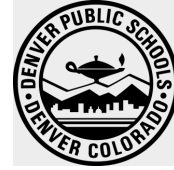


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**DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

900 Grant Street, Denver, CO 80203



**Waiver Request by Denver Public Schools on Behalf of the Math and Science Leadership Academy**

To the Colorado State Board of Education:

In accordance with C.R.S. 22-2-117, Denver Public Schools (DPS) hereby submits the following application for a waiver from C.R.S. 22-60.5-301 on behalf of the Math and Science Leadership Academy (MSLA), a new DPS school formed in partnership with the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA).

In June 2008, the DPS Board of Education officially resolved, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, to request this waiver on the grounds that it is necessary to “enhance educational opportunity within the school district” and because “complying with the requirements for which the waiver is requested, significantly limit educational opportunity within the school district.” C.R.S. 22-60.5-301(1)(a). Specifically, a waiver of state law governing principal licensure is needed in order to implement the Board of Education’s approval of a teacher-led school, the Math and Science Leadership Academy. The school’s management structure and cannot be implemented without a waiver of the statutory requirement that a school leader hold a principal’s license.

**Background**

In the spring of 2008, a new school design team formed by the DCTA and comprised of accomplished teachers and education experts, submitted an application to open the Mathematics and Science Leadership Academy, a teacher-led school. A rigorous review of the application was conducted by a panel of experts was assembled by Denver Public Schools and the panel was comprised of both in-district staff and non-district professionals. This review included an in-depth examination of the feasibility and practical aspects of implementing a teacher-led school, as well as the educational plan and goals of the school. Having addressed all district requirements and concerns, the school proposal was unanimously approved on November 20, 2009 for the Mathematics and Science Leadership Academy to begin operation for the 2009 -2010 school year.

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## **Rationale**

The design of the Mathematics and Science Leadership Academy as a teacher-led school is based on a large body of research that has focused on school conditions that are necessary to attract and retain accomplished teachers to work in high-needs schools. Overwhelmingly, this research indicates that accomplished teachers want to be able to work with like-minded colleagues, make substantive decisions that impact student learning and assume leadership roles within the school. Accomplished teachers are also quite clear about the fact that they will not work for ineffective school leaders.

At the other end of the spectrum there is a significant challenge in retaining teachers that are new to the profession. Over 50% of teachers leave the profession in the first 3 years. This creates a tremendous burden on districts, schools and children. This new generation of workers (teachers) is very interested in assuming leadership roles and having a voice in the workplace (school). In a Public Agenda survey, 65% new teachers (five years or less) indicated that they would be somewhat or very interested in working at a school run and managed by teachers.

The design of the Mathematics and Science Leadership Academy as a teacher-led school is an intentional effort to attract accomplished teachers to a high-needs school and to create an innovative school structure that will retain teachers who are new to the profession. This design is intended to empower teachers to take on leadership roles and assume responsibility for the success of students and the school. In this model all members of the learning community are responsible for its success.

## **Compliance**

The Mathematics and Science Leadership Academy will adhere to the intent of the statute being waived and be accountable for all policies and procedures required of public schools. The school will have a Lead Teacher who will assume the responsibilities traditionally assigned to a principal. The Lead Teacher will be assigned an Instructional Superintendent who will evaluate her performance with input from the school staff in accordance with district policies. The Instructional Superintendent will also ensure that the Lead Teacher is in compliance with administrative rules and regulations similar to that of other school leaders.

The Lead Teacher will serve as the primary person overseeing the teacher evaluation process, by completing and signing appropriate forms and conducting meetings outlined in the district's Master Agreement. However, school staff members will conduct classroom visits, host collaborative conversations with teachers about classroom instruction and give feedback on instructional issues to the teacher. They will also, in collaboration with the teacher being evaluated and Lead Teacher, discuss the Standards and Indicators that were evident during the teacher's instruction and identified in the rubric used for teacher evaluation. In the event that teacher performance does not meet standards, the Lead Teacher will be responsible for carrying out appropriate processes and procedures that could lead to corrective action or dismissal.

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## Consent

During the interview process all staff members will be informed of the evaluation process that is to be utilized to assess teacher performance. Upon hiring all teachers will be required to sign a Teacher Acknowledgement and Waiver that clearly explains that the evaluation system is to be conducted utilizing a peer assistance and review and that they are waiving their right to having their evaluation done by a principal (see appendix C).

The school's advisory committee that currently is comprised of the members of the design team has already demonstrated its consent for the structure of the school by writing it into the proposal for the school. Once the permanent advisory committee is assembled the group will provide input and guidance on the implementation of the peer assistance and review process.

## Appendices:

- A. Math and Science Leadership Academy Performance School Application
- B. Resolution of the Board of Education
- C. Consent Documents
- D. Letter of Support from DCTA (NEED THIS)

Sincerely,

Tom Boasberg

Superintendent

Denver Public Schools

Theresa Pena

President

Denver Public Schools Board of Education

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