

256F.4 General operating requirements.

1. Within fifteen days after approval of a charter school or innovation zone school application submitted in accordance with [section 256F.3, subsection 2](#), a school board or innovation zone consortium shall report to the department the name of the charter school applicant if applicable, the proposed charter school or innovation zone school location, and the charter school or innovation zone school's projected enrollment.

2. Although a charter school or innovation zone school may elect to comply with one or more provisions of statute or administrative rule, a charter school or innovation zone school is exempt from all statutes and rules applicable to a school, a school board, or a school district, except that the charter school or innovation zone school shall do all of the following:

a. Meet all applicable federal, state, and local health and safety requirements and laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, ancestry, or disability. A charter school or innovation zone school located within the boundaries of a school district subject to court-ordered desegregation at the time the charter school or innovation zone school application is approved shall be subject to the desegregation order unless otherwise specifically provided for in the desegregation order.

b. Operate as a nonsectarian, nonreligious public school.

c. Be free of tuition and application fees to Iowa resident students between the ages of five and twenty-one years.

d. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of [section 29E.1](#) relating to the sharing of records or information, and the communication, collaboration, and coordination of efforts to best serve students, in the same manner as a school district.

e. Be subject to and comply with [chapters 216](#) and [216A](#) relating to civil and human rights.

f. Provide special education services in accordance with [chapter 256B](#).

g. Be subject to the same financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as a school district. The audit shall be consistent with the requirements of [sections 11.6, 11.14, 11.19, 256.9, subsection 20](#), and [section 279.29](#), except to the extent deviations are necessary because of the program at the school. The department, the auditor of state, or the legislative services agency may conduct financial, program, or compliance audits.

h. Be subject to and comply with [chapter 284](#) relating to the student achievement and teacher quality program. A charter school or innovation zone school that complies with [chapter 284](#) shall receive state moneys or be eligible to receive state moneys calculated as provided in [section 257.10, subsections 9 and 10](#), and [section 257.37A](#) as if it did not operate under a charter school or innovation zone school contract.

i. Be subject to and comply with [chapters 20](#) and [279](#) relating to contracts with and discharge of teachers and administrators.

j. Be subject to and comply with the provisions of [chapter 285](#) relating to the transportation of students.

k. Meetings and records of the advisory council are subject to the provisions of [chapters 21](#) and [22](#).

l. Be subject to and comply with [section 279.76](#) relating to physical examinations, health screenings, and formal examinations or surveys designed to assess a student's mental, emotional, or physical health in the same manner as a school district.

m. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of [section 279.78](#) relating to prohibitions and requirements related to the gender identity of students in the same manner as a school district.

n. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of [section 279.79](#) relating to student, employee, and contractor participation in surveys, analyses, activities, or evaluations in the same manner as a school district.

o. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of [section 279.80](#) relating to sexual orientation and gender theory instruction in kindergarten through grade six in the same manner as a school district.

p. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of [section 279.81](#) relating to prohibiting students from serving on any committees that determine, or provide recommendations related to, whether a material in a school library should be removed.

q. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of [section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph “a”](#), relating to the use of instruction related to agriculture to fulfill a portion of the unit requirements related to science in the same manner as a school district.

r. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of [section 256.11, subsection 5, paragraph “e”](#), relating to the use of instruction related to applied sciences, technology, engineering, or manufacturing to fulfill a portion of the unit requirements related to mathematics in the same manner as a school district.

s. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of [section 280.36](#) relating to the establishment of a multidisciplinary school safety assessment team in the same manner as a school district.

t. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of [section 256.11](#) relating to the human growth and development curriculum for grades five through eight and the health curriculum for grades nine through twelve.

u. Be subject to and comply with the requirements of [section 280.9A, subsection 2](#), related to the administration of a civics test in the same manner as a school district.

3. A charter school or innovation zone school shall not discriminate in its student admissions policies or practices on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, or status as a person with a disability. However, a charter school or innovation zone school may limit admission to students who are within a particular range of ages or grade levels or on any other basis that would be legal if initiated by a school district. Enrollment priority shall be given to the siblings of students enrolled in a charter school or innovation zone school.

4. A charter school or innovation zone school shall enroll an eligible resident student who submits a timely application unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building. In this case, students must be accepted by lot. A charter school or innovation zone school may enroll an eligible nonresident student who submits a timely application in accordance with the student admission policy established pursuant to [section 256F.5, subsection 1](#). If the charter school or innovation zone school enrolls an eligible nonresident student, the charter school or innovation zone school shall notify the school district of residence and the sending district not later than March 1 of the preceding school year. Transportation for the student shall be in accordance with [section 282.18, subsection 10](#). The sending district shall make payments to the charter school or innovation zone consortium in the manner required under [section 282.18, subsection 7](#). If the nonresident pupil is also an eligible pupil under [section 261E.6](#), the innovation zone consortium shall pay the tuition reimbursement amount to an eligible postsecondary institution as provided in [section 261E.7](#).

5. A charter school or innovation zone school shall provide instruction for at least the number of days or hours required by [section 279.10, subsection 1](#).

6. Notwithstanding [subsection 2](#), a charter school or innovation zone school shall meet the requirements of [section 256.7, subsection 21](#).

7. a. A charter school shall be considered a part of the school district in which it is located for purposes of state school foundation aid pursuant to [chapter 257](#).

b. Students enrolled in an innovation zone school shall be counted, for state school foundation aid purposes, in the student’s district of residence.

8. A charter school or innovation zone consortium may enter into contracts in accordance with [chapter 26](#).

[2002 Acts, ch 1124, §4, 16; 2002 Acts, ch 1175, §81; 2003 Acts, ch 35, §46, 49; 2003 Acts, ch 79, §2, 7, 8; 2006 Acts, ch 1185, §127; 2010 Acts, ch 1001, §11 – 14; 2013 Acts, ch 121, §80, 85; 2021 Acts, ch 90, §1, 4; 2022 Acts, ch 1036, §2; 2023 Acts, ch 91, §7, 8; 2024 Acts, ch 1164, §3; 2025 Acts, ch 1, §25; 2025 Acts, ch 59, §3; 2025 Acts, ch 103, §3; 2025 Acts, ch 127, §4](#)

Referred to in [§256F.3, 256F.5, 256F.10, 282.9](#)

See Code editor’s note on simple harmonization at the beginning of this Code volume

Subsection 2, paragraph a amended

Subsection 2, NEW paragraph d and former paragraphs d – m redesignated as e – n

Subsection 2, former paragraph n amended and redesignated as o

Subsection 2, former paragraphs o – q redesignated as p – r

Subsection 2, NEW paragraphs s, t, and u