

**KIT CARSON SCHOOL DISTRICT R-1
REQUEST FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT OF INNOVATION STATUS
AND SUPPORTING PLAN FOR INNOVATION SCHOOL ZONE
JANUARY 7, 2011**

A. Statement of Intent

By this application, the Board of Education ("Board") of Kit Carson School District R-1 (the "School District") hereby requests that the State Board of Education ("State Board") designate it as a school district of innovation as of the 2011-2012 school year pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute §§ 22-32.5-101 et seq. (2010) (hereafter the "Innovation Schools Act of 2008"). Toward this end, the School District submits for the State Board's review and consideration the following plan for an innovation school zone which will include all of the public schools in the School District (the "Innovation Plan").

B. School District Information and Mission Statement

The School District is a Colorado public school district located in Kit Carson, Colorado. The School District consists of three schools, Kit Carson Elementary, Kit Carson Junior High School, and Kit Carson High School, all of which are located in one building under the administration of one superintendent and one principal. The District educates 110 students and employs approximately 17 staff.

The School District's mission is to provide a safe environment, meaningful opportunities and innovative educational programs for all students so that they reach their learning potential including that they meet or exceed district established standards, through partnerships between home, school and the community.

Competent teachers are critical for providing a safe environment, meaningful opportunities, and innovative educational programs for all students. The School District is at a distinct disadvantage in attracting and retaining competent teachers due to its remote location and its inability to offer salaries and benefits comparable to school districts in metropolitan areas. Though the School District has been creative and resourceful in serving the unique needs of its students, many of the barriers to achievement are not local policy, but instead state and federal mandated policy requirements.

Innovative school zone status will enable the District to attract new teachers and retain existing ones through increased flexibility in teacher qualification requirements, employment terms and conditions, and evaluation procedures. The Board feels strongly that, in addition to the Board and the District administration, the members of the School District community are the best judges of the Board's hiring choices. Local accountability is high in Kit Carson and the wisdom of hiring a non-traditional teacher will be determined by state and local assessments plus evaluation scores from the District's chosen evaluation instrument.

C. Description of Proposed Innovations

The School District proposes innovations in the following areas:

1. Teacher Qualifications, Training, and Professional Development

The Board proposes to hire both licensed and non-licensed professionals to instruct, direct, and supervise the instructional programs in the School District's schools. The Board intends to decline all Title I and Title II funding from the federal government and, therefore, will not be subject to the "highly qualified teacher" requirements of No Child Left Behind.

To ensure that non-licensed teachers are providing appropriate instruction, the School District will create a professional growth plan for each non-licensed teacher which will provide for (1) the attainment of college credit in specified content areas, (2) experience working with diverse learners, and (3) improvement of pedagogical methods. Each non-licensed teacher will have input on the substantive content of his or her professional growth plan, but each professional growth plan is subject to final approval by the applicable building administrator. Disputes regarding an individual growth plan may be appealed to the Board, whose decision on the matter will be final.

The School District also will contract with the East Central Board of Cooperative Educational Services to offer non-licensed teachers professional development mandatory training in data usage, instructional techniques, and content-specific training. Finally, non-licensed teachers will be required to participate in Colorado Growth Model and Colorado State Standards training courses.

The School District will reserve the right to require a non-licensed teacher to obtain a valid teaching license from the Colorado Department of Education if the applicable building administrator, in consultation with the School District superintendent and building administrator, determines that student achievement will be enhanced by the attainment of such license.

2. Teacher Employment and Dismissal

The School District proposes two types of teacher employment status: (1) probationary status and (2) regular-teacher status. Probationary teachers will be offered one-year, renewable contracts that may be non-renewed for any reason deemed sufficient by the Board. The Board's nonrenewal of a probationary contract will not be a grievable. During the term of a probationary teacher contract, the Board of Education may terminate the contract for just cause in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act. A probationary teacher will be eligible for, but

not guaranteed, regular teacher status after completing five years of successful teaching experience in the School District or elsewhere.

In contrast, regular teachers may be offered multiple-year, renewable contracts. At the end of a regular teacher's contract term, the Board of Education will have the authority to (1) renew the contract for another multi-year term; (2) renew the contract as a one-year probationary teacher contract; or (3) non-renew the contract for any reason deemed sufficient. The Board's action at the end of the regular teacher's contract term will not be grievable. During the term of a regular teacher contract, the Board of Education may only terminate the contract for just cause in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act.

A teacher's employment status in the School District will be subject to the Board's discretion and will be a function of the individual teacher's work experience as a whole, and not just his or her work experience in the School District. As such, the Board will have the authority to offer a teacher with more than five years of successful teaching performance who is new to the School District a multiple-year, regular teacher contract. For example, a teacher having fifteen years of successful teaching performance in another Colorado school district may be offered a regular teacher contract with a multiple-year term. This innovation is to provide teachers with greater long-term job stability and better employment benefits. Therefore, subject to the Board's discretion, incoming teachers with applicable levels of experience will be eligible for biennial or triennial evaluation schedules under Subsection 3 below, except that each teacher shall be evaluated during his or her first year of employment in the District.

Teacher contracts will not be automatically renewable; rather, Board action will be required to renew probationary and regular-teacher contracts.

3. Teacher Evaluation

The School District proposes to conduct annual evaluations for probationary teachers and for regular teachers having ten years of teaching experience or less. Regular teachers having more than ten years of experience but less than twenty years of teaching experience shall be evaluated every other year. Regular teachers having twenty years or more of teaching experience shall be evaluated once every three years. However, a negative evaluation in any year shall necessitate a follow-up evaluation the next year.

The District's evaluation tool will be divided into four main subgroups: Student Achievement, Student Relations, Staff and Community Relations and Professional Growth. Specific weighting will be as follows: (1) Student Growth (50%); (2) Professional Growth (25%); (3) Staff and Community Relations (15%); and (4) Student Relations (10%). Teachers exhibiting deficiencies in one or more areas

will be provided with improvement plans. The progress of meeting the outlined goals contained in a teacher's improvement plan will be used as the basis for determining the recommendation for renewal or non-renewal of that teacher.

D. Affected School District Policies, Programs, and Operational Documents

1. The proposed innovations will require revisions to the following School District policies:

- Applicable District policies regarding professional staff, including District Policy GC – Professional Staff, GCJA – Teacher Contract, GCOA – Evaluation of Instructional Staff, and GCOA-R – Evaluation of Instructional Staff (Regulation). Proposed replacement policies GC, GCJA (Regular Teacher Contract and Non-Licensed Teacher Contract), GCOA, and GCOA-R are attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.

2. The proposed innovations will require revisions to the following School District operational documents:

- The District's evaluation tool and related forms will be developed upon approval of the Innovation Plan and will meet the guidelines provided in Section C.3. The district's evaluation tool will be similar in nature to the templates and model evaluation instruments contained on the CDE website

E. Expected Improvements in Academic Performance

Maximum flexibility in hiring practices and teacher retention will encourage stability in the teaching ranks, thereby having a positive impact on student achievement, including increased scores on state and local assessments.

F. Estimated Cost Savings and Increased Efficiencies

A copy of the School District's 2010-2011 budget is attached as **Exhibit B**. The District anticipates no material impact on its budget by implementing the approved reforms. The School District anticipates cost savings and increased efficiency in dismissing underperforming regular teachers at the expiration of their contract terms.

G. Evidence of Administrator, Teacher, and School Accountability Committee Consent

A copy of the minutes from the Board of Education's meeting on January 7th is attached hereto as **Exhibit C**. Also attached with **Exhibit C** are the signatures of a staff representative, accountability committee chair, and the school administrators indicating their support of the application and the Innovation Plan. The Innovation Plan has received a unanimous vote from all impacted parties.

H. Statutory, Regulatory and District Policy Waivers

To implement the Innovation Plan, the District requires waivers from the following statutes and regulations:

1. Statutes

- Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-9-106, Local Boards of Education - Duties - Performance Evaluation System. The School District will continue to follow its current evaluation procedures, which comply with existing state law, but will develop its own evaluation tool as set forth in this Innovation Plan. This waiver request includes a waiver from the provisions of S.B. 191 which have yet to take effect, including the effectiveness standards promulgated by the Colorado Department of Education. Though the School District may incorporate such effectiveness standards in the future, the School District desires the flexibility to implement its own evaluation tool beginning with the 2011-2012 school year and to tailor such tool to current and future instructional programs in the District.
- Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-63-103(7), (11), Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act – definition of probationary/nonprobationary teacher. As set forth in Section C.2 above, the Board of Education will employ teachers on either a probationary or regular-teacher status based on an individual teacher's experience and performance.
- Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-63-201, Employment - license required – exception. The School District intends to decline Title I and Title II federal funding and, therefore, will not be subject to relevant provisions of No Child Left Behind. As set forth in Section C.1, the School District intends to implement rigorous professional development requirements for its non-licensed teachers and may require such teachers to obtain a teacher's license if necessary to enhance student achievement.
- Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-63-202(2)(c.5), Employment Contracts - Contracts to be in Writing - Duration - Damage Provision, mutual consent hiring. The School District only has one principal who exercises administrative functions for all three District schools. The Board of Education routinely consults with the principal with respect to teacher hiring decisions and will continue to do so if the Innovation Plan is implemented.
- Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-63-203(1)-(4), Probationary Teachers - Removal and Nonrenewal of Employment Contract. As set forth in Section C.2, the School District intends to extend the number of probationary teaching years required for regular-teacher status from three years to five years, regardless of whether such experience is in the School District or elsewhere. Probationary teachers in the School District will be afforded the same statutory protections as set forth the Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act, except that contract renewal shall not be automatic.
- Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-63-203.5, Nonprobationary Portability. As set forth in Section C.2 and beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the School District intends to implement its own portability requirements for teachers with the requisite qualifications and experience.

2. Regulations

- The School District requests a waiver of all regulations related to the statutory waivers set forth in Section H.1 above, including regulations promulgated in accordance with S.B. 191.

I. Collective Bargaining Agreement Waivers

There is no collective bargaining agreement between the School District and the School District teachers.

J. Propriety of Innovation School Zone

Since the School District's schools are located in one building under the supervision of one building administrator, the Innovation Plan is only possible with the participation of all School District schools. As set forth in Section G, the Board and the School District community are in support of the District's designation as an innovation school zone.