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TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*

DATE: December 17-18, 2008

SUBJECT: Amendments to the Eligibility Criteria and Admissions Plan for the SEED School of Maryland

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PURPOSE:

The SEED School of Maryland, a publicly-funded residential education program for at-risk students, opened in August 2008 with its first student group of 80 sixth graders. As required by law, SEED is returning to the State Board for members' review and approval of revisions designed to address concerns that surfaced during its first year admissions process with further articulation regarding the overall admissions plan for the Maryland school, the eligibility criteria, and the student application and related materials.

BACKGROUND:

***Education Article: Title 8. Special Programs for Exceptional Children: Subtitle 7: Residential Boarding Education Programs for At-Risk Youth*** (Attachment I) was enacted by the Maryland General Assembly in 2006 to establish a residential boarding education program for at-risk youth under the supervision of the Maryland State Department of Education (the Department). A major purpose of the school is to adequately prepare students for success in college. § 8-101 and § 8-701 through 8-709 of the Annotated Code define the eligibility criteria for students applying to the school as well as establish the program as a statewide initiative. The operator selected through the State procurement process was the SEED Foundation, Inc., which formed and incorporated the SEED School of Maryland. The SEED Foundation had previous experience operating the SEED Public Charter School of DC which opened its doors in 1998.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In August 2007, the Department and SEED staff began the process required to be ready for the entering class of up to 80 eligible students entering the School in the sixth grade for the 2008-2009 school year. As SEED conducted its first year application review process, problems were encountered that needed to be addressed in year two of its operations. SEED staff has therefore provided a description of the revised application review process, including how eligibility criteria will be applied (Attachment II) and an updated application along with parent outreach materials (Attachment III) for consideration by the State Board.

Several administrative changes relating to the principal, the head of school, and managing director positions have occurred. In November, the SEED School of Maryland hired Jerry Kountz to serve as interim principal and the acting head of school. SEED Foundation staff will fill-in on management responsibilities until a new managing director can be in place. Progress at the school continues under Mr. Kountz' leadership with the anticipation that the school will meet contract required benchmarks. SEED plans to present its Mid-Year Progress Report to the Board by the end of December.

An important next step for the continued development of the SEED School of Maryland is the requested approval by the Maryland State Board of Education of the school's revisions to its approach to the eligibility criteria for enrollment, student application and the applications review process. Once approval is received from State Board, SEED will start the process of working directly with families, school systems, and others to identify potentially eligible students and to assist families in the completion of the detailed application. SEED will continue its outreach to Maryland school systems through April in preparation for the May 30<sup>th</sup> admissions lottery in order to identify the next group of 80 students who will enroll in the sixth grade for the 2009-2010 school year.

ACTION:

The Board is being asked to approve the revisions made to clarify the school's eligibility criteria, admissions application and review process for the SEED School of Maryland.

NSG/rsf  
Attachments