

# THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

SECTION: CHARTER SCHOOLS

TITLE: INTRODUCTION

ADOPTED: APRIL 24, 2014

REVISED:

## 400. INTRODUCTION

### 1. Mission & Vision

The School Reform Commission (“SRC”) is committed to providing high-quality public education to all students in Philadelphia. The SRC recognizes that charter schools are an important part of that commitment, representing expanded options for parents/guardians and providing additional opportunities for innovative programs and improved student achievement.

The SRC is committed to the development of high-quality charter schools as part of a system of education for all students in Philadelphia. The School District of Philadelphia (“District”) will work in collaboration with charter schools to develop high-quality education options for students, relieve overcrowding at District schools, expand opportunity in underserved neighborhoods, and provide specific academic programs for underserved student populations. The SRC is committed to a system in which traditional District and charter schools work collaboratively and for the benefit of all students in Philadelphia.

As the oversight body for a school district in distress, the SRC is responsible for the sound allocation of limited financial resources to all public schools in Philadelphia, both District schools and charter schools. In conjunction with its role as authorizer of charter schools in Philadelphia, the SRC is committed to considering the financial health and sustainability of the system of public schools in Philadelphia including District-managed schools.

It is the policy of the SRC that charter schools may operate with a high level of autonomy in educational programming, budget, staffing, scheduling, and governance. In exchange for this high level of autonomy, charter schools will be held accountable for meeting high and measurable academic, operational, and financial standards within established accountability systems.

The SRC is committed to the development and implementation of clear, transparent policies and procedures that are grounded in research-based high-quality authorizing

practices and meet nationally-recognized standards. District procedures promulgated under this section shall be consistent with SRC policy unless the procedure is approved through SRC resolution.

## **2. Commitment to High Quality Authorizing Practices**

The SRC commits itself to three core principles of high-quality authorizing practices. These principles, and their component parts, are:

- 1) Maintaining high standards for charter schools by:
  - a) Setting high standards for approving charter applications when new charter applications are being accepted;
  - b) Maintaining high standards and measurable objectives for all charter schools through a comprehensive performance framework;
  - c) Effectively cultivating quality charter schools that meet identified educational needs of the District;
  - d) Requiring that all charter schools sign charter agreements acceptable to the District;
  - e) Monitoring charter schools that, over time, meet the performance standards and targets set forth in their charters through established measures and metrics, including contractual benchmarks defining reasonable progress;
  - f) Closing schools that fail to meet standards and/or targets set forth in law and by agreement; and
  - g) Rewarding schools that meet or exceed CSO standards and/or targets.
- 2) Upholding charter school autonomy by:
  - a) Honoring and preserving core autonomies crucial to charter school success, including:
    - i. Governing board independence from the authorizer, and
    - ii. Recognizing the school's autonomy in managing personnel, school vision and culture, instructional programming, and budgeting.
  - b) Minimizing administrative and compliance burdens on schools; and focusing on holding schools accountable for their student outcomes and stewardship of public resources.
- 3) Protecting student rights and the public interest by:
  - a) Making the well being and interests of all Philadelphia students a fundamental value informing the SRC's actions and decisions.
  - b) Holding schools accountable for fulfilling fundamental obligations to all students, including:
    - i. Non-discriminatory and non-selective access,
    - ii. Fair treatment in admissions and disciplinary actions, and
    - iii. Appropriate services for all students, including those with disabilities and English Language Learners, in accordance with applicable law.

- c) Holding schools accountable for fulfilling fundamental obligations to the public, including;
  - i. Sound governance, management, and stewardship of public funds, and
  - ii. Public information and operational transparency.
- d) Informing parents, students, and the public about the quality of education provided by charter schools.

### **3. Review of Authorizing Practices**

Consistent with the SRC's commitment to high-quality authorizing, the CSO shall conduct a formal review of its own authorizing practices, including authorizing policies, standards and procedures. This review shall occur no less than every three years; the review shall be presented to the SRC and made available to the public on the CSO website.