

6010

Autonomous Schools

Policy 6010

Original Adoption: 01/26/2010

Effective Date: 01/27/2010

Revision Dates:

I. PURPOSE

Minneapolis Public Schools is dedicated to preparing all Minneapolis children to be academically proficient and ready for college. The purpose of this policy is to establish the District's intent to seek out, select and implement a portfolio of schools that will operate with greater autonomy in educational programming, budget, staffing, scheduling, and governance than regular district schools in order to increase academic achievement and meet the needs of their student populations. Our research into new high-performing urban schools across the country reveals that autonomy in these areas is critical to their success.

A high level of autonomy requires an equally high level of accountability. The District will hold its autonomous schools accountable for meeting agreed upon student achievement goals through performance contracts. The Board of Directors will base its renewal, non-renewal, and termination decisions on the performance of each autonomous school in delivering increased student achievement while demonstrating operational integrity, fiscal soundness and legal compliance.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. The Board of Directors may from time to time address the needs of schools, classes of schools, or communities of students by authorizing autonomous schools. Autonomous schools may include:
1. ***District authorized charter schools***: a district authorized charter school is an independent public school authorized and held accountable for performance by the school district and is governed, operated and staffed by a non-profit organization.
 2. ***Site governed schools***: a site-governed school is a district-created school that operates with a high degree of autonomy using district employees but is governed by a site council and is accountable to the district through specific performance standards.
 3. ***Contracted alternative schools***: A contracted alternative school is a school operated by a private organization providing an alternative program for students who have experienced or are experiencing difficulty in meeting goals in traditional schools. Educational services are provided to Minneapolis Public School Students under the terms of a contract with the District and accountable to the district through specific performance standards.

- a) Other innovative forms of schools permissible under Minnesota Law.
- B. The Board of Directors shall direct the educational priorities that shall be considered.
 - 1. All proposals shall have at their core the improvement of student achievement for Minneapolis students.
 - 2. Other requirements or priorities as may be established by the Board.
- C. The Board of Directors shall invite community involvement in the review of proposals for autonomous schools to engage community support for these efforts.
- D. The Board of Directors shall invite education professionals and other community members to propose autonomous schools for consideration.
- E. All autonomous schools shall be subject to a written performance contract that includes, at a minimum:
 - 1. student achievement metrics appropriate to the school authorized, with performance goals customized to the school's student population, and
 - 2. terms and conditions of financial monitoring and oversight appropriate to the type of school authorized.
 - 3. in the case of Contract Alternative schools, the contract will identify the population of students authorized by Minnesota Law to be served by the school.
- F. The authorization, renewal or termination of any school shall be made by the Board of Directors upon recommendation of the Superintendent.
- G. The authorization of autonomous schools may be terminated at any time by the Board of Directors upon the recommendation of the Superintendent for the following reasons:
 - 1. failure to meet the requirements of the performance contract;
 - 2. violations of law, or
 - 3. other good cause shown.

II. GOVERNANCE

A. District Authorized Charter Schools.

- 1. Minneapolis Public Schools' governance of an authorized Charter school shall be limited to those items in the performance contract or other agreement that require district approval or review.

2. The Board of Directors or governing body of the authorized Charter Schools is solely and wholly responsible for the management of the Charter School.

B. Site-Governed Schools

1. The district and site council shall develop an agreement (“the Agreement”) which shall include the powers and duties delegated to the site, the details of the approved proposal, revenues to the site governed school and services to be provided by the district, and performance standards.
2. Except as otherwise provided by law, the Board of Directors retains all rights and duties not otherwise delegated to the site council of an authorized site-governed school.
3. All authorized site-governed schools shall be governed by a site council. The number and composition of the members of the site council shall be determined in the Agreement, however, all councils shall include membership including:
 - (a) teachers
 - (b) administrators
 - (c) parents
 - (d) community members
 - (e) students, if appropriate.
4. The site council shall have autonomy over the school’s:
 - (a) budget decisions,
 - (b) staffing within limits imposed by Minnesota law,
 - (c) curriculum and learning model, limited only to that described in the performance contract,
 - (d) length of school year,
 - (e) length of school day,
 - (f) leadership model,
 - (g) forms of assessment within state parameters,
 - (h) work agreements with school staff.
5. The site council may either establish its own policies or adopt the Board of Director’s policies with regard to:
 - (a) student promotion;
 - (b) student attendance;
 - (c) student discipline;
 - (d) graduation requirements.
6. Minneapolis Public Schools shall remain the legal employer of all staff at an authorized site-governed school who are subject to collective bargaining agreements and memoranda of understanding.

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7. The site council may require employees to agree to a signed individual work agreement covering:
 - (a) length of school year or school day in excess of district standards;
 - (b) work rules beyond or different from those standard in the district;
 - (c) the employee's commitment to the mission, learning program and requirements of the school and school council.
 8. In the event that the school proposes to adopt a different length of school day or school year, or different work requirements than the district's, the district shall negotiate a memorandum of understanding with the collective bargaining unit or units of the affected employees.

C. **Contract Alternative Schools.**

1. Minneapolis Public Schools' governance of the contract school or the private operator of that school shall be limited to those items in the performance contract or other agreements that require district approval or review.
2. Private operators of authorized contract alternative schools may choose to adopt the Board of Director's policies governing students enrolled in the program. Any policies so adopted shall be identified in the performance contract.
3. The private operator of an authorized contract alternative school is solely and wholly responsible for management of the authorized contract alternative schools.

III. RESPONSIBILITY

- A. The Board of Directors shall make the decisions to authorize, renew or terminate the authorization of an autonomous school.
 1. Initial authorization of Charter or Site-governed schools shall be for up to three (3) years.
 2. Renewal of a Charter or Site-governed schools shall be for up to five (5) years.
 3. The Superintendent shall recommend the term of the contract and renewals of contract with contract alternative schools.
- B. The Board of Directors shall review the performance of each autonomous school against its performance contract terms at least annually.
- C. The Superintendent is authorized to seek out, accept proposals or issue requests for proposals for establishing autonomous schools.
- D. The Superintendent shall develop a process to review proposals for establishing autonomous schools. The Superintendent shall make

recommendations for authorization of autonomous schools to the Board of Directors.

- E. The Superintendent is authorized to negotiate performance contract terms with autonomous schools approved by the Board of Directors and in accord with the school proposals or applications for authorization.
- F. The Superintendent shall develop processes for monitoring and reviewing the performance of autonomous schools against their performance contracts. The Superintendent shall report the findings of such monitoring and review to the Board of Directors no less than annually. The Superintendent shall make recommendations to renew or terminate authorizations of autonomous schools.
- G. The Superintendent is authorized to promulgate regulations to implement this policy.

Legal References:

Minn. Stat. §123A.05 (State-Approved alternative Program Organization)
Minn. Stat. §123B.045 (District-Created Site-Governed Schools)
Minn. Stat. §124D.10 (Charter Schools)
Minn. Stat. §124D.68 (Graduation Incentives Program)

Cross References:

MPS Policy 6121 (Intervention Program)
MPS Policy 6130 (Organizational Plan)