

## Policy IHBHE Schools of Innovation

The Board of Trustees recognizes the importance of improving student outcomes, reducing the racial disparities gap, and achieving college and career readiness across CCSD. As such, it intends to allow schools in the district to apply for status as a School of Innovation to the Board of Trustees and to the SC Board of Education. A School of Innovation may apply for specific waivers and/or variances from state law and/or district policy, but may not apply for waivers from all state law or from all district policies.

A School of Innovation may be a small program within a school or a school-wide program. The program may be simple or complex. The application process is necessary only when requesting waiver(s) from specific SC Law(s) or Regulation(s) and/or specific District policy(ies). In addition, the program must demonstrate that it is new, innovative, and more flexible than current district programs, strategies, or approaches, per state law. The Board of Trustees will also consider applications which seek to address a program need in a targeted part of the county. If the proposal involves creating a school, a Community Stakeholder Council should be created to act in lieu of a School Improvement Council until the school is formed.

Underperforming schools may consider application as part of a turnaround plan required under SC Law 59-18 "Education Accountability Act," Article 16 "Assistance and Intervention" which require involvement of the School Improvement Council in developing the plan. The application should indicate how district and state supports available to underperforming schools have been utilized.

### **Preliminary Steps**

Before applying for School of Innovation status, the following steps should be taken:

- Create an innovative program to improve student outcomes in collaboration with the School Improvement Council.
- Work with District staff to determine whether meaningful supports are already available which would support the implementation of the innovation program.
- Determine whether specific SC law or regulations present a barrier to the plan.
- Determine whether specific CCSD policies present a barrier to the plan.
- Demonstrate that the School Improvement Council (SIC), along with other school community stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and staff have been meaningfully informed and engaged and are supportive of the program.

### **Application Requirements and format:**

The applicant must prepare all items required by the [State Dept of Ed Waiver Request](#) form, including District requirements below, *before* coming to the Board for approval. Applications should be received by the CCSD Committee of the Whole February meeting in order to be considered for implementation the following academic year. Specifically, the plan must address:

#### State Requirements

District staff are responsible to formally submit the application to the State Board of Education in accordance with State Law Section 59-19-350 "Schools of innovation exempt from applicable state statutes and regulations." The applicant will provide the required information for the application using the same format as the online [State Dept of Ed Waiver Request](#) form. These requirements are also addressed in IHBHE-AR, which details all steps for applicant submission. See also IHBHE-E "SCDE Schools of Innovation Waiver Form" for the link to the online application. IHBHE-AR and IHBHE-E will be updated as necessary to align with SCDE requirements, state regulations, and state law.

Applications which do not clearly address all sections of the [State Dept of Ed Waiver Request](#) form shall be returned for completion or denied.

### District Requirements

In addition, the Board has certain district specific requirements for School of Innovation applicants:

- A. Describe how the innovations will address district priorities.
- B. Identify specific CCSD policies for which the school is seeking exemption(s) and include rationale for why the innovative proposal requires the exemption(s). Substitute or modified policy should be included in the application.
- C. Have and maintain a fully functioning SIC composed of student (for high school), teacher, parent, principal (ex officio), and neighborhood representatives (see [SC School Improvement Council Handbook for Effectiveness, Appendix A](#) for specific requirements) and follow all aspects of School Improvement Council reporting with fidelity.
- D. Include innovations that will address mental, physical, and/or social emotional health in addition to student outcomes in academics.

More specific application requirements are addressed in IHBHE-AR.

### Accountability

Nothing in this policy permits the Board of Trustees to relinquish control or oversight of an approved School of Innovation. Transparent and timely reporting of fiscal and academic performance for each school of innovation is subject to the same requirements of other district schools.

- District staff will include approved School(s) of Innovation along with other district schools, including subsets of similar schools, in all data collection and data/fiscal analysis in all reports to the board. An MOU between the School of Innovation and CCSD may not include exemption from these reports.
- All CCSD Board policies will apply to approved School(s) of Innovation by default, including standardized testing administered by the district. The applicant may not request exemption from all CCSD policies, but only those which are specifically identified as barriers to the proposed program.
- For an established school, neighborhood attendance zone, Magnet or partial Magnet status will be maintained.

- For a new school or for an application with significant operational changes, an Operational Plan that outlines differences from regular CCSD operations is required. The Operational Plan should include any deviations from regular district support for facilities, grounds, transportation, discipline, professional development, etc. These shall be addressed in the application and formalized in a MOU between the School of Innovation and Charleston County School District. The MOU will also require Board of Trustees approval by a two thirds majority vote.
- The School of Innovation must meet interim goals described in the accountability/evaluation section of the application. If the school falls short of these goals for two consecutive years, the Board will recommend to the SC Board of Education that the School of Innovation status be terminated and any MOUs between the School of Innovation and Charleston County School District shall be suspended. The school will revert to the same status as other similar district schools.

### **Approval and renewal process**

Per state law, an application to become a School of Innovation must be approved by the local Board of Trustees with a two thirds vote in order to be considered by the SC Board of Education. Once approved, the School of Innovation will enter into an MOU with Charleston County School District based on the application, including the Operational Plan. This MOU is subject to approval by a two thirds vote of the Board of Trustees. Any substantial changes to the program, the original application, and/or the MOU, including modifications to policy, must be approved by the Board of Trustees with a two thirds vote. New waiver requests from State Laws and Regulations would also have to be reviewed by the state Board of Education. These change requests may not be made more than once per year.

Any approved School of Innovation must provide all state required reports, including annual financial reports and a 3 year assessment report (SC Code Section 59-19-350). Incremental evaluation reports based on metrics described in the application shall be submitted via the SIC to the CCSD Board of Trustees on an annual basis. In addition, district and state standardized testing data will be included in the regular data reports from staff to the Board.

- 
- A. S.C. Code of Laws, 1976, as amended:
1. Section 59-19-350 -- Schools of innovation exempt from applicable state statutes and regulations.
  2. Section 59-20-60(5) 59-20-60(6) -- Spending priority; audits; evaluations and reports; statewide testing programs; innovation initiatives; school improvement councils; Education Finance Review Committee.
  3. Section 59-155-140(C) -- State Reading Proficiency Plan.
  4. Section 59-18-16 -- Assistance and Intervention.
  5. Section 59-18-900(E) -- Annual report cards; performance ratings; criteria; annual school progress narrative; trustee training; data regulations; military-connected student performance reports.

6. Section 59-18-1310 -- Consolidation of strategic plans and improvement reports; annual submission dates.

B. S.C. State Board of Education Regulations: