved* in the education process as a whole, with the parents continuing both academic learning and character education at home and in the community.

C. Target Student Population

Uncharted Shores Academy increases learning opportunities for K-8 elementary school students in Del Norte County. The charter's focus population is families who believe that interactive, integrated-subject, multi-age, small group education with full parent and teacher support will give students the best understanding of the world around them and the greatest success with their educational endeavors. *USA* strives to maintain a racial and ethnic balance of students which is reflective of the district and county in which we are located.

D. Educational Program Description:

Uncharted Shores Academy offers a program of alternative learning for Del Norte County K-8 students. Students study subjects in thematic units as a family at home and/or as part of a multi-age classroom situation using activity-based rather than textbook-based learning, although textbooks are used as resources for information. Studies are extended with individual student inquiry and supported by parent participation in the education process.

Credentialed teachers and trained instructors offer learning station studies designed to provide the framework for interactive, cross-age, integrated-subjects theme studies. State standards are addressed and students are assisted in meeting state performance standards through interactive instruction at the school site and parent extension of the concepts at home and in the community.

As an integral part of their educational experience, students are given the opportunity to be involved in field trips, academic competitions, programs, activities, and presentations. Options may include activities such as the State Science Fair, National History Day Competition, student plays or other productions, and Presentation Fairs for students to display and present their projects, speeches, and Power Points.

The school is designated as independent study and operates as a home-based program with daily site-based classes. Parent participation in the education process is a dynamic part of our program and home character training is expected as part of the parent's role in education.

E. Educational Philosophy of How Learning Best Occurs

As per the Charter Schools Act, section 47605(c)(1), *Uncharted Shores Academy* is legally required to “meet statewide performance standards,” and we believe that the interactive learning we do at this school will assist students in meeting those standards. However, we at *Uncharted Shores Academy* believe that education goes far beyond meeting performance standards on a test, and that how a child thinks is a better indication of education than what a child knows. Furthermore, we believe that a child who is using interactive, integrated-subject learning methods is far more apt to perform well on core subject critical thinking tasks than a student who has compartmentalized his education into files of facts. Therefore, we do not believe in “teaching to the test,” but rather in preparing well-rounded, inquisitive, thinking individuals who are apt to do well on a standardized test because of their reasoning abilities rather than their memorization of information.

We at *Uncharted Shores Academy* believe that students best learn through thematic integrated-subject instruction in small, multi-aged, cooperative group settings. Moreover, we adamantly believe that good character and well-developed social skills are essential to produce a student who is successful in life. This educational philosophy is based upon the studies and theories of expert educational authorities and the success of various schools with similar theories. Specific studies and examples are delineated on the school's website, www.ShoresAcademy.com. *Uncharted Shores Academy* integrates the proven principles of Montessori, Theme Immersion, Project-Based Learning, Inquiry-Based Learning, Activity-Based Learning, Cooperative Learning, and related philosophies to structure an environment which allows the student to learn through interactive group activities.

Considering this philosophy of education, some of the outcomes (and expected school-wide learning results) which we would like to see our students achieve

by the time they graduate from *Uncharted Shores Academy* are listed on the chart in the Measurable Student Outcomes section of this document on page 10, along with the assessments which could be used to evaluate student progress towards fulfilling that outcome. In addition to the informal and teacher-dependent assessments which will be completed during the year, the ultimate plan is for each student to also participate in data-driven assessments prior to enrollment and periodically throughout the year in order to better evaluate student progress and improve the educational program of the school.

F. Curriculum and Instructional Design

Curriculum used at *Uncharted Shores Academy* is expansive and varied. Reading and math instruction focus on interactive learning methods and teachers use curriculum which provide activities for multiple learning styles. Theme classes reference both state-approved texts and a variety of resource materials to facilitate student research of the subjects they are learning. The thematic plan follows a three-year rotation cycle based on social science and science standards. The onsite thematic program covers concepts for language arts, math, social science, science, health, art, music, character training, and technology. Physical education mostly takes place in the community or at home.

USA is structured according to theories of brain development in children. Students are divided into three levels, called “educational ports,” which coincides with children’s levels of cognitive reasoning. As students progress through the “ports,” they take on increasingly more independent learning tasks. The teacher’s main focus is to build positive attitudes and critical thinking skills which will lead to students taking responsibility for their own education. Students will continue for several years with the same group of teachers until they are socially and academically ready to move to the next “educational port”.

The structural design for *Uncharted Shores Academy* students also includes the use of interactive learning stations and multi-age groupings (known as learning crews). Students are placed into crews according to their academic and social abilities, rather than by grade. This method of positive bonding with a few adults for extended years, learning alongside a small group of older and younger students, and taking on increasingly more responsibilities, all reflect the philosophy of “family style learning.”

Primary students focus on building reading and basic math computation skills, with science and social science taught thematically using extensive arts and crafts. Ideally, students remain in the primary port until reading fluently. Both the Lower Elementary Port and Upper Elementary Port employ integrated thematic education to address standards, using a three-year rotating theme schedule. Student’s placement in the appropriate educational port is based on both social and academic readiness.

G. Special Student Populations

Uncharted Shores Academy improves learning for low achieving students, as many of these students have alternate learning styles and find it difficult to learn in the traditional textbook-based classroom. *Uncharted Shores Academy* also appeals to high achieving K-8 students, who benefit from the independent student inquiry process and

delve into a deeper understanding of the academic subjects. English learners are incorporated into a full-immersion model of learning as they are assisted in their understanding of academic subjects through the school's emphasis on interactive lessons and the use of the community for learning. Manipulatives and small learning groups prove to be beneficial to the hearing or visually impaired. In other words, some students who are not exhibiting success or working to their full potential in the current schools may very well flourish in the explorative environment which *Uncharted Shores Academy* offers. Students with special needs will be directed to resources which may be of benefit to their particular situation, as addressed below.

1. Students Achieving Above or Below Grade Level

Due to the unique multi-age structure of *Uncharted Shores Academy*, students are able to progress at their own rate while achieving state standards. The presentation-based assessment process allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and areas of strength even if still struggling academically. Students with special needs may achieve at a slower pace in an appropriate ability-level learning group and those who are advanced may reach a highly proficient status early through placement with an appropriate academically advanced group. Learning goals will be addressed in the student's IEP or 504 Plan, if applicable.

Classroom sessions are organized in multi-age cooperative groupings and students complete projects in multi-age groups, with peers, or individually as appropriate. Older students may set their own goals for the term, under the guidance of a parent and teacher, and complete a self-evaluation concerning the completion of those goals at the end of each term. Evaluation of progress is often made through the means of a presentation, and students are free to present the knowledge they have acquired in a format in which they show the most strength. All of these factors lead to increased performance and self-esteem for both low and high achieving students.

2. English Language Learners

The Home Language Survey is a part of the enrollment packet at *Uncharted Shores Academy* and CELDT testing will be administered as applicable. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will ensure that a family or community member is available for translation at student teacher conferences for students identified as English Language Learners, and bilingual materials will be sought for each student as appropriate. The use of manipulatives and cooperative groups will assist with ELL academic success. CLAD, BCLAD, or bi-lingual teachers may be recruited to serve this population as needed. However, English language immersion with the use of appropriate multi-sensory teaching tools is the primary mode of instruction.

3. Students with Disabilities

Uncharted Shores Academy shall comply with all applicable State and Federal Laws in serving students with disabilities, including, but not limited to, Sections 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ("Section 504"), the American with Disabilities Act ("ADA"), and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act ("IDEIA"). *Uncharted*

Shores Academy shall comply with all state and federal laws related to the provision of special education instruction and related services and all SELPA policies and procedures; and shall utilize appropriate SELPA forms.

Uncharted Shores Academy recognizes its legal responsibility to ensure that no qualified person with a disability shall, on the basis of that disability, be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program of the school. Any student, who has an objectively identified disability which substantially limits a major life activity, including, but not limited to, learning, is eligible for accommodation by the school. The facilities to be utilized by the school shall be accessible for all students with disabilities.

Individuals with special needs who wish to participate in the independent study program shall be served in accordance with applicable federal and state law, which states: “No individual with exceptional needs, as defined in Section 56026, may participate in independent study, unless his or her individualized education program developed pursuant to Article 3 (commencing with Section 56340) of Chapter 4 Part 30 specifically provides for that participation. An individualized education program (IEP) is current for one calendar year and must be rewritten and approved by the IEP team within 30 days of expiration. If special education students are to be instructed through independent study, the instructions in the IEP must be followed.”

Each special education student must have an IEP stating that the educational program offered through *Uncharted Shores Academy* is an appropriate placement for that student. If the IEP team determines that *Uncharted Shores Academy* is not an appropriate educational placement for a student, then the student will be directed to remain at his/her school of residence. Parents or teachers may request an evaluation of a student for the special education program at any time, and *Uncharted Shores Academy* will comply with the federal and state law regulations and timelines for evaluating those students. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will provide special education services in contract with the district for those students whose IEP deems this school to be an appropriate placement, and will contract with the district to use district personnel in identifying students who may qualify for special education services.

If a student is found to have a disability under Section 504, the accommodations, modifications, and services needed to ensure that the student receives a free and appropriate public education will be implemented by the *Uncharted Shores Academy* staff. *Uncharted Shores Academy* shall be solely responsible for its compliance with Section 504. All parents, guardians, teachers, and other participants in the student’s education, including tutors, will be supplied with a copy of the student’s 504 plan. A copy of the 504 plan will be retained in the student’s file. Each 504 plan will be reviewed at least once per year to determine the appropriateness of the plan, needed modifications to the plan, and continued eligibility.

Uncharted Shores Academy intends to remain a public school of Del Norte Unified School District (DNUSD) for purposes of Special Education purposes pursuant

to Education Code Section 47641(b). As a public school of the district, solely for purposes of providing special education and related services, *Uncharted Shores Academy* seeks services from Del Norte Unified School District for special education students enrolled in *Uncharted Shores Academy* in the same manner provided to students in other district schools. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will follow the DNUSD policies and procedures, and shall comply with DNUSD protocol as to the delineation of duties between the DNUSD central office and the *Uncharted Shores Academy* school site in providing special education instruction and related services to identified students. The **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU – Appendix B)** between Del Norte School District and *Uncharted Shores Academy* spells out in detail the responsibilities for provision of special education services and the manner in which special education funding will flow to the students of the charter school.

Measurable Student Outcomes and Other Data

The measurable student outcomes which *Uncharted Shores Academy* expects students to be able to achieve by the time they enter high school tie in with our mission statement: to produce responsible, respectful, resourceful students and with our educational philosophy that student assignments and assessments will mirror real-world activities. Therefore, we expect students to be self-motivated and take responsibility for their education; develop critical thinking skills which will help them become competent in core subjects; utilize inquiry, investigation, and research in their studies; and demonstrate their knowledge through skillful presentations. Furthermore, we expect USA students will display attitudes, values, and character traits which will enable them to be positive adults, assets to their community, and continue with their learning throughout their lives.

Teachers will assess whether the student is progressing with these goals after evaluating student records of his progress through various assessment means, including journals, student/teacher conferences, student presentation of completed projects, and the quality of the samples in his portfolio. Additionally, evaluation tests may be used to objectively evaluate student progress. Students will complete state mandated testing as part of their yearly evaluation of progress, and the schoolwide results will be reported to the parents and community every year. The teacher will use these and a variety of other assessment measures to make a complete assessment of each student's progress in attaining competency with state standards each term.

Uncharted Shores Academy administration will analyze the total school progress attained towards reaching proficiency with state standards, including any applicable API scores, and reevaluate the programs and methods used for student learning accordingly. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will pursue API scores equivalent to other similarly ranked schools. The API growth target will be evaluated each year and the student program adjusted as needed to reflect needed improvements in instruction.

The chart on the next page delineates the five basic outcomes which *Uncharted Shores Academy* expects of students by the time they are ready to enter high school, and which *Uncharted Shores Academy* will pursue as goals for all students. In addition, *USA* has established an overall academic objective. The overall academic objective of *Uncharted Shores Academy* will be to perform at comparable rates to students at the Del Norte County Unified District Schools. *Uncharted Shores* has established additional goals and measures for student achievement as indicated in the following graph:

YEAR	API	Percent Proficient/Adv English Language Arts	Percent Proficient/Adv Math
2013	655	33%	30%
2014	666	37%	35%
2015	677	41%	40%
2016	688	45%	45%
2017	700	50%	50%
Fall 2016	reviewed	renegotiated for the following term	Renegotiated for the following term

Additionally, *Uncharted Shores Academy* will monitor student academic growth within all achievement bands, from far below basic to advanced, to determine the overall student achievement for the year.

Student Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation
<p>Students will take <i>responsibility</i> for their own learning.</p>	<p>Objective: Student Goal Records Completion of student projects Checklists of Student Work Student research journals</p> <p>Subjective: Student/Teacher conferences Portfolios Learning logs</p>
<p>Students will develop <i>critical thinking skills</i> which will help them solve math problems, comprehend difficult reading selections, write persuasive essays, comprehend and critically interpret historical sources, demonstrate scientific principles, and make wise choices.</p>	<p>Objective: State mandated tests Teacher Administered Tests Portfolios of Student Work Rubrics and Scoring Guides</p> <p>Subjective: Reader/Writer Interviews Student/Teacher conferences Presentation of projects Student Essays</p>
<p>Students will successfully carry out an <i>investigation</i> of personal interest, including inquiry research on a subject of interest, utilizing historical and scientific research and following the scientific method as needed.</p>	<p>Objective: Student research journals Demonstrations Lab Reports Science Projects Research Papers</p> <p>Subjective: Student/Teacher conferences Learning logs</p>
<p>Students will demonstrate strong <i>presentation skills</i> in multiple forms of expression (e.g. written, oral, multimedia, creative arts), with communication skills appropriate to the audience and setting.</p>	<p>Objective: Student Presentations Rubrics and Scoring Guides</p> <p>Subjective: Student/Teacher conferences Anecdotal records Teacher Observations Young Author's Conference</p>
<p>Students will display <i>attitudes, values, and character traits</i> which will enable them to be positive adults, assets to their community, and continue with their learning throughout their lives.</p>	<p>Objective: Portfolio documenting the successful identification, implementation, and progress with student goals, behavior plans, and/or cooperative learning experiences.</p> <p>Subjective: Teacher observations Anecdotal records Student Self-Evaluations Student reflections</p>

IV. Governance Structure

A. Nonprofit Benefit Corporation

Uncharted Shores Academy is a directly funded independent charter school and will be operated as a California Public Benefit (nonprofit) Corporation, pursuant to California law. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will operate autonomously from the District, with the exception of the supervisory oversight as required by statute and other contracted services as negotiated between the District and the Charter School. Pursuant to California Education Code Section 47604©, the District shall not be liable for the debts and obligations of *Uncharted Shores Academy* or claims arising from the performance of acts, errors, or omissions by the charter school as long as the District has complied with all oversight responsibilities as required by law. *Uncharted Shores Academy* is incorporated as a nonprofit benefit corporation (see Articles of Incorporation – appendix C), and the governance of *Uncharted Shores Academy* is delegated to the USA Governing Board. However, upon renewal of the charter, the title of the governing board will be changed from *Uncharted Shores Academy (USA) Governing Board* to *Unified Shores Academies Charter School District (USACSD) Governing Board*, and USA will be governed by the new *Unified Shores Academies Charter School District Governing Board* (see USA Bylaws – Appendix E).

B. Governing Board

Uncharted Shores Academy shall be governed by the five to nine member *Unified Shores Academies Charter School District (USACSD) Governing Board*, which shall hire the Executive Director to direct *Uncharted Shores Academy*. The complete organizational chart of the school is included in Appendix F. A thorough description of the governing board policies and procedures is delineated in the *USA Policies and Procedures (Appendix D)* and in the *USA Bylaws (Appendix E)*.

C. The Executive Director

The Executive Director will execute the school's mission, direct the school's vision, and ensure that the implementation of the school's curriculum maximizes student learning experiences. He/She must report directly to the *Unified Shores Academies Governing Board*, and is responsible for the orderly operation of the school as well as the supervision of all employees in the school.

The Executive Director shall perform tasks as directed by the *Unified Shores Academies Governing Board* and is required to oversee the tasks listed in Appendix G. These tasks, with the exception of personnel matters, may be delegated or contracted out, as approved by the Governing Board, to another administrator, another employee of the school, or to a third party provider. Personnel will be retained as the responsibility of the Executive Director, although the Director may request another administrator assist with personnel observations, evaluations, recordkeeping, and decisions involving personnel.

D. Parental Involvement

Parents will be involved in the governance of the school as representatives to the board, as described in the *USA Bylaws (Appendix E)*.

V. Human Resources

A. Qualifications of School Employees

The qualifications for all administrative staff of Uncharted Shores Academy shall be determined by the Board of Directors. Notwithstanding, the executive director of *Unified Shores Academies Charter School District* shall hold, at a minimum, a Masters Degree in teaching, education, curriculum development, or a related field. The director must have had a minimum of ten years of teaching experience and be knowledgeable about a variety of learning methods. Additional qualifications shall be determined by the *USACSD Governing Board*.

Additional directors or other administrative staff shall be hired as determined by the Governing Board and may be assigned duties of the director, including a sharing of all the responsibilities of the executive educational director on an equal basis. Administrative staff positions shall be re-evaluated on a yearly basis and adjusted according to current needs and requirements.

All teachers hired by *Uncharted Shores Academy* must hold valid California teaching credential(s), with the exception of teachers of specific non-academic classes as allowed by charter law. Credentialed teachers shall be considered “highly qualified teachers” under the No Child Left Behind Act or be working towards attaining the highly qualified status. Furthermore, the teachers hired by *Uncharted Shores Academy* will have previous experience with alternative learning methods or exhibit a desire to complete training in interactive, explorative learning.

All teachers will be required to attend professional development workshops and/or seminars to assist them in acquiring or improving the skills needed to instruct using the teaching methods employed by the school. Self-evaluations, peer evaluations, and administrator evaluations concerning teacher progress and aptitude will be made yearly and any plans for remediation, coaching, mentoring, or improvement will be made in writing. Teachers must demonstrate growth or proficiency in using interactive learning methods and professionalism in completing required responsibilities in order to qualify for merit raises. Teachers who show a pattern of ineptitude or a disregard for professional standards of conduct may be terminated.

The administrative assistant and other non-certificated support staff will have professional experience in their field and/or demonstrate the capacity to work successfully in the field for which they are hired. Needed services may be contracted out to a third party provider rather than hire an employee if the board determines this to be beneficial financially. Specific qualifications for any of the full-time, part-time, or temporary administrative staff shall be determined by the *Unified Shores Academies Governing Board*.

B. Compensation and Benefits; Retirement Systems

Uncharted Shores Academy will strive to provide competitive employee compensation in order to attract high quality candidates with the necessary skills and

experience. Full time certificated staff members of the charter school will be covered by the State Teachers' Retirement System. Appropriate health coverage may be provided to certificated full time employees as well. All employees will be covered by workers compensation and unemployment insurance. The administrative assistant of *Uncharted Shores Academy* or the contracted agency handling business finances for *Uncharted Shores Academy*, will make arrangements to ensure that the required retirement and health coverage is maintained for each appropriate employee, and forward any payroll deductions and related data to the appropriate agency.

C. Employee Representation / Collective Bargaining

Uncharted Shores Academy shall be deemed the exclusive public school employer of the employees of the charter school for the purposes of the Educational Employee Relations Act. Employees will, as a group, have the right to choose to form their own bargaining group or complete contract negotiations as independent employees. A complete description of employee policies and procedures may be found in the *USA Employee Manual (Appendix H)*.

D. Teacher Hiring and Retention

Every effort will be made to attract, hire, and retain high quality teachers who meet the NCLB requirements as well as possess the experience, education, and qualifications which would contribute to the expectations consistent with the educational philosophy of *Uncharted Shores Academy*. As needed, advertisement for teaching positions will be made at the Del Norte County Office of Education, California universities and colleges, charter organizations, the local newspaper, and/or by any other appropriate means. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will endeavor to offer pay and benefits competitive with the district as well as training and merit raises if funds allow to attain the level of competency expected.

E. Health and Safety

Uncharted Shores Academy will maintain the following state regulations related to the health and safety of pupils and staff:

- The requirement that each employee of the school furnish a criminal record summary as described in the Education Code.
- Requirement that all employees submit to a criminal background check as required by Education Code.
- Requirement for all staff to have current TB screening.
- A requirement that all enrolling students and staff provide records documenting immunizations to the extent required for enrollment in other county public schools or sign a waiver concerning such immunizations.
- Development and implementation of a student safety plan that will be shared with students, staff and parents.
- Training for staff relating to preventing contact with blood-borne pathogens.
- Requirement that at least one instructional and/or administrative staff receive training in emergency response in each school site building.
- Implementation of a policy establishing that the school functions as a drug, alcohol, and tobacco free workplace.

F. Dispute Resolution

The staff of *Uncharted Shores Academy*, the *Unified Shores Academies* governing board, the Del Norte County Office of Education Superintendent, and the Board of the Del Norte County Office of Education agree to attempt to resolve all disputes regarding this Charter, including audit disputes, pursuant to the terms of this section. All shall refrain from public commentary regarding any disputes until the matter has progressed through the dispute process.

In the event that *USA* and DNCOE/DNUSD have disputes regarding the terms of this charter or any other issue, all parties agree to first frame the issue in written form and follow the formal communication procedures outlined in this document. The President of the *USA Board*, along with the Executive Director of *Uncharted Shores Academy*, and the Superintendent of the Del Norte Unified School District/Del Norte County Office of Education agree to meet informally and attempt to resolve the dispute. If this joint meeting fails to resolve the dispute, all parties agree to jointly identify a neutral, third party mediator. The format of the mediation session shall be developed jointly by the Del Norte County Office of Education Superintendent and the Uncharted Shores Academy Executive Director, and shall incorporate informal rules of evidence and procedure unless both parties agree otherwise. The findings or recommendations of the mediator shall be non-binding, unless the *Uncharted Shores Academy Board* and the governing board of the Del Norte School District/Del Norte County Office of Education jointly agree to bind themselves.

Disputes arising from within the school, including all disputes among and between students, staff, parents, volunteers, advisors, partner organizations and the *Uncharted Shores Academy* shall be resolved pursuant to policies and processes developed by the USA board.

DNCOE shall not intervene in any such internal disputes without the consent of the *USA Board* and shall refer any complaints or reports regarding such disputes in writing to the *USA Board* for resolution. DNCOE agrees not to intervene or become involved in the dispute unless the dispute has given DNCOE reasonable cause to believe that a violation of this charter or related laws or agreements has occurred, or unless the *USA Board* has requested the district to intervene in the dispute.

VI. Student Admissions, Attendance, and Suspension/Expulsion

A. Student Admission Policies and Procedures

Uncharted Shores Academy actively recruits a diverse student population from Del Norte County who understand and value the school's mission and are committed to the school's instructional and operational philosophy. Application for admission to the school is open to any eligible resident of the State of California and Del Norte County. Prospective students and their parents or guardians will be briefed regarding the school's student-related policies and parent expectations. The school will establish an annual recruiting and admissions cycle, which shall include reasonable time for all of the following: (1) outreach and marketing, (2) orientation sessions for parents and students, (3) an admissions application period, (4) an admissions lottery, if necessary, and (5) enrollment.

B. Lottery Process

If there are not enough spaces available to accommodate all the students who have applied for enrollment, a lottery will be held as required by state regulations to determine which students will gain admittance. Siblings of currently enrolled students will be given first preference to fill the vacancies before a lottery of additional students.

C. Reassignment of Students

Students who do not exhibit success while enrolled in *Uncharted Shores Academy* will be offered additional resources, such as tutoring and/or structured student assignments. A "Student Study Team" consisting of parent, teacher, administrator, student, and any other interested parties who may be connected with the student's success will be convened to determine which resources would be applicable to the particular student. A student who continues to exhibit difficulty in attaining the standards expected may be referred to other educational options which may be better suited to his/her needs.

D. Non-Discrimination Clause

The application process for *Uncharted Shores Academy* is open to all students in grades K-8. The school is nonsectarian and nondiscriminatory in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations, does not charge tuition, and does not discriminate against any person on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability as set forth in Section 47605(d)(1) of the Education Code. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will implement a student recruitment strategy that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, various elements or strategies to ensure a racial and ethnic balance among students that is reflective of the service area.

E. Public School Attendance Alternatives

Students who opt not to attend the charter school may attend other district schools or pursue an inter-district transfer in accordance with existing enrollment and transfer policies of Del Norte County Unified School District. The parent or guardian of each student enrolled in the charter school will be informed that the students have no right to admission in any particular school as a consequence of enrollment in the charter school, except to the extent that such a right is extended by the local education agency.

F. Suspension/Expulsion Procedures

Uncharted Shores Academy shall follow written policies and procedures related to discipline as established by the *USA Governing Board*. All staff, students, and parents/guardians shall be given written notice of this charter school's policies, due process rights and procedures related to discipline in the *Uncharted Shores Academy Parent Handbook (Appendix I)* which will be distributed at the time of enrollment. All discipline procedures will follow due process guidelines. Students and their parents shall be so notified in the Parent Handbook. Parents will be expected to work closely with *Uncharted Shores Academy* staff to reinforce the school rules and behavioral expectations.

Students shall be recommended for suspension or expulsion in accordance with USA Board Policy upon determination that the student has committed one of the acts enumerated in 48900 et seq. and 48915 of the Education Code while on school district property or engaging in school related events or in the presence of their credentialed teacher while any activities related to home schooling are being conducted in the student's home. The Board appointed panel shall conduct expulsion hearings and make recommendations to the *Uncharted Shores Academy* Executive Director.

These procedures will be amended as required by law to protect the rights of students with disabilities or exceptional needs. This includes, but is not limited to, convening an individual educational plan team if a suspension lasts beyond five days or in the event that expulsion is recommended. The school will notify the county of any expulsions and will include suspension and expulsion data in its annual performance report.

G. Confidentiality Clause

Confidentiality of all student records and information will be maintained according to the Federal Right To Privacy (FERPA) regulations, as follows:

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):

- School officials with legitimate educational interest;
- Other schools to which a student is transferring;
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
- Accrediting organizations;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, USA will request permission for disclosures on the application for admission and not disclose directory information without parent consent. USA will notify parents through the Parent Handbook of their rights under FERPA, and will review these rights annually in a notice sent home with the students at the beginning of each year.

VII. Financial Planning, Reporting, and Accountability

A. Budget

Budget development will be the responsibility of the USA Executive Director and presented to the *USA Board* for approval. *USA* will provide documentation on request to demonstrate that the charter school has liquid assets available to operate the school on an ongoing sound financial basis. It shall be the goal to maintain a reserve of 3% of the annual operating budget as contingency.

B. Financial Reporting

Uncharted Shores Academy will maintain fiscally responsible systems and processes to keep track of financial data and compile information in the prescribed formats needed. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will transmit a copy of its annual, independent, financial audit report for the preceding fiscal year to Del Norte County Office of Education, the State Controller, the County Superintendent of Del Norte County Office of Education, and the State Department of Education by December 15 of each year, unless an extension has been granted. Financial management will be in accordance with State Law and the GAAP standards. Administration of the funds will be under direction of the *Unified Shores Academies Governing Board*. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will be subject to financial examinations and audits as determined by the state auditor, including annual audits for legal and fiscal compliance.

Del Norte County Office of Education agrees to receive and review the annual fiscal and programmatic audit and annual performance report and to perform the annual site visit and other accountability policies and procedures mutually agreed upon with *Uncharted Shores Academy*. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will provide financial reports as required by law to Del Norte County Office Of Education. Deadlines for the reports are detailed in the **MOU (Appendix B)**

C. Insurance

Uncharted Shores Academy will maintain general liability, property, errors and omissions, workers compensation and other necessary insurance of the type and in the amounts required for an enterprise of similar purpose and circumstance. A complete assessment of potential liability will be made with measures taken to mitigate and/or insure against loss. The insurance will be secured from an insurer approved by the State of California and shall be within the limits required by law and within the limits appropriate for schools of similar size and configuration.

D. Administrative Services

Uncharted Shores Academy will be constituted as a California Public Benefit (nonprofit) Corporation and will be governed by a Governing Board, as described within the Governance section of this charter. *Uncharted Shores Academy* elects to receive all state and federal funding directly, including but not limited to general purpose entitlement and the categorical block grant computed pursuant to Section 47633 and 47634, and any other state and federal categorical aid and lottery funds. Del Norte County Office of Education shall pay to *Uncharted Shores Academy* its fair share of any operational funds to which it is eligible that cannot be received directly, including but not limited to: Forest Reserve Revenue, Sales and Use Taxes, Parcel Taxes, and property taxes.

A school executive director will administer the school under the policies adopted by the school's board. The school director will be the employee of and serve at the discretion of the *USA Board*. The school anticipates that it will provide or procure most of its own administrative services, independent of the district. These include, but will not be limited to, financial management, personnel, instructional programs development, and payroll services. *Uncharted Shores Academy* may contract some services from the district, such as Special Education Services, for which the specific terms will be determined through an annual memorandum of understanding. In addition, the district will be required by law to provide oversight and performance monitoring services, including monitoring school and student performance data, reviewing the school's audit reports, performing annual site visits, engaging in any necessary dispute resolution processes, and considering charter amendment and renewal requests.

E. Facilities

Uncharted Shores Academy will be responsible for obtaining a facility which is safe, habitable, and well suited for its educational purpose. Facility space may be contracted through the district with DNUSD approval.

F. Transportation

Uncharted Shores Academy will develop a transportation plan based on student needs. Most transportation will be arranged by parents, with the school assisting with setting up car pooling options. Other transportation plans will be addressed as needed.

G. School Management Contracts

All contracts for equipment and services, including consulting services, special education services, leases, improvements, real property purchases, and insurance requirements related to the management of *Uncharted Shores Academy* will be in compliance with federal and state mandates appropriate to charter schools and approved by the USA Governing Board.

H. Audits

The *USA Governing Board* will oversee the selection of an independent auditor and the completion of an annual audit or review of the school's financial affairs. Auditors will be changed no less frequently than every 6 years as required by law. The audit will verify the accuracy of the school's financial statements, attendance and enrollment accounting practices, and review the school's internal controls. The audit or review will be conducted in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles applicable to the school. To the extent required under applicable federal law, the audit or review scope will be expanded to include items and processes specified in any applicable Office of Management and Budget Circulars. The annual audit or review will be completed each year and a copy of the finding will be forwarded as required to the chief financial officer of the chartering agency, the State Controller's Office, the County Office of Education and the California Department of Education. All audits or reviews will follow all mandated state and federal requirements.

The USA Executive Director will review any noted exceptions or deficiencies and report to the *Unified Shores Academies Charter School District Board* with recommendations for resolution. The *Unified Shores Schools Association Board* will report to the Del Norte County Office of Education the result of any audit and the resolution of any audit exceptions and deficiencies. Any disputes regarding the resolution of audit exceptions and deficiencies will be referred to the dispute resolution process contained in this charter and will ultimately be resolved to the satisfaction of the chartering entity.

The Executive Director of USA and the Superintendent of Del Norte County Office of Education agree to jointly develop the content, evaluation criteria, timelines, and process for an annual performance report. USA and Del Norte County Office of Education will jointly develop an annual site visitation process and protocols to enable the sponsor to gather information needed to confirm the school's performance and compliance with the terms of this charter.

I. Closure Protocol

In the event that *Uncharted Shores Academy* closes, the assets of the school will be transferred to the Del Norte County Office of Education, another charter school, another non-profit organization, or other appropriate entity in accordance with the asset disposition provisions of the school's bylaws. The USA administrative staff under the direction of the USA Governing Board will attend to enumerating and disposing of the assets and liabilities as directed in the bylaws, and the *USA Governing Board* treasurer shall ensure that a final audit of the school's assets and liabilities is performed.

At the end of each school term, and upon graduation, parents or guardians of students will be provided with a printed or electronic log of their student's academic progress at the school, along with other relevant information. Thus, in the event of a school closure, parents and students will possess an independent copy of potentially necessary pupil records. The *USA Governing Board* may also provide for the transfer of such records to Del Norte County Office of Education or other responsible and willing school district, county office of education or other qualified entity, if available, at the time the school closes. School resources allowing, former charter school staff may be retained for a period of designated weeks or months after school closure to ensure that student records are transferred to the families and/or appropriate agencies. In the event that no such willing repository is available, the records shall be disposed of or destroyed in a fashion that will ensure confidentiality of the records.

J. Revocation

If the Board of Del Norte County Office of Education believes it has cause to revoke this charter, they agree to notify *USA Board* in writing and to follow the dispute procedures outlined in this document. DNUSD shall note the specific reasons for which the charter may be revoked and grant the school reasonable time to respond to the notice and take appropriate corrective action, unless the alleged violation presents an immediate threat to health or safety.

This charter may be revoked by the Del Norte County Office of Education if they determine the charter school did any of the following:

- ▶ Committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in this charter petition.
- ▶ Failed to pursue any of the pupil learning objectives identified in this charter petition.
- ▶ Failed to meet the standards of generally accepted accounting procedures of fiscal management.
- ▶ Violated any provision of law.

K. Term of The Charter

The duration of the charter will be five years, beginning July 1, 2012, and continuing until June 30, 2017. The Del Norte County Office of Education and *Uncharted Shores Academy* agree to work together to accomplish all tasks necessary to fully implement this charter. Renewal of the charter shall be in accordance with the standards set forth in Education Code Section 47605. *Uncharted Shores Academy* shall submit to Del Norte County Office of Education a petition for renewal by January 31st of the year the charter is scheduled to expire.

L. Modifications of the Charter/Severability/Communication

Amendments to this charter may be made by the *Uncharted Shores Academies Governing Board*. Notification will be given to Del Norte County Office of Education in a timely, good faith fashion. Material revisions and amendments shall be made pursuant to the standards, criteria, and timelines in Education Code Section 47605.

The terms of this charter contract are severable. In the event that any of the provisions are determined to be unenforceable or invalid for any reason, the remainder of the charter shall remain in effect, unless mutually agreed otherwise by Del Norte County Office of Education and *Uncharted Shores Academy*. *Uncharted Shores Academy* and Del Norte County Office of Education agree to meet to discuss and resolve any issues or differences relating to invalidated provisions in a timely, good faith fashion.

M. Charter Appendices

The appendices are not a material part of this charter document and may be revised, updated, or deleted at any time by the *USA Governing Board*.

VIII. Impact on the Charter Authorizer

The establishment of *Uncharted Shores Academy* has had a positive effect upon education in Del Norte County. It has enhanced parental choice in education and provided the parents and students within the attendance area with another quality educational option for K-8 students.

Uncharted Shores Academy has proved to be a valuable alternative for the small, but persistent, population of students who need an interactive learning environment, as well as provided an avenue for high excelling students to study subjects in more depth. Parents of home-schooled children have found that the teacher resources and classes provide the support they need to succeed in implementing explorative learning at home, and the site-based instruction has proved to be a boon to those with multiple home-schooled children. *Uncharted Shores Academy* has attracted students who were previously not schooling with the district public schools as well as provided a positive mode of education for students with alternative styles of learning.

Additionally, *Uncharted Shores Academy* has proved to be a positive asset to the community at large. Professional people often investigate school choices when considering whether to move to our area, and this charter has offered a unique choice for educating children, adding to the retention of these people. We have already attracted professional families from both New York and Washington State who were considering a move to our community. Additionally, community resources are part of the education of our students, so we are actively promoting community resources. The final plus for the community is the role our school has in preparing students with the education they need to be successful citizens.

Therefore, the positive impact on the chartering authorizer and surrounding community should offset the additional time and resources the authorizers must expend to oversee the school. *Uncharted Shores Academy* adds educational choice within the county, fills an alternative instructional need for a specific population of students, assists homeschooling students in reaching their state proficiency goals, attracts students currently not with the district, and promotes the community. It has been an asset, not a liability, to our authorizer, Del Norte County Office of Education.

APPENDICES

- A. Index of required elements of the charter document**
- B. DNCOE/USA MOU 2010 -2012**
- C. USA Articles of Incorporation**
- D. USA Policies and Procedures**
- E. USA Bylaws**
- F. Organizational Chart**
- G. Duties of Executive Director and USA Governing Board**
- H. USA Employee Handbook for 2011-2012**
- I. USA Parent Handbook for 2011-2012**