



THE DISTRICT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND

ACCOUNTABILITY COUNCIL (SIAC)

RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

ON

CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATIONS

NOVEMBER 2012

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, Community Person
Valentina Flores, Ed.D., Community Person
Mike Johnson, DPS Parent
Roger Kilgore, Community Person, *District SIAC Co-Chair*
Paula Ortlieb, LPS Parent, Community Person
Jacqui Shumway, DPS Parent
Jesse Sutherland, M.D., Community Person
Kristen Tourangeau, DPS Parent, *District SIAC Co-Chair*

The Office of School Reform and Innovation provided the committee with Part A and Part B of the charter school renewal applications and the 2011 and 2012 School Performance Frameworks (SPF) for each school. The School Performance Frameworks and CSAP/TCAP information were also used as tools for evaluating each of the charter schools. The committee met to consider each school and reach consensus on recommendations.

On October 30, the committee presented District SIAC with a progress report including an overview of its recommendations for the charter school renewal applications. District SIAC adopted a resolution supporting the work of the committee.

Criteria for Renewal

As in the past, the primary focus of District SIAC's evaluation of these applications for charter renewal was student achievement. This year we also took into consideration the School Performance Framework rating developed by the District. The school's response to the elements of Part A and Part B of the renewal application contributed important supplementary material to our review.

Specifically, we examined the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on CSAP for reading, writing, and math for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. We focused on any trends that the data revealed.

Renewal Recommendations

Cesar Chavez Academy

2012 SPF Rating – Accredited On Priority Watch

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited On Priority Watch

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited on Watch

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

Rational for Recommendation:

Cesar Chavez Academy elementary school “meets” the criterion for academic status, but “does not meet” for growth. Conversely, the middle school “does not meet” for status, but is “approaching” for growth. Compared to similar schools as defined by the DPS risk factor, Cesar Chavez is doing better in the SPF than four of ten similar schools.

* District SIAC recommends that Cesar Chavez Academy be renewed for one final one-year term. If the results at the end of this term do not show significant improvement, then District SIAC recommends that the contract not be renewed at that time.

Denver Language School

2012 SPF Rating – N/A

2011 SPF Rating – N/A

2010 SPF Rating – N/A

TCAP Status 2011-2012 % Proficient/Advanced	
Reading	76
Math	71
Writing	55

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

Denver Language School was founded in the 2010-2011 school year. It has no SPF rating for its first two years because 3rd graders' testing began in 2011-2012. Therefore, no comparison could be made to establish an SPF. The lower writing scores are being addressed with an additional English teacher and an ELL teacher who will collaborate with all teachers. DLS appears to be addressing the low-achieving students who do not qualify for SPED.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms. District SIAC recommends a two-year renewal in these instances. A two-year renewal would allow the school to have three more years of data, including their first year of middle school data from 6th graders.

Denver School of Science and Technology – GVR Campus Middle School (DSST-GVR Middle School)

2012 SPF Rating – Meets Expectation

2011 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2010 SPF Rating – N/A

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

In 2011-2012, DSST-GVR Middle School had 6th and 7th grades. The SPF rating went from “Distinguished” with 93% points earned in 2011 to “Meets Expectation” with 74% points earned in 2012. One of the areas that dropped was “Student Growth” from 91% to 20%.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms. District SIAC recommends a two-year renewal in these instances. Additionally, with the drop in points earned and the addition of 8th grade next year (plus new grades in high school), District SIAC recommends DSST-GVR Middle School be renewed for a two-year period.

Denver School of Science and Technology – GVR Campus High School (DSST-GVR High School)

2012 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2011 SPF Rating – N/A

2010 SPF Rating – N/A

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

DSST-GVR High School had its first 9th grade last year and is the highest rated high school on the SPF. The raw TCAP Proficient/Advanced scores in reading, math, and writing for the 9th grade were all below those of the 7th grade (no 8th grade in 2011-2012) DSST-GVR Middle School.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms. District SIAC recommends a two-year renewal in these instances. District SIAC recommends DSST-GVR High School be renewed for a two-year period. The next renewal would include data for 9th – 11th grades.

Denver School of Science and Technology – Stapleton Middle School

2012 SPF Rating – Meets Expectation

2011 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2010 SPF Rating – Distinguished

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 3-year Term

Rational for Recommendation

From 2009 to 2011, DSST-Stapleton Middle School earned points for both Student Progress Over Time—Growth and Student Achievement Level—to achieve a status of “Exceeds.” In 2012, Student Progress Over Time—Growth dropped to “Meets,” which based on the various growth categories seems to come from a drop in writing. The school has identified literacy – writing and reading – as an area of instructional focus this year.

District SIAC recommends DSST-Stapleton Middle School be renewed for a three-year period.

Denver School of Science and Technology – Stapleton High School

2012 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2011 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2010 SPF Rating – Distinguished

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 3-year Term

Rational for Recommendation

DSST-Stapleton High School has consistent ratings of “Distinguished” on its SPF for the last four years. This demonstrates high student achievement, particularly in light of a free and reduced lunch population of over 40%. District SIAC recommends that DSST-Stapleton High School be renewed for a three-year period.

However, we encourage the school to focus on its relatively low (green) scores on student engagement and re-enrollment, and whether the relatively low re-enrollment score might be related to relatively low student engagement.

Girls Athletic Leadership School (GALS)

2012 SPF Rating – Meets Expectation

2011 SPF Rating – Meets Expectation

2010 SPF Rating – N/A

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-year Term

Rational for Recommendation

GALS middle school has been rated “Meets Expectations” on the SPF for the past two years and for 2012 “Meets” in both status and growth. GALS fell short of meeting its target of a 40% ELL population. While GALS is a district program and not boundary bound, for many families, location is still a factor in choosing a school. The move to Del Pueblo next year may assist in attracting more ELL students.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms. District SIAC recommends a two-year renewal in these instances. A two-year term would provide a look at GALS after its move and as it begins its high school.

Northeast Academy

2012 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

District SIAC Recommendation – Non-renewal of Contract

Rational for Recommendation

Although District SIAC commends the efforts that Northeast Academy has put forth in the past, we believe this effort has not been enough to bring about the positive academic achievement level to meet the needs of the students who attend this school. The academic curriculum does not appear to be consistent or coherent to bring about successful learning experiences to the school student population or to attract a new population of students.

District SIAC recommends a non-renewal based on the low performance of Northeast Academy Charter School in the area of student achievement level (9%), student enrollment (0%), and student growth over time (9%).

SOAR Green Valley Ranch (SOAR GVR)

2012 SPF Rating – N/A

2011 SPF Rating – N/A

2010 SPF Rating – N/A

TCAP Status 2011-2012 % Proficient/Advanced	
Reading	43 (59)*
Math	59
Writing	32

* Error in administration of the Reading test resulted in 22 students' scores being invalidated. The Reading score of 59 represents the scores of all students whose tests were scored.

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-year Term

Rational for Recommendation

In 2011-2012, SOAR GVR had its first third grade students, and thus with only one year of TCAP data there is no SPF Rating. The Reading and Math scores were consistent with other FNE schools, while the Writing score fell short. SOAR believes the results indicate a need for better test preparation to provide greater comfort with both test conditions and test formats.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms. District SIAC recommends a two-year renewal in these instances. During the next two years, SOAR GVR will grow to its full build out (K-5), giving the District sufficient data to evaluate the school using both status and growth.

Southwest Early College

2012 SPF Rating – Accredited On Priority Watch

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited On Watch

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited On Watch

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

Rational for Recommendation

Academic achievement has been generally declining in all four TCAP subject areas for the past four years. The math scores are particularly low. Academic growth has also been declining, although the growth scores hover around the 50% level.

The financial situation for Southwest Early College has improved; however, the school spends 22% of its per pupil revenue on rent, which is higher than the SEC Board of Directors has recommended.

* District SIAC recommends that Southwest Early College be renewed for one final one-year term. If the results at the end of this term do not show significant improvement, then District SIAC recommends that the contract not be renewed at that time.

STRIVE Prep – Highland Campus

2012 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2011 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2010 SPF Rating – N/A

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-year Term

Rational for Recommendation

In 2011-2012, STRIVE Prep-Highland had 6th and 7th grades. It has been rated “Distinguished” in its first two years of existence.

District SIAC recommends STRIVE Prep-Highland be renewed for a two-year term. With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms. District SIAC recommends a two-year renewal in these instances. At the next renewal period, two years of full school data (6th-8th grades) will be available for review.

STRIVE Prep – Lake Campus

2012 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2011 SPF Rating – Distinguished

2010 SPF Rating – N/A

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-year Term

Rational for Recommendation

In 2011-2012, STRIVE Prep-Lake had 6th and 7th grades. It has been rated “Distinguished” in its first two years of existence.

District SIAC recommends STRIVE Prep-Lake be renewed for a two-year term. With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms. District SIAC recommends a two-year renewal in these instances. At the next renewal period, two years of full school data (6th-8th grades) will be available for review.

Alternative Educational Campus (AEC) School Renewal Recommendations

The following three charter schools have a State designation of Alternative Educational Campus.

This means that at least 95% of each school's student population meets one or more of the at-risk criteria, as determined by the State. In most cases, these are the students whom 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 growth in one year's time. Whether this has been achieved is hard to determine using the SPF. Additionally, each of these schools has earned a rating of "meets" or "approaching" the expectations for student satisfaction on its SPF. District SIAC believes that this is a very important criterion for students at an alternative school.

The committee believes that a better method of assessing alternative schools needs to be developed by the District. This method should be more thorough and better suited to the student body and the particular environment at the alternative school.

Based on the assessment tools currently available to us, the committee does believe that the following schools should be renewed, however, they should be closely monitored for another year.

Academy of Urban Learning

2012 SPF Rating – Accredited On Priority Watch

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited On Watch

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited On Watch

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 1-year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

District SIAC recommends renewal for a one-year term, as AUL is making more progress with its students than other alternative schools with similar student populations. Of the seventeen alternative high schools, AUL ranks fifth on the SPF report. Its student engagement score is green, which meets expectations.

AUL has and continues to focus on providing nursing, psychological, and "wraparound" services for its students. These wraparound services include guidance regarding housing and public assistance, as well as internships and job readiness training. AUL received the 21st Century Grant in May of 2012 to finance wraparound services.

AUL has a 100% teacher retention rate from 2009-2010 through 2012-2013, providing a consistent instructional team for four years.

We applaud the focus on job readiness training. We feel this is a much more important focus than spending additional resources preparing for the ACT test. The addition of 20 hours per week with a Goodwill Industry representative to work with AUL students to secure employment and internships is an excellent service.

District SIAC recommends a one-year renewal to see whether the focus on wraparound services and job-readiness programs will improve student performance.

ACE Community Challenge School

2012 SPF Rating – Accredited On Priority Watch

2011 SPF Rating – Meets Expectations

2010 SPF Rating – Meets Expectations

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 1-year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

District SIAC applauds ACE School for persevering and exceeding expectations in post-secondary readiness (SPF Points 100%) and meeting expectations in student engagement (61%). However, ACE Community Challenge School does not meet expectations in student achievement (0%) or in growth on student progress over time (33%).

Therefore District SIAC recommends a one-year renewal based on the low academic performance of ACE Community Challenge School.

Colorado High School Charter

2012 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited On Priority Watch

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 1-year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

It is difficult to analyze this alternative school by similar metrics used for other schools. It is critical to successfully move this student population to the point that they are well-prepared for post-secondary success. The school has far to go to improve student achievement “does not meet,” but it is showing growth “approaching.”

Some of the narrative in the renewal application seems to indicate that last year a focus was applied to reading and writing, with math lagging. Proposed changes include emphasis on math with a reduced emphasis on reading and writing. We caution against large pendulum swings in the academic emphasis. We also suggest that the emphasis on the ACT be reviewed. Although all 11th graders are required to take the test, it may not be the best use of the students’ and teachers’ time to emphasize test-taking.

Because of the overall rating of this school, we recommend continued oversight, including a limited renewal term of one year.