



THE DISTRICT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND

ACCOUNTABILITY COUNCIL (SIAC)

RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

TO

The Board of Education

Regarding

Charter School Renewal Applications

November 2014

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 recommendations on the granting of 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 of Education. The District SIAC has taken on the additional responsibility of reviewing and making recommendations to the Board of Education regarding the renewals of the charters for schools whose contractual term is expiring at the end of a designated school year.

Process

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

Sherry Eastlund, Community Person

Dorolyn Griebenaw, Community Person

Don Griebenaw, Community Person

Ray McAllister, DPS Parent

Jesse Sutherland, M.D., Community Person

Kristen Tourangeau, Community Person, *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 2014 School Performance Frameworks (SPF's) for each school with supporting Source Data and All Detail reports. In addition we received the Dashboard reports for each school. The School Performance Frameworks, CSAP/TCAP data, and Dashboard information were used as tools for evaluating each of the charter schools. The committee met to consider each school and reach consensus on the recommendations.

On October 28, the committee presented the District SIAC with a progress report including an overview of its recommendations for the charter school renewal applications. The District SIAC adopted a resolution supporting the work of the committee to be sent to the Board of Education.

Criteria for Renewal

As in the past, the primary focus of the District SIAC's evaluation of the charter renewal applications was student achievement. The committee also took into consideration the School Performance Framework rating and the Dashboard developed by the District. The school's response to the elements of Part A and Part B of the renewal application contributed supplemental material to the review.

Specifically, the committee examined the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on TCAP for reading, writing, and math for the year 2014.

Renewal Recommendations:

Cesar Chavez Academy

2014 SPF Rating – Accredited on Watch

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 3-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

Cesar Chavez Academy serves 473 students comprising 88% FRL, 50% ELL, 8% SPED, and 95% minority students.

The school has improved since our last review in 2012. The SPF moved from Accredited on Priority Watch to Accredited on Watch. The school is now performing similarly to an average District school.

For the elementary grades the Academic Status measures in all three content areas are improving, and the progress has been steady. The elementary school outperformed the District in Academic Status measures. Academic Status measures improved in all categories, including the disaggregated groupings. The school's Academic Growth measures were similar to the District's averages.

For the middle school the Academic Status percentages were similar to the District's only in reading, and were lower in math and writing. However, the middle school is making improvements in its Academic Status measures for its disaggregated groupings. Academic Growth is similar to or better than that of the District. The middle school outperforms the District in Academic Growth measures for reading and math.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

Denver School of Science & Technology (DSST) – College View

2014 SPF Rating – Distinguished

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

DSST College View serves 303 students comprising 88% FRL, 66% ELL, 11% SPED, and 86% minority students.

DSST College View received a rating of Distinguished on its 2014 Student Performance Framework.

The school outperformed the District on its Academic Status measures. Reading was 64% compared to the District's 55%; Math was 56% compared to 48%; and Writing was 54% compared to 49%. Academic Growth measures also outperformed the District's.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, the District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms until all grades are filled. We recommend a two-year renewal in this instance, as the two-year renewal will allow the school to have additional years of data.

Escuela Tlatelolco

2014 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2013 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2012 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited on Priority Watch

District SIAC Recommendation – Nonrenewal of Contract

Rational for Recommendation:

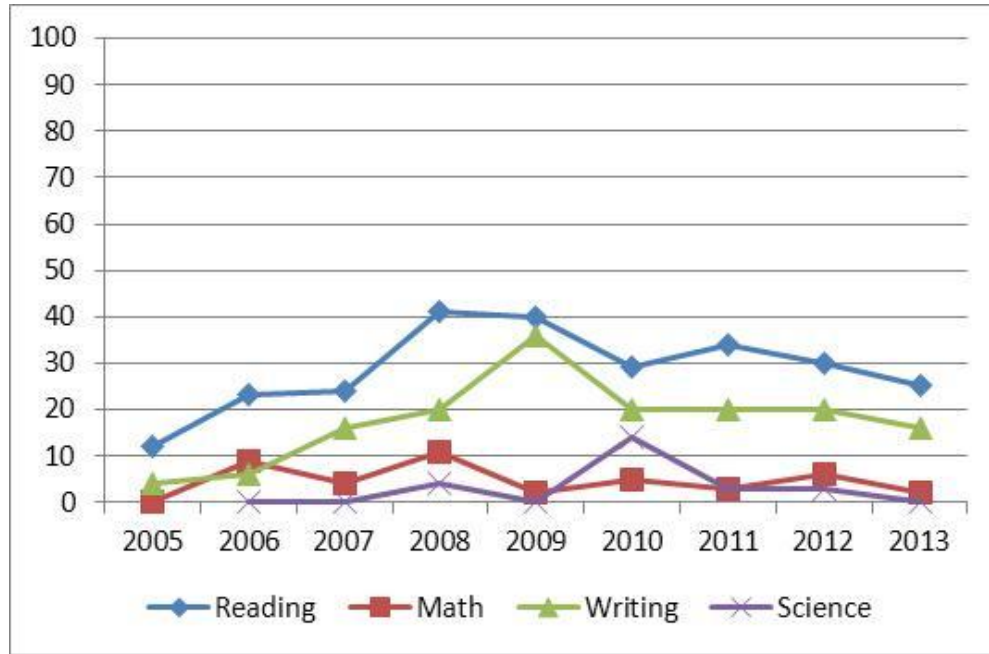
Escuela Tlatelolco serves 129 students comprising 91% FRL, 72% ELL, 5% SPED, and 98% minority students.

Over the last **ten** years, most areas of student achievement at Escuela Tlatelolco have been unacceptable and **below** district schools (see graph below). This school does not have an Alternative Education Campus status. It also appears that the school continues to have financial problems that its leadership attributes to the District, but which are, in actuality, problems related to the terms of its established status as a contract school.

The last two times Escuela Tlatelolco went through the District's renewal process, the District SIAC made the following recommendation: ***“After taking into account Escuela Tlatelolco's multiple-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.”*** In the current renewal process, the District SIAC still stands by its prior recommendations for closure.

*****We note that this year Escuela Tlatelolco's numbers have again failed to improve.*****

****This is our third recommendation for closure. We question why this school is allowed to continue operating in spite of its abysmal performance over multiple years.****



% Proficient and Advanced for Escuela Tlatelolco

KIPP Denver Collegiate High School

2014 SPF Rating – Meets Expectations

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 3-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

KIPP Denver Collegiate High School serves 354 students comprising 92% FRL, 85% ELL, 9% SPED, and 96% minority students.

The school outperformed the District on two out of three Academic Status measures. Reading was 56% compared to the District's 54%; Math was 34% compared to 27%; and Writing was 33% compared to 39%. Academic Growth measures also outperformed the District's.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

The District SIAC recommends a shorter renewal time to ensure that the school is monitored more closely for continued improvements.

Monarch Montessori

2014 SPF Rating – Accredited on Watch

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

Monarch Montessori serves 219 students comprising 65% FRL, 37% ELL, 5.5% SPED, and 70% minority students.

We are concerned that the founding principal has already left the school. This upheaval may make the school's transition to a new leader difficult. Additionally, the 40% turnover in teachers is unacceptably high. The school has expressed concerns about what it considers to be a high number of ELL students.

The school underperformed the District on all three Academic Status measures. Reading was 43% compared to the District's 57%; Math was 31% compared to 59%; and Writing was 28% compared to 45%. The FRL Gap is large. Academic Growth measures are not yet available.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, the District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms until all grades are filled. We recommend a two-year renewal in this instance, as the two-year renewal will allow the school to have additional years of data.

Omar D. Blair Charter School

2014 SPF Rating – Meets Expectations

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 5-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

Omar D. Blair Charter School serves 800 students comprising 61% FRL, 39% ELL, 7% SPED, and 74% minority students.

The founding principal retired at the end of the last school year. This change led to a higher turnover in teachers.

However, this charter continues to be an example of a highly successful program. The school has had very strong success in reducing academic gaps. The school

outperformed the District on all three Academic Status measures. Reading was 65% compared to the District's 57%; Math was 68% compared to 59%; and Writing was 55% compared to 45%. Academic Growth was lower than the District's growth in reading and math, but still in an acceptable range.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

Rocky Mountain Prep

2014 SPF Rating – Meets Expectations

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

Rocky Mountain Prep serves 289 students comprising 84% FRL, 34% ELL, 9% SPED, and 70% minority students.

At the time of the renewal application submittal, Rocky Mountain Prep did not have TCAP data. The school does not have an official School Performance Framework, as it has not yet served students in Grade 3 who have taken the TCAP for two years. However, Rocky Mountain Prep presented the results of the DRA2/EDL2 assessments, which met or exceeded the SPF benchmarks.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

According to the information presented, it appears that student achievement, parent satisfaction, and enrollment data are trending in the right direction.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, the District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms until all grades are filled. We recommend a two-year renewal in this instance, as the two-year renewal will allow the school to have additional years of data.

Sims-Fayola International Academy

2014 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 1-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

Sims-Fayola International Academy serves 198 students comprising 78% FRL, 28% ELL, 20% SPED, and 93% minority students.

The Academic Status measures are declining in all three content areas, and the school is underperforming the District in Academic Status measures by significant margins. The disaggregated groupings are performing poorly compared to those of the District. The school's Academic Growth measures are also significantly below the District's averages.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are declining.

Since Sims-Fayola serves an underserved population and is comprised of a very high proportion of SPED students (20%), we believe that the school should remain open, but should be monitored very closely.

SOAR at Green Valley Ranch (GVR)

2014 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 1-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

SOAR at Green Valley Ranch serves 472 students comprising 73% FRL, 44% ELL, 6% SPED, and 76% minority students.

The Academic Status measures are relatively flat in all three content areas, and the school is only slightly underperforming the District in Academic Status measures. The disaggregated groupings are performing similarly to those of the District. The school's Academic Growth measures are also below the District's averages.

We suspect that the inconsistencies between the SPF rating and the Academic Status performance measures can be accounted for by the transition of many students from the closed SOAR at Oakland to SOAR at GVR.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

Southwest Early College

2014 SPF Rating – Accredited on Priority Watch

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

Southwest Early College serves 293 students comprising 74% FRL, 68% ELL, 5% SPED, and 95% minority students.

The school underperformed the District on its Academic Status measures. Reading was 53% compared to the District's 54%; Math was 14% compared to 27%; and Writing was 30% compared to 39%. Academic Growth measures also underperformed the District's.

The District SIAC recommends that math proficiencies be monitored closely and that the ACT scores be reviewed for steady improvement.

We are also concerned that Southwest Early College has had difficulties in retaining staff.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

STRIVE Prep – Green Valley Ranch (GVR)

2014 SPF Rating – Distinguished

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

STRIVE Prep – Green Valley Ranch serves 238 students comprising 81% FRL, 66% ELL, 9% SPED, and 87% minority students.

STRIVE Prep – Green Valley Ranch received a rating of Distinguished on its 2014 Student Performance Framework.

The school outperformed the District on its Academic Status measures. Reading was 57% compared to the District's 55%; Math was 52% compared to 48%; and Writing was 54% compared to 49%. Academic Growth measures also outperformed the District's.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, the District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms until all grades are filled. We recommend a two-year renewal in this instance, as the two-year renewal will allow the school to have additional years of data.

STRIVE Prep – Montbello

2014 SPF Rating – Meets Expectations

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

STRIVE Prep – Montbello serves 224 students comprising 93% FRL, 54% ELL, 14% SPED, and 93% minority students.

The school underperformed the District on its Academic Status measures. Reading was 44% compared to the District's 55%; Math was 37% compared to 48%; and Writing was 37% compared to 49%. Academic Growth outperformed the District's.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, the District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms until all grades are filled. We recommend a two-year renewal in this instance, as the two-year renewal will allow the school to have additional years of data.

STRIVE Prep – SMART Academy

2014 SPF Rating – Accredited on Watch

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-Year Term

Rational for Recommendation:

STRIVE Prep – SMART Academy serves 319 students comprising 90% FRL, 84% ELL, 7.5% SPED, and 97% minority students.

The school performed similarly to the District on its Academic Status measures. Reading was 52% compared to the District's 54%; Math was 39% compared to 27%; and Writing was 39% compared to 39%. However, the Academic Status measures declined significantly from 2013. Academic Growth underperformed the District's by large margins.

Student and parent satisfaction measures are acceptable.

With regard to schools that have not completed the grade level build out, the District SIAC recommends shorter renewal terms until all grades are filled. We recommend a two-year renewal in this instance, as the two-year renewal will allow the school to have additional years of data.

Alternative Educational Campus (AEC) School Renewal Recommendations

The following charter school has a State designation of Alternative Educational Campus.

This means that at least 95% of the 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, this school has earned a rating of "exceeds" 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.

Colorado High School Charter

2014 SPF Rating – Accredited on Priority Watch

2013 SPF Rating – N/A

2012 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2011 SPF Rating – Accredited on Probation

2010 SPF Rating – Accredited On Priority Watch

District SIAC Recommendation – Renew Charter – 2-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 the graduates are well prepared for post-secondary success.

Based on the assessment tools currently available to us, the committee does believe that Colorado High School's contract should be renewed for a two-year term based on the steady progress being made at the school. Additionally, the student satisfaction rate is extremely high and "exceeds" expectations on the SPF. We view this as a very important factor for those students who attend alternative schools, as it indicates whether the students believe that the school is providing them with a suitable and worthwhile education.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

The District SIAC would like to emphasize that Denver Public Schools must have an effective strategy for transitioning students from a school that will be closed to a new school. School closures are extremely

detrimental to a student's well-being, and often result in the student's belief that he, himself, is a failure, as proven by the failed school.

From the closure of Manual High School in 2006 to date, we have not heard of a successful school closure where all students are assisted with care and concern and transitioned to a better situation. 'Students First' should be the guiding principle.

District SIAC – Charter Renewal Recommendation Summary

School Name	Year Founded	Grade s	Enroll-ment 2013-2014	SPF 2014	SPF 2013	SPF 2012	Recommendation
Cesar Chavez Academy	2009	K-8	473	Accredited on Watch	N/A	Accredited on Priority Watch	Renew – 3-year Term
DSST-College View		6-8	303	Distinguished	N/A	N/A	Renew – 2-year Term
Escuela Tlatelolco	2002	K-12	129	Accredited on Probation	Accredited on Probation	Accredited on Probation	Non-renewal
KIPP Denver Collegiate		9-12	354	Meets Expectations	N/A	N/A	Renew – 3-year Term
Monarch Montessori	2012	K-5	219	Accredited on Watch	N/A	N/A	Renew – 2-year Term
Omar D. Blair	2004	K-8	800	Meets Expectations	N/A	N/A	Renew – 5-year Term
Rocky Mountain Prep	2012	ECE-5	289	Meets Expectations	N/A	N/A	Renew – 2-year Term
Sims-Fayola International School	2012	6-12	198	Accredited on Probation	N/A	N/A	Renew – 1-year Term
SOAR @ GVR	2010	K-5	472	Accredited on Probation	N/A	N/A	Renew – 2-year Term

School Name	Year Founded	Grade s	Enroll-ment 2013-2014	SPF 2014	SPF 2013	SPF 2012	Recommendatio n
Southwest Early College	2004	9-12	293	Accredited on Priority Watch	N/A	Accredited on Priority Watch	Renew – 2-year Term
STRIVE Prep – GVR		6-8	238	Distinguished	N/A	N/A	Renew – 2-year Term
STRIVE Prep – Montbello		6-8	224	Meets Expectations	N/A	N/A	Renew – 2-year Term
STRIVE Prep – SMART ACADEMY		9-12	319	Accredited on Watch	N/A	N/A	Renew – 2-year Term
Colorado HS		9-12	161	Accredited on Priority Watch	N/A	Accredited on Probation	Renew – 2-year Term