

Charter School Authorizer's Meeting
11/17/2010
Brighton 27-J

Discussion on Financial Transparency Act (FTA) and how it applies to ESPs:

- Questions have risen regarding the application of the FTA as it affects Education Service Providers (CMOs and EMOs). Is the ESP required to follow the FTA?
- Feedback from ESPs has been that they believe they are not required to follow the requirements
- Discussion resolved in several points:
 - ESPs should be providing an itemized accounting for schools (even when items are bought in bulk for several schools)
 - The FTA requires posting the accounts register (check register) for schools so that the distribution of funds is transparent.
 - FTA is intended to deconstruct where public funds are going. Lump sum fees to ESPs do not comply.
- Discussion also covered school level improvement as a result of FTA
 - Schools may be more aware of ESP fees and distribution as a result of FTA
 - FTA may shed more light on a move to performance contracting with ESPs

Unified Improvement Plans and Accountability: presentation from The League

- Kara Vandas and Jennifer Turnbull presented updates to the UIP process and provided resources
- CDE has requested assistance from the League in getting training to non-charter public schools as well as charters
- Regional and contracted presentations are available
- Resources and models are available on the CDE website
- Terminology and process are built into the report expectations
- Root cause analysis is causing a true shift to ownership of data
- D-11 shared that they have expanded on the UIP process by adding a peer review process
 - Peer reviewers were trained together with staff
 - Charters were included in training
 - Charters required to be at peer review training
 - Other best practices were shared at training events
 - D-11 established priority goals and directed schools to include priority areas in their action plans
- With plan due dates scheduled for January (half way through the year) guidance is to start action planning with alternative data
- Title schools and districts have additional requirements; checklists are available on the CDE website
- Discussion:
 - The charter SAC should only see summary data (not student level data)
 - The UIP is built by staff, SAC is included when early drafts are developed
 - SAC submits the UIP to the charter board
 - The charter board submits the UIP to the district
 - The charter board strategic plan parallels the UIP, but is different in that it evaluates finance and board performance (purpose of UIP is accreditation, purpose of strategic plan is to meet the vision and mission)

- First consideration for a charter school on “Turnaround” status should be closure, and an evaluation if students need to be served with a restart (new school)

Charter Operating and Charter Authorizer Standards – HB 1412 (Vinny Badolato)

- Two subcommittees
- Authorizer Standards: 5 areas of study for authorizer based on NACSA standards
- School Standards
- Committee expanding responsibilities beyond just standards development
 - May consider recommendations to online schools
 - May consider recommendations around ESPs
- Committee meetings are open and guests are welcome
- (Denise shared committee members...list here?)

NACSA Principals and Standards – Nora Flood

- The League shared the 2010 edition of the NACSA Principals and Standards (handouts included the standards and the appendices)
- Suggestion is to spend some time reviewing the content of the standards in detail
- Authorizers should read the document and provide feedback since these are the standards that the HB 1412 are likely going to use as the recommendation to the state board
- Review for Colorado viewpoint because the standards are set to be a national resource

New Authorizer related projects – Nora Flood

- The League has acquired grant money through BCSQ (Building Charter School Quality) to develop resources for authorizers
- The League, CDE, and CSI are collaborating to develop those resources
- The project will include reviewing and updating a number of authorizer resources before December 31st: Standard Application, Model Contract, and ESP provisions
- Updates are for SB 163 (accountability) and Financial Transparency Act
- New projects will include, before December 31st: Renewal Framework, Closure Process and Timeline, and Replication Readiness Checklist
- Discussion:
 - Authorizers are asked to provide feedback on Standard Application and Model Contract so that updates can incorporate field practitioner feedback
 - Participants requested that the League include the development of application reviewer training and training resources (both for new applications and for renewal applications)
 - Current funding will not include this project, however the project team acknowledged that this is on the radar. Ideally a cadre of reviewers would be developed state-wide.
 - In addition, a framework for authorizer readiness has been considered
 - Authorizers will be asked to continue reviewing any resources that are developed
 - Participant feedback:
 - Charter schools need I-9 documentation review and training in how to manage that documentation (The League has staff that can look into the issue.)
 - Schools need replication guidance, as well

High Stakes/administrative reviews – John Griego

- Questions across the state about what level and how to intervene with an autonomous charter school
- The challenge an authorizer faces: How much is too much from an authorizer, and how much is not enough?
- Is it time for a Colorado charter authorizer organization (something more formal)

- There are over 60 authorizers in CO (districts and CSI); the few at the table have the opportunity to drive the conversation with regard to best practices, training, etc.
- Conversations about “closing schools” are serious and modeling as we go forward will shape educational choice
- In district programs considering using the charter process to vet their own.

CSP Grant Post Award Information

- The CSP grant has changed to include additional requirements:
- CDE may only offer a grant to “separate and distinct” charter schools
 - Considerations include: board, program, shared services, authorizer, etc.
- Parameters around conflict of interest language are ramped up, CDE will be reviewing language already in the RFP to accommodate the new expectations
- Management companies must be kept at “arms length” from the school. Assets from the grant belong to the charter school not the management company.
- CDE must hold authorizers accountable for their performance.
 - Feedback from authorizers was requested on this issue given that CO is a “local control” state: How can CDE hold authorizers accountable for the authorizing practices?
 - HB 1412 – Standards (process and procedures will be demonstration of compliance with standards)
 - Accreditation process (does not include an authorizing component)
 - Emergency Powers Act
 - Exclusive Chartering Authority (criteria for a challenge)
 - Appeal cases and district response

League Conference – Omni in Broomfield, February 17 & 18

- Authorizer session in the morning, possibly speakers, may be in conjunction with authorizer summit this year, new resource roll-out – Feedback from authorizers is requested

Next Authorizer Meeting – January 18th at Denver Public Schools

- Topics:
 - New authorizer resources and review
 - HB 1412
 - Legislative update