

PRE-OPENING MONITORING
City of Milwaukee Charter School Initiative
Charter School Review Committee
February 7, 2013

Staff of the Charter School Review Committee is responsible for monitoring an approved applicant during the time from approval to opening. If, during our monitoring, we find that an approved applicant is struggling during the pre-opening phase, we bring a recommendation to the CSRC. To date, those recommendations have all been to withdraw the approval to open a charter school.

For example, when CSRC staff learned during our pre-opening monitoring that Garden Homes Montessori audit report expressed doubts about the organization's ability to continue operating, CSRC staff brought a recommendation to the CSRC for action. After gathering additional information and holding a meeting with Garden Homes Montessori, the CSRC made a recommendation to the Common Council to withdraw approval to operate a charter school.

Following are the most common ways that CSRC staff monitor approved applicants during the pre-opening phase:

DPI funding

Is the school seeking funding? Receiving funding? Responding to DPI's information requests?

IF YES, no action

IF NO funding, request revised budget for review by financial monitor

IF budget deemed reasonable by monitor, continue monitoring. IF unreasonable, bring recommendation to CSRC

IF POOR REPORTING, problem solve with applicant and DPI; if no correction, bring recommendation to CSRC

Audits of existing organization (conversion schools; CMOs)

IF CLEAN AUDIT, no action.

IF FINDING, bring recommendation to CSRC

On-going meetings with operator

There are many opportunities to interact with the charter school operator in the pre-opening phase. While not designed to monitor the school's performance, these meetings assist in the CSRC staff, as well as DPI staff, in developing relationships with the approved applicant. On-going meetings include:

- Getting them looped in with collaborative efforts to deliver special education (CESA or other providers);
- Ensuring they are introduced to and responding to M.L. Tharps and CRC so systems are in place for reporting out financial and educational data;

- Getting them looped into the appropriate DPI divisions so systems are in place reporting out DPI-required data; and
- Meetings as requested by either CSRC staff or approved applicant.

Pre-opening benchmarks in the contract

- Adequate building and permit in place by August 1 or 30 days before opening
- Adequate enrollment by July 15
- Adequate teaching staff by July 15
- School leadership (education and financial) in place
- Line of credit or adequate liquidity in place by August 1 or 30 days before opening
- Adequate liability insurance coverage in place by August 1 or 30 days before opening
- Revised annual budget (or confirmed as unchanged) by August 1
- Annual Cash Budget by August 1 (or confirmed as unchanged)

IF ANY BENCHMARK IS UNMET, staff brings recommendation to the CSRC for termination of contract.