

**Focus Academy Charter School
CSRB Second-Round Interview Questions**

Insert the answers to the questions as written with as much detail as possible in the text box provided. **If the applicant board has attachments to support responses, please link them in the appropriate text box.**

- 1. In the 2024 application, Dr. Grubbs indicated she was the Board Chair and she planned to move into the Principal's role. CSRB members indicated that was problematic and either a Chair or a Principal needed to be brought on quickly. This year, the application is the same. Why?**

We'd like to reference Q170 in our application. Dr. Grubbs provided her qualifications for implementing the school design successfully, including capacity in the area of school leadership. Dr. Grubbs is extremely qualified to serve as the current role of Board Chair and the future role as Principal. It is really important that the leader of a charter school and the Board are able to work together and that the leader of the school buys into the mission and vision of the school. We feel Dr. Grubbs is the best fit for the role.

At the same time, Focus Academy has already taken proactive steps to ensure a smooth and compliant transition in board membership when Dr. Grubbs steps down from the Board to become the school leader. The Board has already added a new member and is actively recruiting additional members to ensure there are no gaps in governance when Dr. Grubbs steps off the Board in accordance with charter requirements. In addition, a new Board Chair will be selected promptly in accordance with the guidelines established in the school's bylaws to ensure continuity of leadership.

- 2. The last documented enrollment event in the application was April 2025 (Q119). What events have occurred since then to increase interest/enrollment?**

We have taken your advice and we have made our presence known in the Wake county community with our focus being on the cities of Garner and Raleigh by participating in various community events.

Focus Academy has implemented a comprehensive marketing strategy to establish community relationships. Through multiple channels we engaged with the Garner community along with the surrounding areas. Since April 2025, we have continued to participate in community events and make our presence known:

1. Digital engagement: We created a website that offers an interest form for prospective families and a survey that yielded a total of 373 responses.
2. Social media: We set up profiles on Facebook and Instagram to share information updates about Focus Academy. The social media presence on these platforms has attracted followers that include educators as well as parents, and it generated substantial engagement with new posts. These platforms have been very effective.
3. Community presence and direct outreach: The flyer we created as Informational material gave the community something tangible to take away and to remember Focus Academy. It was designed to highlight the educational model and invite community feedback. We distributed them to local businesses and community centers throughout the greater Garner and Southeast Raleigh areas. Our in-person presentations have been held at local churches and community events, as well as an interest meeting held at the local library for prospective parents.
4. Visibility: In order to have more visibility we designed a table runner to showcase our logo boldly to draw attention to our vendor table. Focus Academy has been a vendor at several community events, including, but not limited to local festivals, farmers markets, and family oriented gatherings in the greater Garner and Southeast Raleigh areas. These opportunities have allowed Focus Academy team members to directly engage with hundreds of families, distribute informational material and personally answer questions about the school's educational approach, in addition to collecting contact information from interested parents. These opportunities allowed us to establish a presence as an active community partner. We appreciate the in-person interaction because it has allowed us to see first-hand the excitement and the need for Focus Academy Charter School
5. As a result, these initiatives combined, have demonstrated a significant community demand for Focus Academy's educational approach with 255 families indicating interest in enrolling their children when the school opens. We will continue to do outreach as we have several events scheduled for the rest of this year. We will continue to strengthen relationships with community stakeholders, and generate enthusiasm for our school's accelerated launch.

3. The graph in the application indicated 62% of 300 responses to a survey have school-aged children. Since that is not the same as interest or demand, why did you apply for an accelerated charter?

The Focus Academy Board carefully considered several factors in its decision to apply for acceleration.

We initially applied under the regular timeline; however, multiple data points demonstrated that an accelerated opening is both necessary and feasible. A parent interest survey confirmed 186 families committed to attending Focus Academy, representing 93% of our projected initial ADM. After submitting our application, the parent interest survey confirmed 255 families committed to attending

Focus Academy, representing more than 100% of our projected ADM. In addition, demographic projections within a five-mile radius of our proposed location show anticipated growth of more than 1,000 families over the next five years, further reinforcing demand.

One of the greatest barriers to charter school openings is securing a suitable facility. Focus has already secured a facility, which includes an existing ECO, significantly increasing the likelihood of a successful launch. However, the landlords have been clear that they will not hold the facility beyond 2026. This makes acceleration not only practical but essential to ensure that Focus Academy can open its doors to students on schedule and in alignment with demonstrated community need.

4. Explain how the survey located at Question 119 demonstrates your goal of 200 students by grade level when school begins, Aug 2026.

The survey results at Question 119 directly support our enrollment goal of 200 students by opening in August 2026. At the time of our application, 186 families indicated their intent to enroll at Focus Academy, representing 93% of our projected initial ADM. Since that submission, interest has continued to grow. As of now, 255 families have formally indicated their intent to enroll. This steady increase demonstrates not only strong initial demand but also sustained momentum, which gives us confidence that we will meet and exceed our target of 200 students across grade levels at launch.

5. Did you start with the charter idea or did ATA come to you?

We started with the charter idea for Focus Academy Charter School. The charter idea for Focus Academy started in 2023, shortly after Dr Grubbs received her doctorate degree. Her vision was to provide a high-quality, arts-integrated education that would meet the unique academic and social-emotional needs of students in our community.

In 2023, the founders of Focus Academy Charter School, began formal planning, including researching successful charter models, exploring state requirements for charter approval, reviewing submitted charter school applications, and connecting with organizations experienced in charter school development.

Dr. Grubbs met the founder of ATA a year after the charter idea for Focus Academy at the 2024 NC Charter School Conference in Charlotte, NC.

6. Provide a detailed account of what you are receiving from ATA? How are they providing that service?

American Traditional Academies (ATA) will serve as Focus Academy's Charter School Operational Support (CSO) provider, delivering comprehensive operational and financial support during the planning year, through school opening, and for ongoing operations. ATA's role is advisory and supportive: ATA will provide expertise, systems, tools, and staff to implement operational and financial functions, while the Focus Academy Board of Directors and school administration retain full decision-making authority and accountability for educational, governance, and personnel decisions.

Relationship & Decision Authority (non-delegation)

- ATA will advise, recommend, implement, and operate certain administrative systems at the direction of the Board and school administration.
- ATA will not make final governance, educational program, or personnel decisions for Focus Academy. Specifically, ATA will not: hire or terminate employees, set or implement the school's Education Plan or curriculum, evaluate or supervise the principal or other instructional staff, or exercise independent decision-making authority over school finances or governance. Final authority rests with the Board and authorized school administrators.

Planning year & opening support

- Student recruitment support and assistance meeting RTO (Ready to Open) requirements.
- Assistance with the application and enrollment process (materials, systems, parent communications).
- Identification, evaluation, and development support for a permanent facility; assistance negotiating and implementing a facilities lease or purchase (Board approval required for final agreements).
- Assistance in obtaining planning-year funding, grants, or short-term financing as needed (board approval required for acceptance).
- Marketing planning, design, and implementation support for recruitment and community outreach.

- SIS (Student Information System) selection, configuration, implementation, and staff training.
- LEA billing setup and support (claims preparation and submission) consistent with legal and regulatory requirements.

Human Resources & benefits administration

- HR administrative services, including payroll processing, benefits administration, tax withholdings, required deductions, vendor payments, and HR reporting.
- ATA will process payroll and provide payroll reports; all hiring, performance evaluation, and termination decisions remain the responsibility of Focus Academy's administration and Board.

Financial management & accounting

- Accounting, bookkeeping, and monthly financial reporting.
- Monthly cash-flow tracking and analysis delivered to the Board on a regular schedule.
- Preparation and presentation of a 5-year strategic budget and annual updates to the long-range financial plan.
- Ongoing strategic financial management support, including cash-flow forecasting, reserves planning, and guidance for fiscal sustainability.
- Assistance drafting, implementing, and documenting sound financial procedures and internal controls.
- Support and preparation for audits and state/federal financial reviews; ATA will compile audit working papers and coordinate with external auditors as directed by the Board.

Governance & compliance

- Draft policies, procedures, and governance materials for Board review and formal approval.
- Board development and monthly training sessions (materials provided in advance).
- Preparation of required submissions and compliance reporting to the Board, the Office of Charter Schools (OCS), the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and other oversight bodies — ATA will prepare and submit reports only with

Board-designated signatory authority.

- Regular reporting to the Board on operational, enrollment, and financial matters.

Subcontracting, Accountability & Confidentiality

- ATA may subcontract select services where specialized vendors are required (for example, facility consultants, specialized IT vendors, or legal counsel). ATA will remain the prime contractor and is fully accountable for the performance, confidentiality, and compliance of any subcontractor. ATA will provide Focus Academy with the names and roles of subcontractors and will require subcontractors to meet ATA's contractual standards and confidentiality obligations.

Deliverables & Reporting (examples)

To ensure transparency and limit questions about operational oversight, ATA will provide, at a minimum:

- A monthly financial package for the Board (income statement, balance sheet, cash-flow analysis, and variance explanations).
- Monthly cash-flow forecasts and budget monitoring reports.
- Monthly board packets that include operational updates, RTO/enrollment status, and policy drafts.
- Monthly board training materials and a documented training schedule.
(Reporting cadence and formats will be set forth in the ATA/Focus contract and may be adjusted by mutual agreement.)

Term, Renewal & Budgeting

- Focus and ATA have executed a three-year agreement. Focus Academy has budgeted to continue ATA services beyond the initial term should both parties agree to extend the relationship. Any extension, renewal, scope change, or termination will be executed in writing in accordance with the terms of the contract.

7. **What distinguishes ATA from operating as an EMO, when providing “Operational Support” for 10% of revenue? The application states: “ATA staff provided assistance with board development, application development, budgeting, operations planning, marketing, and community relations. ATA plans to provide school development assistance through the planning year and operational support services after opening,” and in the interview it was stated that ATA is also providing financial services such as payroll, student accounting, and auditing. What else would be needed to consider this an EMO?**

The primary distinction lies in control and decision-making authority: a CMO/EMO operates and manages the school, while a CSO provides support without taking control.

As a CSO for Focus Academy Charter School, American Traditional Academies (ATA) WILL NOT:

- Operate or manage Focus Academy
- Hire, employ, or supervise any staff members
- Develop or implement the school’s Education Plan
- Direct, evaluate, or supervise the lead administrator or any other staff members
- Make decisions regarding school finances, governance, or operations
- Lead day-to-day operations
- Participate in student discipline

As a CSO for Focus Academy Charter School, ATA WILL:

- Provide operational and administrative support
- Offer financial management services and guidance
- Provide board training and governance support
- Collaborate with and report to the Board

- Work in partnership with the principal to support school success

8. Submit a copy of the Agreement between Focus Academy and ATA.

 ATA Contract with Focus Academy.pdf

9. The application states you have not paid any fees regarding assistance for the application to ATA. Is that correct?

That is correct. The Focus Academy Board of Directors has not paid any fees to ATA in connection with the application. All costs associated with Focus Academy, including the application fee, have been paid directly by the Focus Academy Board without any financial assistance from ATA.

**10. Is Word of God Academy closed or closing? How many students did they have and what is the plan for those students?
What is the relationship between WOG and Focus?**

Word of God Academy closed at the end of the 2024–2025 school year. At the time of closure, to our knowledge, the school had approximately 45 students enrolled in middle and high school grades. Since Focus Academy will initially open as an elementary school, those students will transition to other secondary schools in the area. The relationship between Word of God Academy and Focus Academy is limited to a facilities agreement, with Focus Academy leasing the former Word of God Christian School facility for its operations. In addition, because Word of God has been a part of the local community, both organizations are committed to fostering a positive relationship grounded in community support and collaboration.

11. What is the source of the start-up funds and repayment terms?

The board will use start-up funds from:
Fundraising
Donations
Grants
Loans

The source of the start-up funds is from ATA, They have offered a line of credit up to \$150,000 should we need it for start-up costs. The board will use this line of credit if other means fall short of needed funds. If we do need to activate a line of credit with ATA, we will mutually agree on a repayment plan. Since it has not been determined that a line of credit will be needed, terms have not been negotiated, and documents have not been signed.

12. Provide updated documentation on enrollment numbers, providing grade levels.

 Focus Academy Projected Enrollment Summary

13. What is the relationship between “Rocket Corporate Services, Inc” and Focus Academy (located at Question 23) - listed as the Registered Agent with NC Sec. of State?

Focus Academy engaged Rocket Corporate Services, Inc. to provide corporate filing support. Specifically, Rocket Corporate Services, Inc. prepared and submitted the required documents to the State of North Carolina to register Focus Academy's business name and establish it as a nonprofit corporation in compliance with state law.

14. Describe your partnership with Sallie B. Howard School in Wilson, NC and The Arts Based School in Winston-Salem. How many times have you met with Robin Hollis or Dr. Woodard? Which school leaders are working with Dr. Grova Bridges and Amy White? Describe what your partnership with Community of Hope will look like. Do you anticipate them providing transportation to their facility in Garner? (Question 33)

As referenced in Question 33 of our application, Focus Academy has intentionally cultivated partnerships with schools that have a strong record of success in arts integration, including **Sallie B. Howard School of Arts and Science (Wilson, NC)** and **The Arts Based School (Winston-Salem, NC)**. These partnerships have been both previous and ongoing, with Focus Academy leadership and Board members engaging in professional development, mentorship opportunities, and site visits to observe best practices. Importantly, both schools have provided commitments of support to assist Focus Academy in implementing our own arts-integrated instructional model.

In addition, one of our Board members has secured the involvement of a former Music Teacher and Band Director from Sallie B.

Howard. This individual was actively involved during the founding years of Sallie B. Howard, bringing both historical perspective and firsthand experience in building a successful arts-focused program. This unique partnership strengthens our ability to learn directly from a practitioner who helped shape one of North Carolina's most respected arts integration schools.

Further, Dr. Atlas, a former Sallie B. Howard, a faculty member, currently resides in Knightdale, NC and serves in the Pastoral Ministry in Raleigh, which is less than three miles from our temporary location. His proximity and experience will allow for ongoing mentorship and support. Our Board member's longstanding involvement in the Wilson community also continues to facilitate opportunities for collaboration, including exploring future mentorship support from Dr. Woodard, who has played a critical leadership role at Sallie B. Howard. Dr. Woodard has also suggested that Dr. Grubbs collaborates with the art director at Sallie B. Howard. Dr. Grubbs has already met with Dr. Woodard numerous times (2 times in person and 4 times through a phone conference). Dr. Grubbs has also met with Robin Hollis a few times thus far (1 in person, once through a zoom meeting, and twice by phone)

Looking ahead, our projected school leader, Dr. Grubbs, along with Board member and educator Mr. DuBois, will maintain and expand these educational partnerships. This includes, but is not limited to, Sallie B. Howard, The Arts Based School, and an A+ Schools Program, ensuring that Focus Academy remains connected to a robust network of arts-integrated learning institutions.

In addition to these school partnerships, Focus Academy has developed a relationship with Community of Hope, a nonprofit organization that will provide afterschool tutoring for our students at no cost. Community of Hope has also committed to offering scholarships for its summer camp arts program to 5 of the students that attend Focus Academy Charter School, which would otherwise present a financial burden for many families. The organization currently provides transportation from various feeder schools, they will also provide free transportation to Focus Academy students that attend their afterschool program. Any required adjustments to transportation will be reflected in our Transportation Plan.

15. What does the mentorship of the Liberty Charter Academy look like during the next two years?

The Focus Academy leadership has established a positive working relationship with the Liberty Board, including attending a Liberty board meeting and engaging in direct communication. The Liberty Board has extended an open invitation for the Focus Academy Board members to visit the school, attend additional meetings, and reach out with any questions. Moving forward, it is anticipated that the two boards will remain in regular contact, at a minimum on a quarterly basis, and more frequently as needed to ensure collaboration and shared learning.

16. The address for the school's location has a Raleigh mailing address. How far is it from Garner?

The school location, which is located at 3000 Rock Quarry Road is approximately 6 miles from Garner, (5.7 miles to be exact).

17. Provide updated demographic information. The application demographics total 112% of the student population (Q14).

The demographic numbers are estimates based on Garner and nearby communities. The percentages add up to more than 100% because families who identify as Hispanic are counted in that category as well as by race.