



June 22, 2020

Winona Area Public Schools
Dr. Maurella L. Cunningham
Director of Learning and Teaching
903 Gilmore Avenue
Winona, MN 55987

Dear Dr. Cunningham:

Thank you for submitting a revised application on June 1, 2020 to exit authorizer corrective action status as required by the Minnesota Department of Education's (MDE) letter dated December 2, 2019. Your investment of time and resources to prepare an application and provide a response to MDE's initial review is recognized.

Unfortunately, MDE is unable to approve the revised charter school authorizer application submitted by Winona Area Public Schools (WAPS). MDE's initial review identified deficiencies in the application, some of which were addressed by WAPS in the revised application. However, significant deficiencies remain in the revised application. A rubric generated by MDE's review of the revised application is enclosed with this letter and provides additional information regarding these deficiencies as well as elements in need of clarification in the following measures:

Part A: Authorizer Capacity and Infrastructure

- Measure A.1 – Authorizer Mission
- Measure A.2 – Authorizer Vision and Organizational Goals
- Measures A.3 & A.4 – Authorizer Structure of Operations & Authorizer Staff Expertise
- Measure A.6 – Operational Budget for Authorizing the Portfolio of Charter Schools
- Measure A.7 – Authorizer Operational Conflicts of Interest
- Measure A.8 – Ensuring Autonomy of the Schools in the Portfolio
- Measure A.9 – Authorizer Self-Evaluation of Capacity, Infrastructure and Practices
- Measure A.11 – Authorizer Compliance to Responsibilities Stated in Statute

Part B: Authorizer Processes and Decision Making

- Measure B.1 – New Charter School Decisions
- Measure B.2 – Interim Accountability Decisions
- Measure B.3 – Contract Term, Negotiation and Execution
- Measure B.4 – Performance Standards
- Measure B.5 – Processes for Ongoing Oversight of the Portfolio of Charter Schools
- Measure B.9 – Charter School Renewal or Termination Decisions

Consistent with Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.05, subdivision 3(a), and as communicated in MDE's December 2, 2019 letter, WAPS had 20 business days to address the deficiencies to the commissioner's satisfaction. As stated in the December 2, 2019 letter:

After the 20 business days expire, the commissioner will have 15 business days to make a final decision. The final decision shall either be approval, in which case WAPS' corrective action status will be lifted effective the approval date, or disapproval, in which case MDE will subject WAPS to the corrective action originally proposed July 8, 2019, which is the termination of WAPS' ability to authorize charter schools.

This letter provides notice of the commissioner's final disapproval of WAPS' application. As such, MDE will subject WAPS to the corrective action originally proposed July 8, 2019, which is the termination of WAPS' ability to authorize charter schools. The commissioner's authority to implement this corrective action is provided in Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.05, subdivision 6. The effective termination date will be June 30, 2021, or the date both authorized schools have formally transferred to another authorizer, whichever occurs first. At that time, WAPS will cease to be an approved authorizer of charter schools in Minnesota.

Per Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.05, subdivision 6, MDE will assist WAPS' two authorized schools in acquiring new authorizers. MDE's Charter Center staff will be reaching out to the two authorized schools to discuss the change in authorizer process and share information about prospective authorizers.

This decision does not prohibit WAPS from becoming a charter school authorizer in the future. An application to become an approved authorizer can be submitted in an application period following the effective termination date. MDE's Charter Center staff can provide support and technical assistance should you choose to do so.

Please contact Paula Higgins, Charter Center Supervisor, at paula.higgins@state.mn.us or 651-582-8315 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Mary Cathryn Ricker, NBCT
Commissioner

cc: Annette K. Freiheit, Superintendent, WAPS (email only)
Nancy Denzer, Board Chair, WAPS (email only)
Daron Korte, Assistant Commissioner, MDE (email only)
Jennifer Nelson, Charter Center Director, MDE (email only)
Paula Higgins, Charter Center Supervisor, MDE (email only)
Karen Calcaterra, Charter Center Specialist, MDE (email only)
Mike Schultz, Charter Center Specialist, MDE (email only)

encl.: 20.06-22 WAPS Corrective Action Authorizer Application Review Rubric - FINAL