



Stargate Charter Renewal - Staff Recommendation to Adams 12 Five Star Schools  
Board of Education  
January 9, 2018

# Staff Review Committee

- School Effectiveness and Accountability
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Special Education
- English Language Development
- Advanced Academic and Gifted Services
- Legal Services
- Professional Learning
- Student Engagement Initiatives
- Financial Services
- Business Services (Safety and Security)
- Human Resources

# Strengths of the Application

Staff identified the following strengths of the application:

- A Tradition of strong academic performance based on Colorado School Performance model
- Successful move and expansion of its campus, including high school
- First graduating class, 2019
- History of strong financial oversight and management
- New “Adroit” program provides self-directed learning opportunities for students
- The school’s mission is well written, concise and aspirational
- Renewal application spoke directly to recent climate and culture issues. Stargate has been responsive to corrective actions directed by the OCR in relation to these formal complaints.

# Staff Identified Areas of Concern

- Accountability and Disproportionate Expenditure of Time and Resources by Adams 12 Staff
- Climate and Culture Substantiated Concerns and Allegations
- Special Populations
  - Gifted and Talented
  - Special Education
- Admissions and Enrollment Policy and Practice
- Governance

# Accountability and Disproportionate Time and Resources

- A strong collaborative and positive working relationship exists between Stargate administration and Adams 12 staff.
- Concerns are:
  - Stargate's sense of urgency and follow through when issues arise.
  - A disproportionate amount of staff time supporting Stargate compared to others.
  - Monetary resources required to support Stargate, especially regarding OCR related issues.
- Stargate must begin to take ownership of school processes, procedures and decision-making.
- A belief that the Executive Director can support progress toward legally compliant, independent decision-making at the school.

# Proposed Remedy - Conditions for Consideration

- Approve Renewal Application for a 3 year period with the possibility of a 2-year extension, pending Superintendent's recommendation to the Board of Education at the end of year three.
- Stargate progress report to the Adams 12 Board of Education twice in the 2019-20 school year (January 2020 / June 2020) and annually thereafter.
- Stargate shall indemnify Adams 12 for all costs incurred by the District, including legal fees and expenses incurred by the District to retain outside legal counsel to respond to all complaints and address any subsequent monitoring obligations.
  - Includes the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Civil Rights Division, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or the Office for Civil Rights.

# Proposed Remedy and Conditions for Consideration

- Title IX / Civil Rights - Stargate will continue through 2019-20 school year to retain the services of independent expert Title IX/Civil Rights coordinator (or mutually acceptable and qualified replacement), through a consulting arrangement.
  - The district will support costs at 25% through December 2019.
  - The spring semester of the 2019-20 school year will be at the school's sole expense.
  - This will allow Stargate to onboard an Executive Director and develop a plan for Title IX/Civil Rights oversight and compliance.
    - Plan submitted to Board of Education in January of 2020.
    - Stargate will continue to support and cooperate with the independent expert in fulfilling his/her role.
    - Stargate, the District, and the independent expert must mutually agree in writing to the plan and appropriate credentials of future Title IX Coordinator(s).

# Climate and Culture Concerns and Allegations

- History of serious culture and climate allegations and documented concerns
  - Discrimination, retaliation, bullying, offensive conduct towards students, and harassment among staff, parents, and students
- Multiple, formal Office of Civil Rights complaints between January 2017 and February of 2018
- Concerns/accusations related to violation citations issued by the Colorado Department of Human Services for failure to fulfill mandatory reporting obligations
- Complaints of administrator misconduct brought to the Stargate Board's attention, leading to complaints to district staff that the Stargate board and administration did not address the concerns in a timely, documented and accountable manner



# Proposed Remedy and Conditions for Consideration

- Executive Director
  - Hire an Academic Executive Director to oversee non-business operational functions.
  - Publicize and conduct a nationwide search for a suitable candidate for this position.
  - Fill with a qualified candidate by no later than July 1, 2019.
  - District involved throughout the application pre-screening and interview process.
- Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) Climate/Culture Goals
  - Each year the Unified Improvement Plan to include specific goal(s) to improve school climate and culture, action steps, relevant data gathering and adjustments as needed.
  - Work with a facilitator, mutually acceptable to the district, to support effective onboarding of the new Executive Director and community mediation for climate/culture improvement.
  - Facilitator and plan for community engagement/reconciliation to be mutually agreed by September 2019.

# Special Populations - Gifted and Talented

- Lack of an articulated, evidence-based continuum of services for prevention, instruction, intervention and support services for all students, and especially for those identified as having or suspected to have specialized learning needs (i.e. special education, 504, ELL, GT).
- Example - as of January 7th, 2018, over 55% (491 out of 889) of GT students identified as needing support via an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) have incomplete ALPs.

# Proposed Remedy and Conditions for Consideration

- By the start of 2019-20 school year
  - Students currently, formally identified as GT, will have a comprehensive, statutorily compliant ALP.
- Moving forward, within the first 30 days of GT identification, all students will have a formal ALP.
- Stargate to annually train all school administrators on compliance and best practice for gifted learners.
- Two administrators, one at the elementary level and one at the secondary level, will either possess or work toward, within the next 2 years on an endorsement in gifted and talented education.

# Special Populations- Special Education

- Lack of an articulated, evidence-based continuum of services for prevention, instruction, intervention and support services for all students, and especially having or suspected to have specialized learning needs (i.e. special education, 504, ELL, GT).
- Legitimate OCR/CDE special education complaints and district staff is expending time weekly in support of special ed and 504 compliance.

# Proposed Remedy and Conditions for Consideration

- Arrange and complete by June 1, 2019, at its sole cost a special education program audit
  - To be conducted by a mutually agreed upon, independent third party.
  - Based on findings, implement recommendations for improvement of procedures, safeguards, and services for students with special needs prior to the start of the 2019-20 school year.
  - Copies of the audit be provided to the Adams 12 Board of Education and administration.
  - Provide monthly updates about progress to the charter liaison.
- Hire full-time Director of Special Education before the 2019-20 school year, with professional credentials
  - District to participate in the hiring process for this position.
  - Primary function will be to implement recommended changes and to address development, including staff training, of a multi-tiered continuum of support for students who have or are suspected to have a disability.
  - Will oversee special education and 504 processes for the school.

# Proposed Remedy and Conditions for Consideration

- Stargate will provide annual training for all school administrators on compliance and best practice in special education and 504.
- If the District determines that material noncompliance with IDEA, Section 504, or ECEA has occurred in connection with any students or applicants, as evidenced by formal, substantiated complaints and/or patterns of non-compliance, the District may impose an “insurance model” special education/504 service delivery structure for the duration of the authorizing agreement (would include contract modification).

# Admissions and Enrollment Policy and Practice

- Concern that the use of IQ score for admissions is not legally compliant nor best practice, across multiple categories using a body of evidence.
- Current process may hinder culturally and racially diverse student populations access to Stargate.

# Proposed Remedy and Conditions for Consideration

- Stargate to submit a legal opinion regarding its admissions/enrollment practices and policies.
- Stargate to submit revised admissions and enrollment policy and process for review prior to the February 6th Board meeting.
  - Include an action and recruitment plan for ensuring a more diverse student population can be served at Stargate.
  - Recognize multiple categories of giftedness, aligned to CDE guidance and applicable ECEA regulations; and fully align to all applicable Colorado State Board of Education standards referenced in 1 CCR 301-88, and the CDE "Fact Sheet" on the gifted education eligibility determinations.
- Parents will not incur fees/costs in connection with the application/enrollment process beyond those fees/costs authorized by Adams 12 policy.



# Governance

- Stargate board has decided to implement a new leadership structure, with separation of operations and academics between two different Executive Directors (ED). District sees this structure as having great potential.
- Critical for the Stargate board to understand its role in supporting, empowering and supervising both Executive Directors and the new leadership structure.
- New leadership needs Stargate board support to positively impact the school's climate and culture while acknowledging the interests of all stakeholders in the Stargate community.

# Proposed Remedy and Conditions for Consideration

- Stargate board will engage in annual training with a mutually agreed upon charter consultant (e.g., Colorado League of Charter Schools) to address board best practice and compliance in regard to governance and accountability including:
  - Board ethics, effective governance practices and structures, child abuse/neglect, mandatory reporting obligations, sexual harassment and disability/civil rights issues, workplace bullying, student anti-bullying, preventing and being responsive to concerns in writing.
- Annual plan for Stargate board training submitted to District by Sept. 1, 2019.
- Stargate board to report to District designee all complaints and concerns that are brought to the Stargate board which potentially implicate compliance with law (e.g., Section 504 or sexual harassment complaints), Board of Education or District policy (e.g., anti-bullying or treatment of staff violation of Board Policy 2.2), or any provision of the Authorizing Agreement, and the board's written response to those complaints.

# Recommendation

*After thoughtful review and evaluation of the Ascent Classical Academy charter application, the Adams 12 staff provides the following recommendation for the Adams 12 Board of Education members to consider when making their decision regarding authorization:*

**Staff recommends that the Adams 12 Board of Education authorize the charter for a term of three (3) years, with the potential for extending by an additional two (2) years without renewal application, provided Stargate sufficiently satisfies the conditions established in the Board of Education's renewal resolution and contract, as determined by the Superintendent.**

# THANK YOU

District staff would like to express sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following:

## **Stargate**

Stargate staff and board members graciously welcomed the DAC and staff to the school for the site visit. In addition, the Stargate staff has been accommodating to the additional data or information requests, and they were always flexible in agreeing to scheduling requests and adjustments in deadlines.

## **The DAC Charter Review Committee**

District staff would like to recognize the efforts of this citizen committee. This group came fully prepared, they did their regular homework, were willing to engage in discourse and were thoughtful in making their final recommendation. Ultimately, they took their role very seriously in making their recommendation to the Adams 12 BOE, by giving of hours of their own time over a 12 week period. Their dedication to the process and to our district should be commended.

Charter Liaison would like to express sincere gratitude and appreciation to the staff and recognize the efforts of the staff. They worked tirelessly to review the application, participate in the site visit and to provide thoughtful feedback to inform their recommendation to Adams 12 BOE.



○ **Graduation Rates: Safety and Security**