

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE COMPACT – FINAL POLICY

Policy Code Pending

Board Approval Date: 12/17/15

I. Policy Statement.

The Board of Education (“Board”) of School District No. 1 in the City and County of Denver, State of Colorado (“District” or “DPS”) is responsible for the quality of education provided by the District and the achievement of its students. Pursuant to the District’s Denver Plan 2020 and its commitments to ensuring all students have access to high quality schools in their neighborhoods, the Board encourages policy and practice that support and improve all schools, create new high quality schools, and restart or replace persistently low performing schools.

The District’s primary focus is supporting all schools for continuous improvement such that all students have access to high quality schools that allow them to succeed and graduate college and career ready. The School Performance Compact is predicated on the belief that the District is responsible for the success of each student in its care. In the event that students are served in persistently low performing schools—even after substantive efforts to support and improve these schools the District believes students deserve fundamental transformation of their learning environments. The School Performance Compact is one part of a broader District improvement strategy, defined in the Denver Plan 2020, to “expand high-quality school choices in all communities through differentiated supports for existing schools, new school strategies, turnaround efforts and strong accountability systems.” This policy focuses specifically on establishing a transparent and consistent process to identify and designate for replacement, restart or closure the most persistently low performing schools. The School Performance Compact is driven by a sense of urgency to dramatically improve the learning environment in these schools.

Specifically, the goals of the School Performance Compact are:

1. Safeguard student and public interests;
2. Facilitate the District’s ability to reach its goal outlined in the Denver Plan 2020 of ensuring at least 80% of students have access to “Great Schools in Every Neighborhood”;
3. Ensure high educational standards and oversight for all schools the District directly runs or authorizes;
4. Encourage prompt, appropriate, and consistent responses to persistently low performing schools so that all students have access to highly effective schools; and
5. Work with urgency to increase the number of high quality schools.

The School Performance Compact shall guide the processes that inform the Superintendent’s recommendations to the Board regarding school replacement, restart and closure. The School Performance Compact provides clear and consistent principles that are aligned with the District’s educational priorities and other relevant considerations concerning school replacement, restart or closure.

II. Principles Guiding the School Performance Compact.

The principles guiding the School Performance Compact are as follows:

- a. **Accountability Across Governance Type:** The District has the responsibility of ensuring that each school it directly runs or authorizes provides a high quality education for DPS students. The District is committed to holding all public schools accountable, regardless of governance type (district-run or charter), using a common School Performance Framework across all schools.
- b. **Transparency:** The District is committed to providing a clear and transparent process across all schools for designating persistently low performing schools for replacement, restart or closure.
- c. **Equity:** All schools shall have equity of responsibility, accountability, and opportunity regardless of governance type.
- d. **Engage Communities and Families:** Criteria for designation of schools under this policy will be public as will the status of schools against such criteria, and school communities shall have the opportunity to be involved in the selection of schools that replace existing schools.

III. School Support Framework and Criteria for Designation of Schools for Replacement, Restart or Closure.

Recognizing that the District's primary obligations and resources are focused on improving the quality of its schools for all students, the Superintendent is directed to establish a clear set of supports for schools in alignment with school performance and needs, ensuring schools receive the appropriate district supports to help them work toward continuous improvement. The primary goal of the District's school support framework should be to ensure all students have access to high quality schools by building the capacity of school leadership to make adequate progress towards district expectations and improve the school's program in alignment with the school's mission. The Superintendent shall establish and publish guidelines that include clear, transparent, and equitable criteria and interventions embedded within its school quality and school support framework. Annually, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall report to the Board on the criteria, resources, and impact of its school support framework and intervention work for district run and charter schools.

When despite these efforts, a school does not meet district standards for academic growth and achievement, the District will promptly intervene to ensure that students have access to higher quality education. The Superintendent shall establish and publish guidelines to implement the School Performance Compact that include clear, transparent, and equitable criteria to designate schools as persistently low performing. The Superintendent shall use these criteria as the basis for recommendations to the Board for the designation of schools as persistently low performing and eligible for replacement,

restart or closure. Criteria will focus on student growth and performance over multiple years as well as other indicators in the District's School Performance Framework ("SPF"), student growth in the most recent year, and qualitative indicators of a school's instructional quality as captured in a School Quality Review ("SQR"). The SQR will provide information and assess how well the school's practices align with what research has shown to be effective in raising student achievement, particularly in the areas of leadership, teaching, school culture, education program, organizational health, and governance.

Schools that meet the criteria set forth in the implementation guidelines shall be designated for replacement, restart or closure, with the restart applicant determined as described below. The Superintendent shall seek to make recommendations for designation by the end of November, pending availability of data.

In accord with the principles set forth in the School Performance Compact, the District shall clearly communicate its designation decision to the affected school and community in a timely manner and provide a written explanation of the reasons for the decision based on the criteria set forth above.

IV. Community Engagement

Every family deserves choice and access to high quality schools in their neighborhood. School communities are essential partners in District improvement efforts and will be educated and informed in a timely and prompt manner when a school is nearing designation for replacement, restart or closure. Should a school be designated for replacement, restart or closure, the district will establish a clear process for the community to provide input and evaluate all approved and high-quality school applicants and proposals for matching with their school community. The Superintendent will make the final recommendation to the Board, informed by input from the school community.

V. Selection and Matching Process.

After consulting with the affected community, the District shall select an approved school applicant for placement at each school designated for replacement or restart pursuant to the School Performance Compact. Pursuant to the District's Call for New Quality Schools ("CNQS"), operators of all governance types - including members of any current school community - shall be eligible to submit an application to serve potential district needs for replacement or restart through the CNQS process. All applicants must meet the obligations and conditions set forth in the CNQS.

The District shall evaluate each application based on its alignment with the needs and priorities identified in the District's Strategic Regional Analysis ("SRA") and the annual CNQS as well as the Facility Allocation Policy ("FAP") criteria. Academic track record and performance, community support, enrollment demand, and alignment with the FAP will be key criteria considered.

Using criteria set forth in the FAP and considering input from the community, placement matches will be made between schools approved through the CNQS process and schools designated for replacement or restart.

The Board directs the Superintendent to define clear requirements for school applicants and ensure they are clearly communicated to potential applicants through the implementation guidelines and CNQS. There may be situations in which a school is designated for closure, rather than restart (e.g., a charter school or a district-run school with declining enrollment). In such situations, the school facility may or may not be eligible for re-allocation through the FAP based on district considerations.

VI. School Development Supports

District staff shall be responsible for identifying and attracting a pipeline of high quality school applicants, regardless of governance type, whether they be school networks that are replicating a school model or new school design teams. District staff shall create conditions to support recruitment and retention efforts, including appropriate supports for all applicants in the design phase and prior to opening for applicants selected to serve the school community.

VII. Policy Implementation

The Board directs the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee to implement this School Performance Compact starting in Fall 2016. Decisions of schools designated for replacement, restart or closure made under the School Performance Compact will be determined beginning in Fall 2016. Nothing in this policy precludes the District or the Board from taking additional appropriate action in the best interest of students with regard to low performing schools before or after Fall 2016. In order to ensure faithful implementation, the Board also directs the Superintendent to develop clear and comprehensive Implementation Guidelines that are reviewed by stakeholders and brought forward to the Board for review and public discussion prior to policy implementation.