

# UNCHARTED SHORES ACADEMY



## CHARTER DOCUMENT

5-13-21

Crescent City, California

**Charting New Educational Waters**

main office

330 E Street, Crescent City, CA 95532

(707) 464-9828

[www.shoresacademy.com](http://www.shoresacademy.com)

Charter Renewal Petition for the July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2026 Term

# *Uncharted Shores Academy*

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## I. Founding of the School

*Uncharted Shores Academy* (USA) began with a group of homeschooling parents who wanted more support and opportunities offered to their children than was currently instituted by the independent study schools in operation in Del Norte County. 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. Studies showing the effectiveness of explorative education using project-based learning were researched during Ms. Rouge's studies while obtaining 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](http://www.shoresacademy.com)).

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** in exploring and extending the concepts. 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 assist the student in building **respect** for themselves, others, and their own education.

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 in order to produce responsible, resourceful, respectful citizens of tomorrow.

## II. Educational Philosophy and Program

### A. Mission

In every society, the basic purpose of education is to be an asset to the society in which he/she lives, and education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is no exception. The mission of *Uncharted Shores Academy* is to promote a learning environment which will enable students to succeed as productive, contributing members to our society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We believe that if our students can learn to be **Respectful, Responsible, and Resourceful**, they will be prepared to succeed as positive members of our global, fast-paced, ever-changing, complicated 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

The most important aspect of education at USA is to influence students to be **respectful** of themselves, others, and the diverse world in which we live in order to become a positive contributing 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 positively with others. USA seeks to create **respectful** adults as we assist our students in building positive life-long learning attitudes, values, and character traits.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 also 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.

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 and presentation skills which will allow students to better understand subject matter and interpret information to 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.

### 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 nurture and 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 grade TK-9 independent study students in Del Norte County, striving to accommodate all Del Norte County students who are interested in the school. The school focuses on a population of 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 offers homestudy, part-day class, and full-day class educational options to students, all centered around an interactive education involving a variety of resources. *USA* strives to maintain a student population balance of racial and ethnic students, special education students, and English learner students which is reflective of the district and county in which we are located. USA will use local demographic data to evaluate whether student demographics are in line with the county demographics, and concentrate outreach on under-represented groups if needed.

### **D. Educational Program Description**

*Uncharted Shores Academy* offers a program of alternative learning for Del Norte County TK-9 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 instructional assistants offer learning station studies designed to provide the framework for interactive, cross-age, integrated-subjects thematic studies. State standards are addressed (including Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, History-Social Science Framework, and English Language Development Standards) 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 Education Code section 47605(d)(1), *Uncharted Shores Academy* is legally required to “meet all statewide 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](http://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, 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. Data collected for the annual School Accountability Report Card will also be used for evaluation of the school's progress in meeting the needs of the students.

The Eight State Priorities, and how the school will align the educational program with these priorities, will be addressed in the Local Control and Accountability Plan, which will be updated annually.

#### **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 which include language arts, math, social science, science, health, art, music, character training, and technology. Physical education may take place during PE classes, after school sports, in the community, or at home.

*USA* is structured according to theories of brain development in children. Students are divided into age appropriate levels, called "educational ports," which coincides with children's levels of cognitive reasoning. Student's placement in the appropriate educational port is based on both social and academic readiness. 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."

#### **G. Special Student Populations**

*Uncharted Shores Academy* improves learning for *low achieving students*, as many of these students have alternate learning styles and adapt well to interactive

learning but find it difficult to learn in the traditional textbook-based classroom. *Uncharted Shores Academy* also appeals to *high achieving students*, as they benefit from the independent student inquiry process and have the opportunity to delve into a deeper understanding of the academic subjects. Both classifications of low achieving and high achieving students are based on test scores, grades, and teacher assessments. English learners are incorporated into a full-immersion model of learning and 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. There are many student populations who are not exhibiting success or working to their full potential in the current schools but 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 Learners**

The Home Language Survey is a part of the enrollment packet at *Uncharted Shores Academy* and ELPAC 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 Learners, and bilingual materials will be sought for each student as appropriate. The use of manipulatives and cooperative groups will assist with EL 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* 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. A Memorandum of Understanding between Del Norte School District and *Uncharted Shores Academy* will be established to spell out in detail the responsibilities for provision of special education services, the cost of those services to the charter school, and the manner in which special education funding will flow to the students of the charter school.

*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 Education Improvement Act (“IDEA”). *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. A student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment, is eligible for protections under Section 504. The facilities to be utilized by the school shall be accessible for all students with disabilities.

For individuals with special needs who wish to enroll, *Uncharted Shores Academy* will follow Education Code Section 51745(c), which states: “*An individual with exceptional needs, as defined in Section 56026, shall not 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.*”

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 his/her school of

residence. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will provide special education services for those students whose IEP team deems the school to be an appropriate placement.

*Uncharted Shores Academy* will follow state mandates in identifying students who may qualify for special education services and *Uncharted Shores Academy* will comply with the federal and state law regulations and timelines for evaluating those students. If a student is found to have a disability under either Ed Code Section 56026 or the Federal Rehabilitation Act 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 compliance with Individualized Education Programs and Section 504 plans. All parents, guardians, teachers, and other participants in the student's education, including tutors, will be supplied with a copy of the student's goals and accommodations. A copy of the IEP or 504 plan will be retained in the principal's special education file and reviewed at least once per year to determine the appropriateness of the plan, needed modifications to the plan, and continued eligibility.

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* 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. A student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment is eligible for protections under Section 504. Students and parents will consult with the special education resource teacher in planning a program providing the least restrictive environment using home, classroom, and community resources as applicable. All activities, events, programs, and field trips offered by the school will be available to special needs students, and accommodations made as per a student's IEP or 504 to ensure that he/she can participate. The facilities to be utilized by the school shall be accessible for all students with disabilities.

*Uncharted Shores Academy* operates a full-inclusion program model in all classes that special needs students choose to attend. As with all other USA students, special needs students will be placed in classes according to ability rather than grade. As per the *Planned Educational Program Master Agreement* which parents and students must both sign to be enrolled per independent study law, "*The Onshore (classroom based) Uncharted Shores Academy option is a privilege and will only be available to those students who show by their behavior and effort that they can benefit from this option. Students who are unable or*

*unwilling to use their classroom time appropriately and productively will be placed in the Uncharted Shores Academy Offshore Program.”* The special education IEP will reflect student placement in USA as an independent study school and agree that placement as a homestudy student is an appropriate placement. Participation in classes is an optional benefit, not the default mode of instruction.

### **III. 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 graduate tie in with our mission statement: to produce responsible, respectful, resourceful citizens. 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 the core subjects of math, language arts, social science, and science; 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, assessment 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 state testing scores, and reevaluate the programs and methods used for student learning accordingly. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will pursue state test scores equivalent to or surpassing other schools in Del Norte County. The Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), which delineates how *Uncharted Shores Academy* addresses the state priorities, will be evaluated each year and the student program adjusted as needed. Specific goals are addressed in the LCAP, which will be updated annually as indicated for charter schools. The goals for the state priorities will be modified to align to grade levels served at *Uncharted Shores Academy*, and to reflect only the statutory requirements explicitly applicable to charter schools in the Education Code. Changes in the LCAP goals and actions/services for charter schools that result from the annual update process do not necessarily constitute a material revision to the school’s charter petition.

The table on the next page delineates the four basic outcomes which *Uncharted Shores Academy* expects of students by the time they are ready to graduate, and which *Uncharted Shores Academy* will pursue as goals for all students. These goals are included as applicable in the LCAP, and applicable state indicators are listed in bold on the chart on the next page as quantitative methods of evaluation.

STUDENT OUTCOMES	METHOD OF EVALUATION
<p>Students will display <i>respect through the demonstration of 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><b>Quantitative:</b> Portfolio documenting the successful identification, implementation, and progress with student goals, behavior plans, and/or cooperative learning experiences.</p> <p><b>Suspension rates.</b> <b>Parent Survey</b></p> <p><b>Qualitative:</b> Teacher observations Anecdotal records Student reflections</p>
<p>Students will take <i>responsibility</i> for their own learning.</p>	<p><b>Quantitative:</b> Student Goal Records Completion of student projects Checklists of Student Work <b>Attendance Rates</b></p> <p><b>Qualitative:</b> Student/Teacher conferences Portfolios, Journals Learning logs</p>
<p>Students will develop <i>critical thinking skills and become resourceful in the integration of information</i>, which will help them solve math problems, comprehend difficult reading selections, write persuasive essays, comprehend and critically interpret historical sources, demonstrate scientific principles, conduct investigations, and make wise choices.</p>	<p><b>Quantitative:</b> <b>State Academic tests</b> Teacher Administered Tests Portfolios of Student Work Rubrics and Scoring Guides</p> <p><b>Qualitative:</b> Reader/Writer Interviews Student/Teacher conferences Presentation of work products Student Essays, Papers</p>
<p>Students will demonstrate the culmination of project products using strong <i>presentation skills</i> in multiple forms of expression (e.g. written, oral, multimedia, creative arts), using <b>communication skills</b> which engage the audience and are appropriate to the audience and setting.</p>	<p><b>Quantitative:</b> Rubrics and Scoring Guides</p> <p><b>Qualitative:</b> Student/Teacher conferences Anecdotal records Teacher Observations Student self-reflection</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* is incorporated as a nonprofit benefit corporation, and the governance of *Uncharted Shores Academy* is delegated to the *USA* Governing Board. Pursuant to California Education Code Section 47604(d), 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* 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, as listed in a Memorandum of Understanding. At this time, *Uncharted Shores Academy* intends to remain a public school of Del Norte Unified School District (DNUSD) for purposes of Special Education, as delineated in Section II, part G.3, of this document.

### **B. Governing Board**

*Uncharted Shores Academy* shall be governed by the five to seven member *Uncharted Shores Academy* Governing Board, which shall hire the Executive Director to direct *Uncharted Shores Academy*.

### **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 *Uncharted Shores Academy* Governing Board, and is responsible for the orderly operation of the school as well as the supervision of all employees in the school.

### **D. Parental Involvement**

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

## **V. Human Resources**

### **A. Qualifications of School Employees**

The qualifications for all administrative staff of *Uncharted Shores Academy* will be determined by the Board of Directors. Notwithstanding, the Executive Director of *Uncharted Shores Academy Charter School District* will hold, at a minimum, a Masters Degree in teaching, education, curriculum development, or school administration. Additional qualifications shall be determined by the *Uncharted Shores Academy* Governing Board.

Additional directors or other administrative staff may 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 will be re-evaluated on a yearly basis and adjusted according to current needs and requirements.

All teachers hired by *Uncharted Shores Academy* must hold the Commission on Teacher Credentialing certificate, permit, or other document required for the teacher's certificated assignment. Furthermore, *Uncharted Shores Academy* will seek teachers who have previous experience with alternative learning methods or exhibit a desire to complete training in interactive, explorative, project-based 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 practically and financially. Specific qualifications for any of the full-time, part-time, or temporary administrative staff shall be determined by the *Uncharted Shores Academy* 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. Certificated staff members of the charter school will be members of the State Teachers' Retirement System. Non-certificated employees may contribute to a retirement fund. Appropriate health coverage will be provided to all full-time employees. Employees will be covered by workers compensation and unemployment insurance.

## **C. Employee Representation / Collective Bargaining**

*Uncharted Shores Academy* declares that it 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.

#### **D. Teacher Hiring and Retention**

Every effort will be made to attract, hire, and retain high quality teachers who meet the credentialing 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 may be made through the Del Norte Unified School District, 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, as funds allow, to attain the level of competency expected.

#### **E. Health and Safety**

*Uncharted Shores Academy* will maintain all California regulations required for public charter schools related to the health and safety of pupils and staff.

#### **F. Dispute Resolution**

The staff of *Uncharted Shores Academy*, the *Uncharted Shores Academy Governing Board*, the Del Norte Unified School District Superintendent, and the Board of the Del Norte Unified School District 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 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 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 Unified School District 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 Unified School District 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.

DNUSD 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. DNUSD agrees not to intervene or become involved in the dispute unless the dispute has given DNUSD 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 Admission, 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.

Admission preferences shall not require mandatory parental volunteer hours as a criterion for admission or continued enrollment. *Uncharted Shores Academy* shall not discourage a pupil from enrolling or seeking to enroll in the charter school for any reason, including, but not limited to, academic performance or because the pupil exhibits any of the characteristics listed in Education Code Section 47605(e)(2)(B)(iii). Similarly, *Uncharted Shores Academy* shall not encourage a pupil currently attending the Charter School to disenroll or transfer to another school for any reason, including, but not limited to the academic performance of the pupil or because the pupil exhibits any of the characteristics described in Education Code Section 47605(e)(2)(B)(iii). *Uncharted Shores Academy* shall post a notice developed by the CDE on the Charter School website, outlining these requirements and make this notice available to parents.

### **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 law 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* may 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. *Uncharted Shores Academy* may conduct an evaluation of a student who continues to exhibit difficulty in attaining the standards expected. .

#### **D. Non-Discrimination Clause**

The application process for *Uncharted Shores Academy* is open to all students in the grades served by the school that year. 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 protected classes, as set forth in Section 47605(e)(1) of the Education Code. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will implement a student recruitment strategy that includes strategies to ensure a racial and ethnic, special education, and English Learn balance among students that is reflective of the territorial jurisdiction of the District.

#### **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* which will be distributed at the time of enrollment. All discipline and involuntary removal 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 will 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 the USA Policy while on USA 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 shall conduct expulsion

hearings in accordance with referrals from the *Uncharted Shores Academy* Principal, who will make recommendations for expulsion to the USA Board. The USA Board will make the final decision for expulsion.

USA will follow the procedures as required by law to protect the rights of students with disabilities or exceptional needs. This includes, but is not limited to, convening a manifestation determination review when required. 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 Family Educational Rights And Privacy Act (“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 for 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 5% 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 be subject to financial examinations and audits as determined by the state auditor, including annual audits for legal and fiscal compliance. *Uncharted Shores Academy* will transmit a copy of its annual, independent, financial audit report conducted by a state-approved independent auditor for the preceding fiscal year to Del Norte Unified School District, the State Controller, the Superintendent of Del Norte Unified School District, and the California 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. Audit deficiencies and exceptions will be reviewed by the *Uncharted Shores Academy Governing Board* and rectified by the administrative staff prior to the next audit. Administration of the funds will be under direction of the *Uncharted Shores Academy Governing Board*.

Del Norte Unified School District 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 Unified School District.

### **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 the local control funding formula, and any other state and federal categorical aid and lottery funds. Del Norte County 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 executive 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, for which the specific terms will be determined through an annual memorandum of understanding. In addition, the DNUSD 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 in accordance with their policies.

## **H. Audits**

The *USA Governing Board* will oversee the selection of an independent financial 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 six (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 *Uncharted Shores Academy Governing Board* with recommendations for resolution. The USA Executive Director will report to the Del Norte Unified School District 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.

## **I. Closure Protocol**

In the event that *Uncharted Shores Academy* closes, the assets of the school will be transferred to the Del Norte Unified School District, 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 Unified School District 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 Unified School District believes it has cause to revoke this charter, they agree to first 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 Unified School District 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 shall be five years, beginning July 1, 2021, and continuing until June 30, 2026. The Del Norte Unified School District 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 Sections 47605 and 47607.2(b). *Uncharted Shores Academy* shall submit to Del Norte Unified School District a petition for renewal by March 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Academy Governing Board*. Notification will be given to Del Norte Unified School District in a timely, good faith fashion. Material revisions 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 Unified School District and *Uncharted Shores Academy*. *Uncharted Shores Academy* and Del Norte Unified School District agree to meet to discuss and resolve any issues or differences relating to invalidated provisions in a timely, good faith fashion.

### **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.

*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 Del Norte County, and this charter has offered a unique choice for educating children, adding to the retention of these people. *Uncharted Shores Academy* has already attracted professional families as far away as New York and Washington State who moved into our community. Additionally, community resources are part of the education of USA students, so USA actively promotes and participates in the community. The final plus for the community is the role the 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 Unified School District.