nacsa
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

2017 NACSA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
OUR CHOICES MATTER

# THE QUALITY PRACTICE PROJECT: WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM AUTHORIZERS WITH STRONG PORTFOLIOS

MILES CAUNIN, THOMAS B. FORDHAM FOUNDATION

RASHIDA YOUNG, DC PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

ALYSSA HOPKINS, MASSACHUSETTS DESE

CAROL SWANN, METRO NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SEAN CONLAN, NACSA



nacsa

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

# THE DEFINITION OF QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZING

Recommended Practices

Professional Expertise

# THE DEFINITION OF QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZING

Recommended Practices

Professional Expertise

Portfolio Outcomes

# THE QUALITY PRACTICE PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Identifying valued outcomes
- Identifying authorizers with strong portfolio outcomes
- In-depth case studies
- Identifying common authorizing practices

# IN-DEPTH CASE STUDIES

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute

The DC Public Charter School Board

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

The State University of New York Charter Schools Institute

# THOMAS B. FORDHAM INSTITUTE

501(C) NON-PROFIT

13 BRICK & MORTAR SCHOOLS LOCATED THROUGHOUT OHIO

JUST OVER 5,000 SCHOLARS

5 AUTHORIZING STAFF

nacsa
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

# THE AUTHORIZER PARADOX – SIMULTANEOUSLY PROMOTING SCHOOL AUTONOMY **AND** PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

- How well do you really know your schools?
    - Governing board philosophically-aligned with sponsor?
    - It's free! -- Accumulating *good-faith capital* for when it's really needed

- Does the environment in your state allow for the "authorizing" that your organization and its board have in mind?

- Organizational capacity – does it hinder or help in being the best authorizer that you can be?

# ROUTINE COMPLIANCE MONITORING

- Most of compliance documentation are submitted via Epicenter

- Examples of when customer-service focus is woven into compliance monitoring –
  - Monthly Financial Calls
  - Staff/Roster changes at school
  - Special Education

# PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

- Ohio Statutory Requirements & Contractual Obligations

- Key Components –

    1) Pre-opening visits and reviews for every school

    2) Sponsorship Annual Report (FSAR)

    3) School site visits (Fall & Spring) followed by detailed report to school & board

    4) Contract renewal process – actual results reconciled with Primary (academic) & Secondary Indicators (academic, financial, operations, & governance)

# OTHER METHODS APPLIED TO COLLECT INFORMATION & PROVIDE MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK

- Attending Board Meetings and Board Committee Meetings

- Leverage Technology –
  - State Department of Education and other government entities
  - Information Technology Centers (ITC's)
  - Service Providers in the Marketplace (Epicenter, etc.)

- Provide Technical Assistance as an Authorizer in a Meaningful and Thoughtful Way

# DC PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

SOLE AUTHORIZER IN DC

66 LEAS ACROSS 120 CAMPUSES

46% OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS ATTEND CHARTER SCHOOLS

OFFICE STAFF OF ABOUT 38

nacsa
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

# DC PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD

Using transparency and public reporting as a tool for accountability and school improvement

| Informal data shared with schools and/ or their Boards just for sake of transparency | Public Reporting |
|---|---|
| • Monthly outlier data emails* <br> • Midyear & end of year data comparing schools to sector average, includes subgroup comparisons* <br> • "Board to Board" meetings* <br> • Midyear & end of year summary report of community complaints <br><br> Information only—not high stakes | Equity Reports (information only) <br> School Quality Reports (accountability--high stakes) |

(*attendance, suspension, expulsion, midyear mobility)

nacsa
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

# TRANSPARENCY WITH EQUITY DATA

- Subgroup data shared intermittently throughout the school year with schools and their Boards
  - All students; SPED & Non-SPED; At-Risk & Not-At-Risk; Black & Not Black; etc
  - School's subgroups compared to sector average by grade band
- Schools are encouraged to respond explaining what strategies are planning to address it (non-prescriptive)
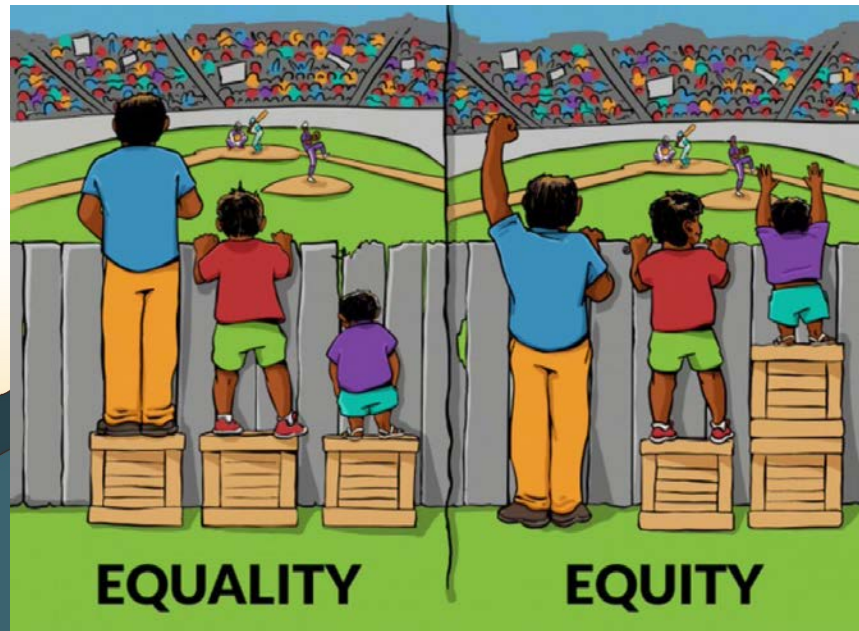


*image from: newyorkschooltalk.org*

# SAMPLE COMMUNICATION TO SCHOOLS

Dear School Leaders,

While reviewing campus and sector level data, PCSB staff noticed your school has an out of school suspension rate much higher than the sector average (data through the end of Sept).

**Suspension Sector Average: 1.8%**
**High School Sector Average: 2.3%**

| School Name | # Suspensions 16-17 | % Suspensions 16-17 | % Suspensions 15-16 (YTD comparison from last year) |
|---|---|---|---|
| ABC PCS | 64 | 19.0% | 2.6% |

**At-Risk OSS Sector Average: 2.5%**

| School Name | 2016-17 At Risk OSS # | 2016-17 At Risk OSS % | 2016-17 Non At Risk OSS % | 2015-16 At Risk % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ABC PCS | 32 | 10.3 | 3.8 | 5.9% |

We realize your team may already be aware of these trends and be having internal discussions about discipline. If you'd like to respond, we are interested to know how your school may be planning to address this. If you think there are errors in this data or want to discuss it further, please feel free to call or email me back.

nacsa
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

# PUBLIC REPORTING—EQUITY REPORTS

- Not high stakes
- Academic & non-academic
- All DC schools—charter & traditional
- Reports posted on DC's common lottery website and PCSB's website
- Sent to schools & their Boards (common discussion: "school v. city average")



**Rate Of All Suspensions**    This School ■ | DC Average ■

| Group | This School | DC Average |
|---|---|---|
| All Students | 17.2% | DC AVG 19.3% |
| Black non-Hispanic | 24.1% | DC AVG 24.3% |
| White non-Hispanic | 0% | DC AVG 1.5% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 11.8% | DC AVG 8.0% |
| Multiracial | 23.5% | DC AVG 9.7% |
| Special Education | 30.6% | DC AVG 28.2% |
| English Language Learner | 25.9% | DC AVG 9.0% |
| Female | 11.0% | DC AVG 15.6% |
| Male | 22.6% | DC AVG 23.0% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 19.6% | DC AVG 23.6% |

# TRANSPARENCY—NOT ONLY A TOOL TO IMPROVE SCHOOLS, BUT ALSO TO PROTECT CHARTER SCHOOL AUTONOMY

## Washington Post: Grosso's bill to ban pre-K suspensions applauded; advocates urge further steps
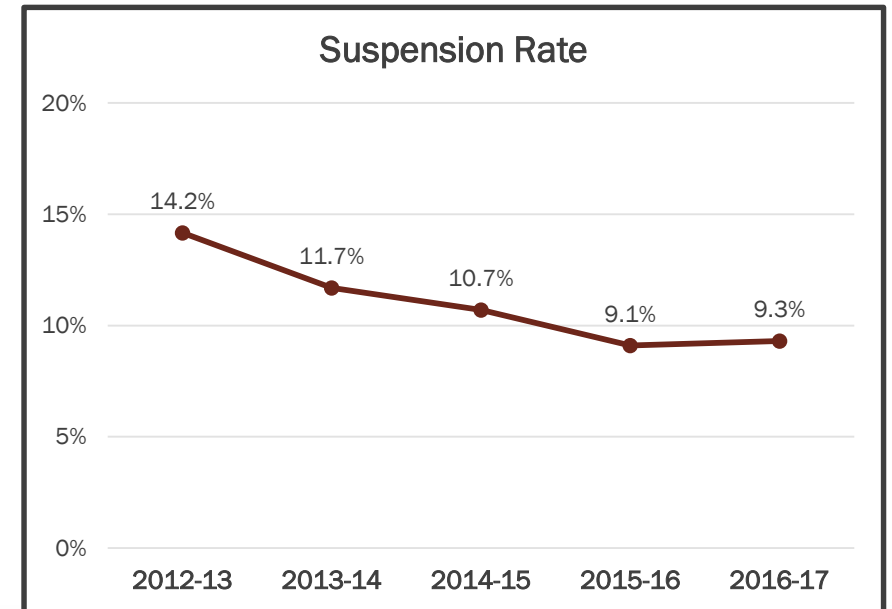
**February 4, 2015**

Children's Law Center Executive Director Judith Sandalow was quoted in *The Washington Post* discussing a recent bill introduced by Council Member David Grosso. The bill would ban suspensions for three- and four-year olds in public school, and Children's Law Center testified in support of the bill as a good first step in dismantling DC's school-to-prison-pipeline.

However, Children's Law Center and other advocates agree that more steps need to be taken to end suspensions for all DC students, including older children.

*Middle schools had the highest suspension rates in the District, according to the report. African American students were almost six times as likely to be suspended or expelled as white students. Rates were also higher for children in foster care, are homeless or have disabilities.*

*"These are some of our most vulnerable children," said Judith Sandalow, executive director of the Children's Law Center. "We are telling them we don't want them to*

SHARE

### Suspension Rate

| 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 14.2%   | 11.7%   | 10.7%   | 9.1%    | 9.3%    |

# MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Single authorizer – Board of Education is the K-12 policymaking body for the state

82 charter schools

Serving almost 45,000 students (4.5% of state enrollment)

11 full-time staff, all employees of the state department of education

# WHY REVISIT YOUR PROCESSES AND PROTOCOLS TO MAKE INCREMENTAL OR MAJOR CHANGES?

**To increase the likelihood of the establishment and renewal of quality charter schools**

But that's not the only reason! It can also be a vehicle to:

- Address concerns regarding current implementation from authorizing staff, schools, and stakeholders
- Increase job satisfaction and sustainability for authorizing staff
- Build strong relationships with charter operators and other authorizers

But sometimes we have no choice – laws or external circumstances have changed and protocols require revision

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO EMBRACE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AS AN AUTHORIZER?

- Establish common language around quality authorizing
- Transparency in protocols and processes
- **Perform cyclical revision of protocols and processes based on best practices and input from stakeholders**
- Remain open-minded to different types of evidence, different ways to gather evidence, and different ways to review and communicate regarding evidence
- Empower staff as professionals to make recommendations that would address challenges in existing protocols

# EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES IN MASSACHUSETTS: DAY-TO-DAY IMPROVEMENTS

- Change frequency, content, and mode of communications to schools

- Require submission of forms following a standardized template

- Develop and use templates for communicating over email with stakeholders

- Build structures around handoffs amongst staff or eliminate handoff if possible

- Change deadlines from 5 p.m. to 12 p.m.

# EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES IN MASSACHUSETTS: ANNUAL UPDATES OF PROTOCOLS

- Instructions and Criteria for Charter Applications

- Instructions and Criteria for Significant Expansions and Replications

- Site Visit Protocols

- Opening Procedures Handbook

- Instructions for Annual Reports

- Instructions for Renewal Applications

# EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES IN MASSACHUSETTS: PERIODIC UPDATES AND MAJOR OVERHAULS

- Periodic Updates:
  - Charter School Performance Criteria
  - Guidance for school policies, such as school enrollment policies
  - Requirements for management contracts

- Major Overhauls:
  - New platform for submissions from the field
  - Launch of rating system for renewals
  - Differentiate processes for veteran operators

# WORKING CONDITIONS CONDUCIVE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Protocols include cyclical self-evaluation of implementation
- Acknowledge the potential rewards AND drawbacks of changes to protocols
- Increase frequency of "Yes, and …" rather than " No, but…" to encourage engagement in discussions, innovative thinking, and individual ownership of authorizing protocols
- Perform norming techniques to ensure consistency and to flag potential unanticipated impacts of changes
- I Do, We Do, You Do approach to training novice staff
- Cultivate and foster professional judgement through professional practice and discussion

# METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
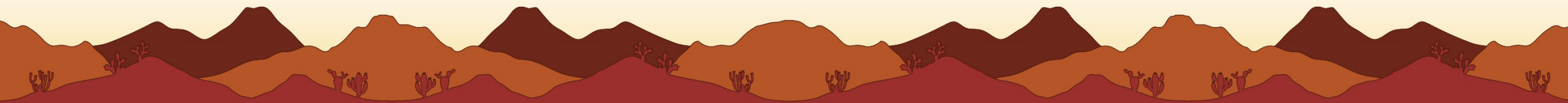
29 DISTRICT-AUTHORIZED CHARTER SCHOOLS
3 ACHIEVEMENT SCHOOL DISTRICT AUTHORIZED CHARTER SCHOOLS
CHARTERS SERVE APPROXIMATELY 11,000 STUDENTS, OR 13% OF THE TOTAL DISTRICT
# AUTHORIZING STAFF

The Art of Getting Things Done Through Others

# WE HAD TO ......

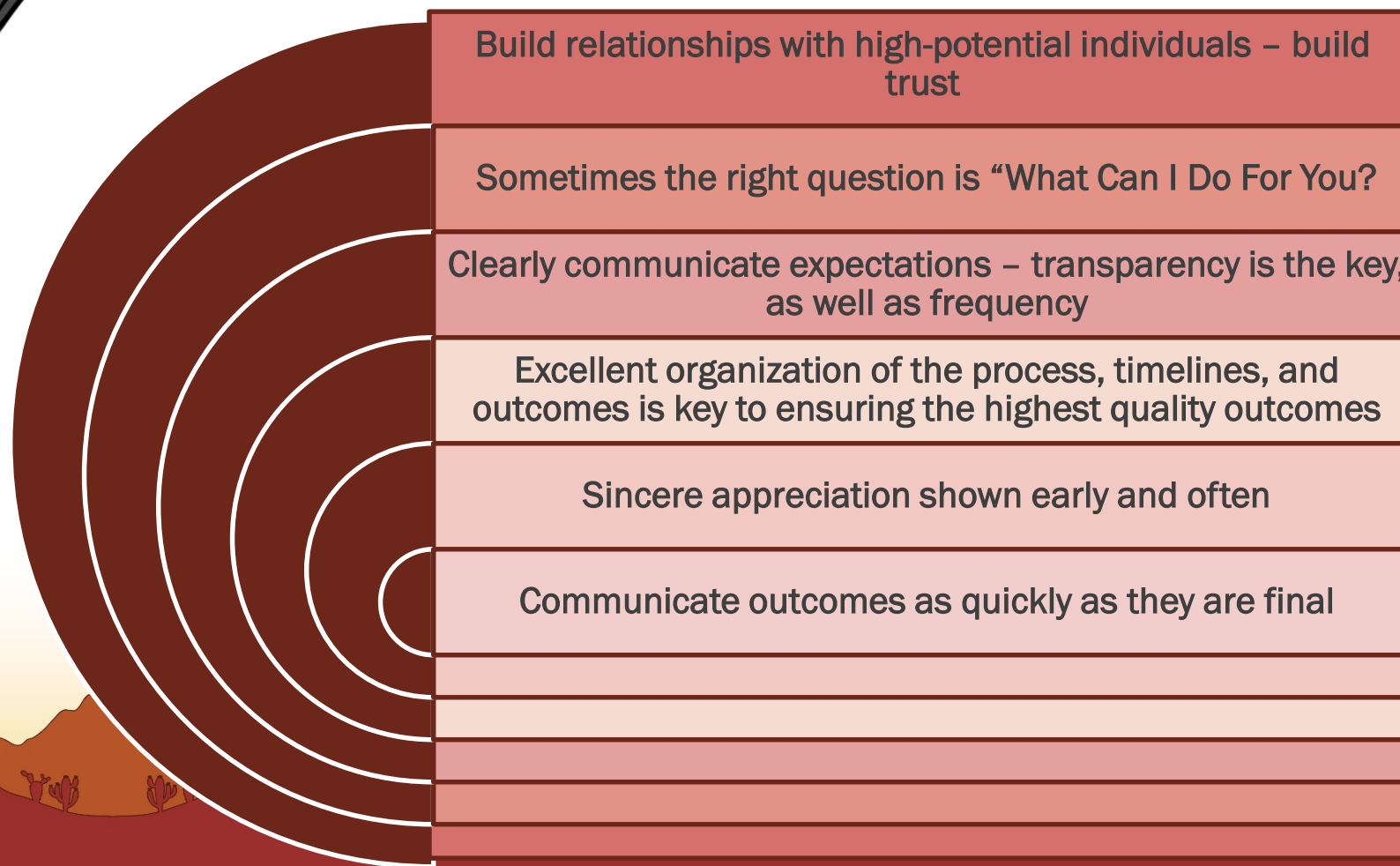# Invest in creating mutually beneficial relationships

We live in a business world fueled by artificial relationships that lack real depth, purpose and meaning.

Building mutually beneficial business relationships is more challenging than people think.  The key is building relationships that can be expected to add substantive value.

Paraphrased from Glenn Llopis, contributor to Forbes Magazine

Meet Our Team

# Creating Authentic Relationships that Last Year Over Year

Build relationships with high-potential individuals – build trust

Sometimes the right question is "What Can I Do For You?

Clearly communicate expectations – transparency is the key, as well as frequency

Excellent organization of the process, timelines, and outcomes is key to ensuring the highest quality outcomes

Sincere appreciation shown early and often

Communicate outcomes as quickly as they are final

# How Did This Approach Impact our Authorizing Practice?

- A highly diverse and experienced group of reviewers from which to choose each application cycle

- Allowed development of close relationships within the district and the larger community, resulting in greater understanding of the purpose and mission of charter schools

- Cultivated broader perspectives and encouraged greater cooperation when there are challenges.

nacsa
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS

# SOME STARTING QUESTIONS

- Would these practices work in your contexts?

- What are the barriers to implementation?

- Do any of your offices follow a very different strategy? Why?

- Other questions?

# Keep in Touch!

**Miles Caunin**

Sponsorship Finance Manager

Thomas B. Fordham Foundation

✉ mcaunin@edexcellence.net

**Alyssa Hopkins**

New Schools Development and Governance Coordinator

Massachusetts DESE

✉ AHopkins@doe.mass.edu

**Rashida Young**

Senior Manager, Equity and Fidelity

DC Public Charter School Board

✉ ryoung@dcpcsb.org

**Carol Swann**

Coordinator of Charter Schools

Metro Nashville Public Schools

✉ carol.swann@mnps.org

nacsa
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZERS