

Denver Public Schools

OFFICE OF SCHOOL REFORM AND
INNOVATION

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To: Members, Board of Education
From: Kristin Waters, Assistant to the Superintendent for Innovation and Reform through Tom Boasberg, Superintendent
Subject: Recommendation concerning the Innovation Plan for Cole Arts and Science Academy
Date: June 15, 2009
Recommendation: Approve

On May 18, 2009 Denver Public Schools received a plan from Cole Arts and Science Leadership Academy to be designated as an Innovation School. The proposed plan would allow for diverse approaches to learning and education within the school, improve educational performance through greater school autonomy and managerial flexibility; encourage innovation in education by providing the local school community and principal with greater control over levels of staffing, personnel selection and evaluation, scheduling and educational programming with the goal of achieving improved student achievement; and encourage finding new ways to allocate resources.

The Office of School Reform and Innovation coordinated the review of the proposal with the CAO team, Budget and Legal. Reviewers considered the following criteria consistent with statute:

- Demonstrated teacher support (50% for all waivers of statute, rules and policy; 60% for all waivers of local collective bargaining agreement) *CRS 22-32.5-104(3)(f) & CRS 22-32.5-109(1)(c)* - OSRI
- Whether the budget is fiscally unfeasible *CRS 22-32.5-107(3)(II)*- Office of Budget and Finance
- Whether the Innovation Plan is likely to result in lower student achievement *CRS 22-32.5-107(3)(I)*- Office of the Chief Academic Officer
- Application meets all other statutory requirements- OSRI

We believe in general that granting schools greater authority and flexibility over matters of personnel (including the selection, evaluation, retention, promotion, and dismissal of faculty), the use of time (including how time is utilized during school day and the length of the school day/week/year), and the use of student-based budgetary funds are critical elements in meeting the needs of the students of that school, improving student achievement, and fostering a heightened sense of empowerment and accountability in schools. We find specifically that the Innovation Plan is well-designed and thoughtfully structured to advance these goals.

The Office of the Chief Academic Officer will be responsible for continued review, implementation, and accountability for all instructional elements of the plan and, in doing so, will utilize the School Performance Framework and its Incentives and Intervention guidelines.

Based on these evaluations and the future monitoring and oversight of the CAO team, District staff has determined that approving this plan would be in the best interests of the pupils, the district, or the community and is recommending that the application be approved.