

9/7/16 Testimony: Proposed Regulation LCB File No R108-15

Dr. Jeffrey Geihs, Assistant Chief Student Achievement Officer – CCSD Turnaround Zone

Thank you to the Board for considering revisions to what makes a school eligible for conversion to the Achievement School District.

Existing law establishes criteria for a public school to be eligible for conversion to an achievement charter school, which include pupil achievement and school performance at the school being unsatisfactory as determined by the Department pursuant to criteria established by regulation of the Department. Section 6 of this regulation prescribes the criteria that the Department will use to make such a determination.

Over the past five years, the Clark County School District's Turnaround Zone has proactively taken the lowest performing and downward trending schools and pulled the lowest of them from their geographic Zone for a four-year intervention. To date, the Zone has treated almost 30 schools, 10 of which have improved enough to exit back to their geographic Zones after extensive review of Nevada School Performance Framework data. Additionally, over the past five years, 34 schools were reviewed and placed on Continuous Improvement Plans, and 29 of those were not identified for migration to the Turnaround Zone. As a result, almost all of these schools improved and did not reemerge for Turnaround consideration. This transparent process can and should continue as it places a healthy tension on the entire system. With state support, and possibly a State Turnaround Designation, this process will only continue to improve the system. The Turnaround Zone was created to help change the entire system, not to build a Zone.

We recommend that the Department add language to consider current District efforts and processes when determining eligibility for conversion to an achievement charter school. Suggested language would be: *When it is determined that a school is eligible for conversion to an achievement charter school, the Department will allow Districts the first opportunity to make improvements through their own District-led turnaround process and efforts. If there is not a District turnaround process, the District determines they are unable to support the school, or after a specified period of time (three school years of data) the school fails to make/maintain necessary improvements after District-led efforts, then the school will remain eligible for conversion to an achievement charter school.*

CCSD's Turnaround Zone operates with a distinctive spirit of autonomy with accountability - clear target goals with the autonomy/support to help schools reach goals. This is done through a site-based empowerment philosophy based on coaching and not directives. The principal is evaluated based on improved student achievement results. Unlike any other school principal, Turnaround Zone principals receive target goals in early fall after the official release of Nevada Department of Education data to reach further achievement gains. A Turnaround Zone principal receives outcome-based evaluations! Additionally, the Zone has a uniform progress monitoring system in the areas of mathematics, reading, graduation tracking, and credit sufficiency that is monitored monthly.