Authorizer Standards Draft

Definition and Terms
Administrative capacity
Financial capacity
Organizational capacity
　　　To include governance and management structures

Standards and Practices for Authorizers of Multi-District Online Schools*

It is recommended that the following standards and practices provide the foundation for the Colorado Department of Education's evaluation and certification of authorizers of multi-district online schools. It is also recommended that authorizers of multi-district online charter schools first align practice with the previously adopted NACSA standards, followed by these standards specific to multi-district online authorization.

Evaluation & Certification of Authorizers

Standards & Practices

Standards & Practices
Authorizer Commitment and Capacity
1) Ensure the district mission is inclusive of multi-district online schools
2) Demonstrate sufficient staffing and expertise
3) Expenditures on oversight and support of multi-district online schools should be annually reported.
Application Process and Decision Making
1) Ensure transparency
2) Establish rigorous approval criteria
3) Establish rigorous performance standards aligned to the state accountability system
4) Implement a rigorous decision making practices
5) Define a timeline for local application and oversight processes
Performance Contracting (*for charter schools or any school utilizing an educational service provider*)
1) Identifies material terms to be included in performance contracts (such as, but not limited to: size of school, scope of service, cost, deliverables, etc.)
2) Identifies how the rights and responsibilities of both parties will be defined in performance contracts, including but not limited to:
a) The performance measures, consequences, and mechanisms by which the school governing board will hold the provider accountable for performance, aligned with the performance measures in the charter contract
b) Terms of any facility agreement that may be part of the relationship
c) Assurances that the school governing board, at all times, maintains independent fiduciary oversight and authority over the school budget and ultimate responsibility for the school's performance

Commented [MS1]: Suggested change: "to implement policies and plans included in the application"

    d) Respective responsibilities of the governing board and service provider in the event of school closure

3) Defines performance standards aligned to state accreditation
4) Describes practices adopted by the authorizer to ensure alignment with national best practice recommendations for educational service provider contracts, such as, but not limited to:
   a) Clear evidence of their capacity to operate new schools successfully while maintaining quality in existing schools (if applicable)
   b) Documentation of their educational, organizational, and financial performance records based on all existing schools (if applicable)
   c) Presentation of their growth plan, business plan, and most recent financial audits
   d) Disclosure and explanation of any existing or potential conflicts of interest between the school governing board and proposed service provider or any affiliated business entities
      i) Clear establishment of the primacy of the multi-district online school contract over the third-party contract
      ii) Clear identification of the multi-district school governing board as the party ultimately responsible for the success or failure of the school, and clearly define the external provider as a vendor of services
      iii) Prohibition of the third party from selecting, approving, employing, compensating, or serving as school governing board members
      iv) Requirement that all instructional materials, furnishings, and equipment purchased or developed with public funds to be the property of the school, not the third party

Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation
1) Define timelines (at a minimum, annually) for review and provision of feedback based on, but not limited to, comprehensive performance outcome data that is inclusive of review of both SPF and UIP
2) Describe compliance monitoring procedures and explain how they will be made transparent to schools

Review and Accountability Decisions
For authorizers who directly operate a multi-district online school, these standards refer to decisions or actions the district would take as part of ongoing review and intervention.

For authorizers of charter or contract schools, or authorizers who contract with an educational service or management provider to manage one or more multi-district online schools, these standards guide actions and decisions related to: review, renewal, intervention, and revocation.

1) District plan explains procedures for review, as well as, how those procedures will be made transparent and clearly communicated.
2) District plan describes a comprehensive body of evidence that includes, at a minimum, the SPF and UIP, to be analyzed in making all intervention and/or renewal decisions.
3) District plan describes the basic content of comprehensive reports the authorizer will provide to schools in advance of intervention or renewal decision making.
4) When applicable, the authorizer grants renewals of schools or service contracts only for schools meeting expectations of performance, as defined in district policy or the performance contract.

*Based largely on NACSA Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing

System & Process Elements for Authorizers of Multi-District Online Schools

CDE Review and Certification Criteria

It is recommended that the following system and process elements serve as the basis for the Colorado Department of Education's review and certification of authorizer's of multi-district online schools.

Evidence according to each standard/area should be utilized as the foundation for evaluation and decision-making regarding authorizer capacity to successfully authorize multi-district online schools.

It is recommended that the Colorado Department of Education collect signed assurances for those standards that speak to a local district's commitments. Alternatively, for those standards that either identify local polices to be created, or ask an authorizer to describe an approach to quality authorization, CDE shall seek, through written application, information from applying districts about their existing policies, new policies, and plans for implementing these standards.

Evaluation

Standard / Area	Evidence

Commitment and Capacity of Authorizers	1) Ensure the district mission statement is inclusive of multi-district online schools (District or BOCES commitments to be made through assurances to CDE)
	 a) Assurances that the authorizer
	   i) Will hold schools accountable for their performance
	   ii) Has expertise in implementing and supporting online learning as differentially appropriate for traditional vs charter models.
	 b) Promise of accountability to the public
	   i) For the proper stewardship of educational resources
	   ii) To commit to offering quality, sustainable education options to students
	 2) Demonstrate sufficient staffing and expertise
	 a) Demonstration of prior performance (not limited to management of online schools), if available
	   i) To include local or state measures of success for students participating in existing online programs or schools operated by the district or BOCES.
	   ii) To include local or state performance measures of success for existing charter or contract schools authorized by the district or BOCES
	 b) Description of the responsibilities of the district or BOCES personnel and teachers, and their qualifications
	 c) Describe and provide rationale for staff time (or equivalent) and financial resources devoted to authorization activities
	 d) Demonstration of plan for district or BOCES personnel and teacher professional development

Commented [MS2]: CDE to develop a skip pattern review process to appropriately distinguish between oversight of a traditional model from that of a charter school model.

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Standard / Area	Evidence
	3) Plan for evaluation of its authorizing practice against state standards for quality multi-district online school authorizing and recognized effective practices and development of improvement plans, as needed

School Application Process and Authorizer Decision Making	Districts and BOCES who are certified as multi-district online school authorizers may decide to directly manage and operate multi-district online schools. Similarly, Districts and BOCES may choose to establish a contract with an educational service or management provider. Separately, districts may also choose to authorize charter schools or contract schools. The following components and criteria for an application process may be used by a district choosing to directly manage and operate schools as components and criteria for plans, rather than for applications to be reviewed. As such, the terms "application/plan" will be used throughout the section. Districts or BOCES planning to play both direct management, and charter, contract or service provider authorization roles should address their processes for both in their application.
	
	1) Description of the application/plan and review process the authorizer will use to make decisions regarding the granting of new multi-district online schools. The following elements should be included in processes for charter or traditional models, with or without ESPs.
	   a) Explanation of rights and responsibilities of both authorizer and applicant
	   b) Identify sources of academic outcomes data that will form the evidence base for decision making (including but not limited to the CDE SPF)
	      i) Including state-mandated and other standardized assessments, student academic growth measures, internal assessments, qualitative reviews, and performance comparisons with other public schools in the district and state
	   c) Identify sources of financial data that will form the evidence base for decision making, grounded in professional standards for sound financial operations and sustainability
	   d) Evidence that training and supports for school staff are sufficiently provided.
	   e) Evidence of rigorous application evaluation criteria and evidence of transparent and consistent procedures for decision making.
	   f) Evidence that performance outcomes serve as the primary basis for decision making.
	   g) Define the sources of organizational data that will form

Commented [MS3]: OTF members need to provide a list of components and criteria for each: plan and application

Standard / Area	Evidence
	the evidence base for decision making, focusing on fulfillment of legal obligations, fiduciary duties, and sound public stewardship h) Clearly defined timeline for submission, review, and decision

Performance Contracting

Suggested Change	OTF Comment(s)
Performance Contracting (if applicable)	

1) Description of the evidence of material terms, rights and responsibilities of parties, and performance standards reliant on objective, verifiable, and state aligned data sources.

> **Commented [MS4]:** Gretchen to provide language for special populations; OTF needs to return to this once this language is provided to determine how this will be worded.

   a) Description of services appropriate for all students, including those with disabilities and English learners.

Suggested Change	OTF Comment(s)
Description of **important components of an effective online school, which must meet the needs of all students**.	

   b) Description of processes for successful entry to and exit from the school, including transition to another school, if necessary, for all students
   c) Description of student and family engagement, and community outreach
   d) Evidence that training and supports for school staff are sufficiently provided

2) Description of the contracting process for multi-district online schools.
   a) Define clear, measurable, and attainable academic, financial, and organizational performance standards and targets that the school will utilize when determining renewal, including but not limited to state and federal measures

Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation

1) Description of the annual review process.
   a) Description of the activities of the review process, including site visits (physical and/or virtual), review of enrollment trends, types of outcomes used, financial audits, and annual report creation, and how these will be used in decision making

2) Description of compliance monitoring and procedures.
   a) Provides clear technical guidance to schools as needed to ensure timely compliance with applicable rules and regulations

3) Assurance that monitoring will be minimally invasive and in

Standard / Area	Evidence
	line with school autonomy.
Renewal, Intervention and Revocation Decision Making (if applicable)	1) Description of procedures and timelines for review, renewal, intervention and revocation using clearly defined criteria for renewal, and charter revocation processes (if applicable), and provides clear guidance regarding performance concerns, available remedies, and support to be provided by the authorizer

Further Recommendations

1. Review and certification of all authorizer's currently overseeing multi-district online schools be completed on or before January 1, 2016.

OTF Comment(s)
"January 1, 2016 provides only six (6) months to do this work."
"How does this fit with current legislation?"

2. Ongoing reviews of all authorizers of multi-district schools occur every 5 years.

Suggested Change	OTF Comment(s)
Ongoing reviews of all authorizers of multi-district schools occur every 5 years so long as School Performance ratings remain at either "Performance" or "Improvement." The state reserves the right to modify the frequency of review for an authorizer of one or more multi-district online schools in priority improvement or turnaround status	

3. The CDE is charged with clarifying the effect on a multi-district on-line school if the school's authorizer loses certification, including but not limited to establishing and making known to schools the types of actions and consequences that they may.

Suggested Change	OTF Comment(s)
The CDE is charged with clarifying the effect on a multi-district on-line school if the school's authorizer loses certification, including but not limited to establishing and making known to schools the types of actions and consequences **(omit that)** they may **face**.	

    a. Any State Board Decisions to remove authorizing capacity from a district, BOCES or CSI as of July 1 of any year must be made by July 20 of the prior year.

Suggested Addition	OTF Comment(s)
A district's current DPF rating should be considered when weighing the evidence	

regarding capacity to perform authorizing duties	

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