



**THE DISTRICT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND**

**ACCOUNTABILITY COUNCIL (SIAC)**

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS**

**TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**ON**

**CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATIONS**

**NOVEMBER 2011**

## **Background**

For many years, the District School Improvement and Accountability Committee (District SIAC) has reviewed applications for new charter schools and provided the Board of Education with its recommendations on whether to grant the requested charters, thereby establishing a new DPS school. A school created by this process is established for a set term, usually three years, and at the end of such term may continue in existence only if its charter is renewed by the Board. District SIAC has taken on the additional responsibility of reviewing and making recommendations as to whether the Board should renew the charters of those schools whose contractual term is expiring at the end of the present school year.

## **Process**

To complete our review in a timely fashion, District SIAC formed a committee from its membership that included:

Sherry Eastlund, District SIAC Co-Chair

Valentina Flores, Ed.D., District SIAC

Mary Franza, District SIAC

Dorolyn Griebenaw, District SIAC, Secretary

Rita Montero, Former DPS Board Member, District SIAC Co-Chair

Jesse Sutherland, M.D., Community Person

The Office of School Reform and Innovation provided the committee with Part A and Part B of the charter school renewal applications and the 2009, 2010, and 2011 School Performance Frameworks (SPF) for each school, the School Performance Frameworks and CSAP information were used as a tool for evaluating each of the charter schools. The committee met to consider each school and reach consensus on recommendations.

On October 25, the subcommittee presented District SIAC with a progress report including an overview of its recommendations for the charter school renewal applications. District SIAC adopted the resolution supporting the work of the subcommittee.

## **Criteria for Renewal**

As in the past, the primary focus of District SIAC's evaluation of these applications for charter renewal is student achievement. This year we relied on the School Performance Framework rating developed by the District. To the extent possible, we took into account the school's response to the elements of Part A and Part B of the renewal application.

Specifically, we examined the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on CSAP for reading, writing, and math for the years 2009, 2010 and 2011. We focused on any trends that the data revealed.

## **Renewal Recommendations**

### ***West Denver Prep Charter School – Harvey Park***

2011 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2010 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2009 SPF Rating – N/A

### **District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 3-year Term**

#### *Rational for Recommendation:*

West Denver Prep – Harvey Park was founded in the 2009-2010 school year. It has been rated a Distinguished School during its first two years. On the School Performance Framework (SPF), the school is rated “Exceeds” in both Student Progress Over Time -- Growth and Student Achievement Level -- Status.

District SIAC recommends a three-year Renewal and although academic achievement has slightly decreased it is still high. A three-year renewal will allow the school to have two more years of data after the school has reached its full capacity.

### ***KIPP Sunshine Peak Academy***

2011 SPF Rating – Meets Expectations

2010 SPF Rating – Meets Expectations

2009 SPF Rating – Meets Expectations

### **District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 3-year Term**

#### *Rational for Recommendation:*

KIPP Sunshine Peak Academy has been rated “Meets Expectations” on the SPF for the past three years. In 2011, the school met the SPF rating in all areas except Student Engagement and Parent Satisfaction where it was given an approaching rating.

Since the school consistently meets expectations for student growth and achievement, District SIAC recommends KIPP Sunshine Peak Academy be renewed for a three-year period.

## ***Highline Academy Charter School***

2011 SPF Rating – Meets Expectation

2010 SPF Rating – Meets Expectation

2009 SPF Rating – Meets Expectation

### **District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 3-year Term**

#### *Rational for Recommendation:*

Highline Academy has a consistent overall rating of “Meets Expectations” on its SPF for the last three years. For the same period, the elementary school met the District’s expectations in student achievement level status. The middle school’s student achievement status for its first two years was approaching expectations and in 2011 met expectations. Growth ratings for both elementary and middle school met expectations. However, for the same period, most of Highline’s gap ratings were “Does Not Meet”. After discussing the SPF information, the subcommittee struggled with its recommendation to approve the renewal for either a three-year period or five-year period.

Since the school is performing well in both the student achievement status and growth areas but has not met District expectations in the gap areas, District SIAC recommends that Highline be renewed for a three-year period.

## ***Cesar Chavez Academy***

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited on Priority Watch

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited on Watch

2009 SPF Rating – N/A

### **District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-year Term**

#### *Rational for Recommendation:*

Cesar Chavez Academy is performing better at its elementary grades than its middle school grades on the SPF. Elementary grades are rated “Approaching” on the Student Progress Over Time – Growth and rated “Meets” on the Student Achievement Level – Status. While the middle school grades are rated “Does Not Meet” on the Student Progress Over Time – Growth and “Approaching” on the Student Achievement Level – Status. The school is rated “Approaching” for Re-Enrollment and “Exceeds” for Parent Satisfaction. Since the school only has two years of data and is struggling, District SIAC recommends a two-year renewal.

## ***Venture Prep***

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2009 SPF Rating – N/A

### **District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 1-year Term**

#### *Rational for Recommendation:*

The overall SPF ratings for Venture Prep went from “Accredited on Watch” in 2009 to “Accredited on Probation” for 2010 and 2011. The overall SPF ratings for Envision went from “Accredited on Priority Watch” in 2010 to “Accredited on Probation” in 2011. Given the academic history of Denver Venture Prep and Envision before the merger of the two schools, it is hard to determine any positive academic trends. As a result, the subcommittee only looked at the 2011 SPF information. Venture Prep’s high school received achievement status and growth ratings of “Approaching”. The middle school also earned an “Approaching” rating for achievement status, but did not meet the District’s expectations for growth and, in most areas went backwards. Also, the subcommittee had concerns about low ratings in parent satisfaction and the school leadership.

Since the present school only has two years of data and is struggling, District SIAC recommends that Venture Prep be renewed for a one-year period.

## ***KIPP Denver Collegiate High School***

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited on Watch

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited on Watch

2009 SPF Rating – N/A

### **District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 3-year Term**

#### *Rational for Recommendation:*

KIPP Denver Collegiate High School has a consistent overall rating of “Accredited on Watch” on its SPF for two years. The school met the District’s expectations in student achievement level status in 2010 and received an “Approaching” rating in 2011. The growth ratings are “Approaching” for 2010 and 2011. The school should be commended on its parent satisfaction rating of “Exceeds”

expectations. The subcommittee recognizes the data is based on a student population which almost doubled in two years and only two years of data is available. Thus, it is hard to determine trends. It appears that this school is performing as well as or better than the other high schools in Southwest Denver.

Therefore, District SIAC recommends that KIPP Denver Collegiate High School be renewed for a three year period. This will allow the school to have two more years of data after the school has reached its full capacity.

## ***Escuela Tlatelolco***

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited On Priority Watch

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited On Watch

2009 SPF Rating – Accredited on Watch

### District SIAC Recommendation – Non-renewal of Contact

#### *Rational for Recommendation:*

SPF ratings from 2010 show a school struggling in numerous areas. The **Middle school** failed to meet Student Progress over Time – Growth and failed to meet Student Engagement. The failure in student progress over time-growth was specific to; Median Growth percentile in Reading, Math and Writing. The middle school also failed to meet Gaps in reading and math.

SPF ratings for **High School** in this same period show a failure to meet Catch up growth in Math, CSAP Proficient+ in Math, Writing, and Science. In addition the high school failed to meet Gaps in Reading, Math, and Writing. The data showed an approaching rating for CELA. Also of concern was the failure to meet Post Secondary Readiness, CDE Graduation Rates and Graduation rates Similar Schools. Additionally, the high school failed to meet Re-Enrollment Rates.

SPF ratings for 2011 included Middle and High School and also Elementary school. The overall status was stated as “Accredited On Priority Watch”, an indication that the school has continued to struggle, making few, if any, improvements. Escuela’s **Elementary school** failed to meet “Student Engagement/student Satisfaction, CSAP Advanced and Post-Secondary Readiness Status. In **Middle School**, similar to last year, it failed to meet “Student Progress Over Time/Growth, and Student Engagement. In addition this year’s report indicates that it also failed to meet Student Achievement level-status and Re-enrollment. Further indicators regarding achievement show a failure to meet median growth percentile in Math and Writing compared to a similar school, Catch-up

Growth in Math, CSAP Proficient+ in Math, CSAP Proficient+ compared to a Similar School in Math. Also, it failed in Reading, Math and Writing, CSAP Advanced, Attendance Rate, Student Satisfaction and Re-Enrollment Rate.

SPF rates for High School in 2011 did not improve from its 2010 Post-Secondary Readiness Status and Re-Enrollment status. In addition the school failed in its Student Achievement Level-Status. In reference to achievement failures, Escuela continued its 2010 status in CSAP Proficient+ in Math, Writing and Science. It continued its failure status of 2010 in Gaps in Reading, Math and Writing and its CSAP Advanced. It added failures this year in Gap Change in Reading and Science, CSAP Proficient+ in Reading and Gaps in Science and CELA Proficient or Above. In addition, Escuela continued to fail in CDE Graduation and Re-Enrollment ratings.

Escuela Tlatelolco has been in existence as a private school since 1970 and as a Contract School with Denver Public Schools for the last seven years. The subcommittee is concerned that it has maintained failures from 2010 and has added additional failures in numerous other categories in 2011. While numerous academic categories have not been met, it must be mentioned that the school's staff had a 31% change from the previous year. Inasmuch as the programmatic approach is referred to as Dual Language, only 61.5% of the staff is Bilingual and only 75% of the Specialist teachers are Bilingual. It must also be recognized that, for the most part, class size at Escuela is what educators would say is SMALL and yet the school fails to meet the theory that small class size lends to better academic achievement.

Lastly, in the renewal application, Escuela refers to a continued inability to become "financially solvent" and that they continue to work on this *issue*. The subcommittee fails to understand how such a status was allowed when Denver Public Schools originally brought it under the DPS umbrella. There is serious concern that after seven years of functioning as a "Contract School," Escuela Tlatelolco has not been able to resolve its Insolvency.

After taking into account Escuela Tlatelolco's seven-year relationship with DPS, the school's student achievement regression, the financial insolvency issues and the fact that they are not designated as an Alternative Education campus, District SIAC recommends that Escuela Tlatelolco's contract NOT be renewed.

## **Alternative Educational Campus (AEC) School Renewal Recommendations**

The following three charter schools have a State designation of an Alternative Educational Campus. This means that at least 95% of each school's student population meet one or more of the at-risk criteria, as determined by the State. In most cases, these are the students that the traditional schools have failed and who, otherwise, might not be in school if they were not in an alternative school.

Even though these students are low performing, they should make at least one year's of growth in one year's time. This is hard to determine using the SPF. In addition, the schools have earned a rating of "Meets" or "Exceeds" expectations for student satisfaction on the SPFs. Therefore, the subcommittee does not believe that the following schools should be non-renewed, but should be closely monitored for another year.

### ***Colorado High School***

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2009 SPF Rating – Accredited on Watch

### **District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 1-year Term**

#### ***Rational for Recommendation:***

District SIAC applauds Colorado High for making the concerted effort to support the consistent practice of teaching reading strategies across all content areas by hiring an instructional coach in reading and for the commitment of teachers to assist students in three reading strategies in all content areas.

Colorado High School student progress over - time stayed consistent in approaching goals in the past two years with no percentage points gained or lost. The SPF shows that Colorado High continues to show very low performance in all subjects across the curriculum spectrum and does not meet growth expectations. Student achievement did not improve for black and Hispanic students as it did for white students who make up 5% of the student population.

District SIAC recommends a one-year renewal based on the low performance of Colorado High in not closing the persistent gap in student achievement level (0%); does not meet expectations in post secondary school readiness; and does not meet expectations in school attendance.



## ***Justice High School***

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2010 SPF Rating – Meets Expectation

2009 SPF Rating – N/A

### **District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 1-year Term**

#### *Rational for Recommendation:*

We commend Denver Justice High School for trying to meet the needs of students with attendance and behavioral issues. Denver Justice High has worked with parents and their children to achieve better attendance and academic performance and to graduate with a high school diploma from Denver Public Schools.

The SPF data show that in the past two years Denver Justice High School has regressed from meets expectations on a number of academic measures and presently is accredited on probation.

District SIAC recommends a one-year renewal based on the regression of academic expectations and further suggests that this school be closely monitored and assisted to address the needs of students

## ***Life Skills Center of Denver***

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2009 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

### **District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 1-year Term**

#### *Rational for Recommendation:*

District SIAC commends the Life Skills Center making growth in five of the twelve measurable areas in the 2008 Status Norms published by NWEA.

Life Skills Center High School's SPF shows no improvement in Student Progress Over Time - Growth from 2009 to 2010, a precipitous downward measure from 38% to 0% in 2011 and does not meet academic expectations in the same year.

The subcommittee understands that Life Skills Center may be dealing with a different population cohort during these years and suggests that DPS Administration develop an alternative SPF for the schools with the Alternative Education Campus designation. This would reflect and make available data to help in taking this reality into account.

The data that this committee reviewed shows that Life Skills Center High School has not shown measurable growth in Student achievement levels during the past three years. Therefore, the District SIAC subcommittee recommends that Life Skills Center High School be given a one-year renewal based on the low performance of the high school. It does not meet progress over time – growth. In addition, the school does not meet the attendance improvement status.