



Office of Choice Programming

Memorandum

To: DAC Members
From: Tom McMillen, Director, Choice Programming
Date: August 10, 2017
Re: Charter Application Review Team (CART) Processes

This memorandum explains the current process followed by the CART team in reviewing new charter applications, as well as the standards applied and the personnel involved. It also describes some potential changes to improve the process.

Procedure:

The DCSD Charter School Application Procedure is as follows:

1. By March 1 of each year, a new charter may submit an 'Intent to Submit Form' to the Office of Choice Programming. If March 1 falls on a weekend, the form is due the following Monday.
2. A copy of the Intent to Submit form will be forwarded to the DCSD Board of Education and DCSD department leaders as notification of the applicant's intent to turn in an application.
3. By 4:00 p.m. on March 15 of each year, the applicant must submit one printed copy and one electronic copy of the Charter School Application to the Office of Choice Programming. If March 15 falls on a weekend, the application will be due the following Monday.
4. The DCSD Board of Education and department leaders, as well as representatives of the DAC and the LRPC, are provided copies of the applications that were submitted by the deadline. These parties form the "Charter Application Review Team" (CART).
5. Within 15 days of submission of the application, the Office of Choice Programming will determine whether the application is "complete." That entails a review of whether it contains all the necessary elements as set forth in statute. In the event that the application is determined to be incomplete, the applicant will have 15 days to resubmit a complete application. If that deadline falls on a weekend, the resubmission is due the following Monday.
6. The applicant will meet with representatives of the DCSD CART team after the Choice Programming office makes a determination that the application is complete to review the timeline for the application process and to answer any applicant questions.
7. CDE and the League of Charter Schools will be contacted to determine whether the applicant has received prior assistance with the application.



8. The review process will be completed by the CART following the charter application review timeline, and the DCSD board will vote on the application within 90 days of the application deadline. If the DCSD CART team recommends that an application not be approved, and if the DCSD Board of Education does not approve the application, the applicant may appeal the DCSD Board decision to the State Board of Education, pursuant to the timelines and procedures set forth in statute.

By statute, the DAC also has the responsibility of reviewing the application no later than 15 days prior to the time the Board votes on the application.

Application Format and Rubric

DCSD uses the standard application developed by the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, and the Colorado Charter School Institute. The application is divided into 19 application components. The components appear in the application in the same order that they appear in the Colorado Revised Statutes, as amended (C.R.S. § 22-30.5-106.1). Here's a link to the standard application:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/cdechart/download/bcsqappcheckliststdocx.docx>

Each component is divided into three sections: a **Component Description**, a **Checklist for a Comprehensive Application**, and the **Evaluation Criteria**. The Component Description is a narrative designed to give the applicant background information, references to statutes, and a general explanation of the component. The Checklist for a Comprehensive Application may be used by both the applicant and the authorizer to monitor the completeness of the application. The Evaluation Criteria provides the authorizer with a means of determining the quality of the application component, but may also be used by the applicant when targeting a high-quality school program.

The components of the application and which district departments review them are as follows:

- A. Executive Summary-** Choice Programming, Outside Reviewer, DAC
- B. Vision and Mission Statements-** Choice Programming, Outside Reviewer, DAC
- C. Goals, Objectives and Pupil Performance Standards-** System Performance and Accountability, Curriculum and Instruction, Choice Programming, Personalized Learning
- D. Evidence of Support-** Planning and Construction, Choice Programming
- E. Educational Program-** Choice Programming, Curriculum and Instruction, Personalized Learning (SPED, 504, GT, ELL)



F. Plan for Evaluating Pupil Performance- System Performance and Accountability, Curriculum and Instruction , Choice Programming, Personalized Learning

G. Budget and Finance- Chief Financial Officer

H. Governance- Choice Programming, Legal Counsel

I. Employees- Choice Programming, Curriculum and Instruction

J. Insurance Coverage- Risk Management

K. Parent and Community Involvement- Choice Programming, DAC

L. Enrollment Policy- Choice Programming, Planning and Construction, Legal Counsel

M. Transportation and Food Service- Transportation Services, Nutrition Services

N. Facilities- Planning and Construction, Choice Programming

O. Waivers- Choice Programming, Legal Counsel

P. Student Discipline, Expulsion, or Suspension- Choice Programming, Legal Counsel, Personalized Learning, Curriculum and Instruction

Q. Serving Students with Special Needs- Personalized Learning, Curriculum and Instruction

R. Dispute Resolution Process- Legal Counsel, Choice Programming

S. School Management Contracts- Legal Counsel, Choice Programming

Standards of Quality Authorizing

The State Board of Education, the DCSD Board of Education, and the Office of Choice Programming have adopted the following National Standards of Quality Authorizing promulgated by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (“NACSA”). These standards should drive charter and district organizational structures and practices:

- 1. *Commitment and Capacity:*** DCSD recognizes that charter schools, along with other choice options, offer parents and students opportunities to meet identified student needs. DCSD authorizing decisions are made solely based on the best interests of pupils, the district, and the DCSD community. DCSD creates organizational structures that lead to consistent implementation of policies and practices and commits the financial resources necessary to conduct its authorizing duties effectively and efficiently.
- 2. *Application Process and Decision Making:*** DCSD implements a comprehensive application process that includes clear application questions and guidance; fosters open communication with all charter applicants; follows fair and transparent procedures; has transparent and rigorous scoring criteria; engages outside experts in the review of applications; and grants charters only to applicants who demonstrate a strong capacity through their application to establish and operate a quality charter school.
- 3. *Performance Contracting:*** DCSD executes contracts with charter schools that articulate the rights and responsibilities of each party regarding school autonomy, funding, administration and oversight, outcomes, measures for evaluating success or failure, performance consequences, and other material terms. The contract is an essential



document, separate from the charter application, that establishes the legally binding agreement and terms under which the school will operate.

4. **Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation:** DCSD conducts contract oversight that evaluates performance and monitors compliance and uses such information to inform renewal, intervention and revocation decisions while upholding schools' autonomy. DCSD ensures that schools provide fair and open access to students without discrimination. DCSD provides annual performance reports on school performance.
5. **Revocation and Renewal Decision Making:** DCSD designs and implements a transparent and rigorous process that uses academic, financial, governance and operational performance data to make merit-based renewal decisions, establishes clear criteria for renewal and revocation, and will revoke charters when necessary to protect students and the public interest.
6. **Collaboration to Improve Student Outcomes:** DCSD establishes procedures to facilitate ongoing collaboration between the District and charter schools to improve outcomes for all students. These collaborations include, but are not limited to, monthly charter administration meetings, the ability for charter administrators to join the Principal meetings in their feeder area, the ability to join the quarterly district administration meetings, and unlimited support and communication with the Office of Choice Programming. In addition, the School District regularly solicits feedback in developing policies and practices impacting charter schools.
7. **Commitment to Creating Equitable Opportunity, Equitable Responsibility and Access, and Equitable Accountability:** DCSD commits to ensuring that all schools open and operate on the basis of three equities that apply to all our schools: (1) equity in opportunity; (2) equity in responsibility and access; and (3) equity in accountability.
 - a. Equity in opportunity means that the schools have the same access to per-pupil dollars and choices about which support services they want to purchase from the district, and to the maximum extent possible, access to land and facility partnerships if the charter school meets DCSD capacity needs.
 - b. Equity of responsibility and access means that the schools must offer equitable and open access to all our students—regardless of socio-economic, disability, language or other status—and share a proportional financial burden in district-wide responsibilities such as the cost of district-wide special education funding needs for students with disabilities that are served in severe needs programs.
 - c. Equity of accountability means that all schools have the same accountability system under our School Performance Framework, including charter schools.



FAQs:

1. Q: How large is the CART team?
A: This year's CART team had 20 members.

2. Q: Is it comprised of volunteers or staff?
A: Both: 17 staff, one DAC member, one LRPC member, one outside independent reviewer.

3. Q: What are their professional backgrounds?
A: This year's outside reviewer was the former charter school program and grant manager at the CDE Schools of Choice Unit. Staff members represent their various areas of expertise for the District (i.e., budget, SPED, etc.)

4. Q: How does someone join the CART team?
A: We solicit representatives from each department, which then identify the persons from each department to join the team. We also solicit the DAC and the LRPC for members as well and identify an outside reviewer, per NACSA best practices, who is paid for their review.

5. Q: What charter applications are currently approved?
A: Lemay Academy, Parker, opening fall 2018
Apex Community, Castle Rock, opening fall 2018
Milestone Academy, opening fall 2018 *pending location and construction completion*
Ascent Classical, opening fall 2018 *pending location and construction completion*

Updates to the CART Process:

Anticipated updates to the process include the following:

1. A State Board waiver request to allow the charter application and approval process to take place over a two-year timespan will be presented to the DAC in September for review and discussion. The rationale for this request for a waiver from state statute is that new charter applicants have had increasing difficulty finishing their facilities and opening on time under the current timeline. The increased timeline will help to ameliorate these time pressures while maintaining the integrity of the process.
2. Additional CART members are needed to represent the DAC, the LRPC, and potentially the FOC. While the DAC is required by statute to have members familiar with charter



schoolthe process would be strengthened by additional input from the LRPC and the FOC.

3. Additional training for CART members would also strengthen the process, particularly for new members unfamiliar with the application and rubric. A CART “boot camp” will be scheduled in early spring in anticipation of new applications being submitted in March of 2018.
4. Continued improvements to application forms and rubrics is underway through our participation in the Colorado Association of Charter School Authorizers (“CACSA”), an information association of charter authorizers throughout Colorado. These authorizers, which include Denver, Jefferson County, DCSD, Colorado Springs D-11, the Charter School Institute, Colorado Springs D-49, and others, authorize the vast majority of charters in the state. CACSA’s goal is to increase the quality of authorizing in Colorado for the benefit of all charters, charter students, and neighborhood schools throughout Colorado.