



6010 C

Oversight of Autonomous Schools

Regulation 6010 C

Original Adoption: 01/20/2011

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Revision Dates:

I. PURPOSE

In order to meet the requirements of greater accountability for school granted greater autonomy, careful oversight of the educational programming, budget, staffing, scheduling and governance is necessary to preserve the educational interests of students enrolled in autonomous schools. This oversight will serve both to assure that excellent education is available to students, but also that public trust in use of public funds may be maintained. Oversight will serve to improve the ability of autonomous schools to provide the academic programming for which they exist in a legally compliant and fiscally sound manner. It will also allow the district to learn from autonomous school models to improve the ability of new applicants to be successful autonomous schools and to affect the governance and management of traditional district schools. The purpose of this policy is to establish parameters for oversight of autonomous schools approved by the Board of Directors.

II. RESPONSIBILITY

- A. The Superintendent designates the Accountability Division and the Office of New Schools as the authorized district department charged with regular oversight of approved autonomous schools.
- B. The Office of New Schools through the Accountability Division shall regularly report to the Superintendent regarding oversight of all approved autonomous schools on a schedule determined by the Superintendent.
- C. The Superintendent shall report at least annually to the Board of Directors regarding oversight of approved autonomous schools.

III. OVERSIGHT PROTOCOLS

- A. **Service Agreements.** Any contract for management of approved autonomous schools shall be reviewed by the Office of New Schools staff and the district General Counsel for compliance with the school's performance contract and applicable law.
- B. **Schedule of Delivery of Reports.** The Office of New Schools and the Accountability Division will establish a schedule for the delivery of data and reports that demonstrate progress toward performance contract goals.
- C. **Pre-Opening Progress Reports.** The Office of New Schools and the Accountability Division will establish a list of required pre-opening steps with



an accompanying schedule for each approved autonomous school. The Office of New Schools shall monitor compliance with these activities and adherence to the schedule. Modifications and deviations from the required steps or planned schedule must be approved in advance by the Superintendent.

D. Council of MPS Autonomous Schools. The Accountability Division and the Office of New Schools shall establish a council of all District approved autonomous schools. Each approved autonomous school shall designate a representative to the council. The Council shall be used to share information between schools and between the schools and the District regarding issues facing each school, improving management, and increasing student achievement.

E. Educational Program.

1. The Office of New Schools and the Accountability Division will establish academic benchmarks to be reached by each autonomous school.
 - a) Academic benchmarks shall be based on State assessments taken by all students in public schools in the State of Minnesota, nationally norm-referenced exams and other assessments approved by the District.
 - b) Benchmarks may include both measurements of growth and proficiency levels.
 - c) Benchmarks shall include NCLB- AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) measures (or their successors).
2. The Office of New Schools and the Accountability Division will establish Postsecondary Access and Readiness benchmarks to be reached by each school.
 - a) Benchmarks may include level of participation in and results of students taking college entrance exams.
 - b) Benchmarks shall include graduation rate.
 - c) Benchmarks shall include the number of students earning sufficient credits to progress toward graduation with their entering class.
 - d) Benchmarks may include the level of participation in high rigor, college preparatory classes, such as AP, IB, CIS or PSEO.
 - e) Benchmarks may include participation in a post-secondary planning course or program.
 - f) Benchmarks may include assessment of those students prepared to take high school level courses in ninth grade.
 - g) Benchmarks may include percentages of students:
 - (i) gaining admission to post-secondary institutions after graduation;
 - (ii) attendance of graduates in a post-secondary institution within a year after graduation



(iii)enrolled in remedial courses during a first year of post-secondary education.

3. The Office of New Schools and the Accountability Division will establish benchmarks regarding student engagement including student attendance rates.
4. The Office of New Schools and the Accountability Division may establish benchmarks regarding the unique nature of the approved school's program that demonstrate academic achievement for its students.

F. **Financial Management.** The Office of New Schools and the Accountability Division will establish benchmarks that measure the fiscal viability as well as the compliance with generally accepted accounting procedures and required reporting.

1. Benchmarks may include levels of student enrollment including continuous enrollment or the existence of a waiting list.
2. Benchmarks may include stability of student body over and between school terms.
3. Benchmarks may include stability of staff over and between school terms.
4. Benchmarks may include analysis of the school's budget, financial accounts and documentation of both.
5. Benchmarks may include the cost of services per student paid by the school to any third party, or to its vendors collectively.
6. Benchmarks shall include whether or not the school's governing body and administration has completed required financial training.
7. Benchmarks may include requirements regarding the results of audits of the school's financial status.

G. **Governance.** The Office of New Schools and the Accountability Division will establish benchmarks that measure the efficacy of the school's governance structure.

1. Benchmarks may include review of the governing board's meeting agenda, minutes and supporting documentation.
2. Benchmarks may include level of participation in the Council of MPS Autonomous Schools.
3. Analysis of the effectiveness of the leadership and oversight of the governing body shall be included.

H. **Legal Compliance.** The Office of New Schools and the Accountability Division will review the school's compliance with applicable law and the performance contract, including, but not limited to:

1. adherence to admissions practices;

2. adherence to legal requirements of access to and services provided to students receiving or eligible for special education services;
3. adherence to legal requirements of access to and services provided to students with or eligible to have a Section 504 plan (IAP).
4. adherence to legal requirements of access to and services provided to students eligible for English Language Learners programs.
5. adherence to employment laws;
6. adherence to human rights laws;
7. adherence to all fiscal or other reporting requirements of the school's performance contract, state or federal law;
8. adherence to all safety requirements of local, state and federal law.

IV. MEANS OF OVERSIGHT

The Division of Accountability and the Office of New Schools may use any of the following to provide oversight of autonomous schools:

- A. Review of governing board documents, including contracts, minutes, agenda and supporting documentation;
- B. Scheduled and unscheduled site visits;
- C. Interviews with students, teachers, staff and parents;
- D. Review of both aggregated and individual test results;
- E. Interviews of school administrators, service providers or governing board members;
- F. Attendance at governing board meetings;
- G. Review of school generated reports;
- H. Attendance at Council of Autonomous School meetings, review of its agenda and minutes or supporting documents;
- I. Formal review procedures.
 1. Formal review procedures shall follow reasonable written notice to the school of concerns or findings of deficiencies in meeting school benchmarks; the notice shall contain a reasonable period allowed for remediation of the deficiency.
 2. Schools shall have the right to provide information regarding circumstances leading to deficiencies, remedial actions taken, and evidence of performance improvement.
 3. The District shall make all findings and review of school responses public.
 4. The Office of New Schools shall inform the Superintendent of any letter of concern to be sent to an autonomous school.
 5. The Office of New Schools shall inform the Superintendent of any formal review proceedings initiated for an autonomous school.
 6. The Superintendent shall inform the Board of Directors of any formal review proceedings initiated.



Legal References:

Minn. Stat. §123A.05 (State-Approved Alternative Program Organizations)
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 6010 (Autonomous Schools)

MPS Regulation 6010 A (Application Procedures)
MPS Regulation 6010 B (Performance Contracts)
MPS Regulation 6010 D (Renewal or Termination)