STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

May 3, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Charter School Authorizers

FROM: Mark S. Eitrem, Interim Manager, Public School Academy Unit

SUBJECT: New Schools of Excellence Application Process for Authorizers

In response to the changes and additions to the Michigan Revised School Code made in January 2010, most notably the inclusion of a new Part 6E called "Schools of Excellence" (MCL 380.551 through 561), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) hereby establishes a process to expand the opportunities for charter school authorizers to enter into 10 new Schools of Excellence contracts for high performing schools. The new law requires that the 10 new Schools of Excellence (SOE) shall be approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) if he or she determines them to be modeled after a high-performing school or program.

In addition to the initial process that permits individual developers to apply for SOE status, an additional process has been developed specifically for authorizers. This process (called the Authorizer Model) includes the MDE PSA unit being invited by the prospective authorizer to participate in the authorizer's Phase Two interview/ meeting with developers. During this interview, PSA representatives will complete a checklist that follows the Guiding Standards, Expectations, and Applicant Evidence model presented in the other SOE application (See Appendix A).

Appendix A should be provided to developers in advance so that they may be prepared to present evidence during the Phase Two interview/meeting. Following the interview/meeting the PSA representative(s) will present the results of the checklist review with the authorizer. The senior PSA representative, depending on the scope and frequency of weaknesses, may offer the authorizer an opportunity to provide additional evidentiary documentation. When the senior PSA representative is confident that sufficient due process has been afforded to the authorizer and the developer, he or she will report the results to the SPI with a recommendation to approve, delay or deny the issuance of SOE status.

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It is MDE's intent to review all evidentiary documents during the Phase Two interview/meeting so it is important that the developer be able to present their documentation in an organized and systematic way. MDE does not intend for developers to provide any documentation in advance of the interview/meeting unless the authorizer identifies a compelling reason to do so. Any correspondence with MDE during this process should be in writing (via email) and any documentation provided should be in a digital format.

Once the Superintendent makes his decision, a letter with his signature will be forwarded to applicants. There will be three types of letters. The first type of letter announces the unconditional award of a "School of Excellence" status which can then be taken back to their proposed authorizer for immediate authorization as a "School of Excellence." The second type of letter will announce the conditional award of a "School of Excellence" status. These letters will require the recipients to make minor modifications to their plans or provide additional documented evidence within a specific period of time. The third type of letters will notify the applicant that they were not awarded the "School of Excellence" status. The Superintendent's decision shall be final and shall not be subject to appeal.

CF:
Michigan Education Alliance