

CONTACT: Richard Gray or Phil Gloudemans
 212/328-9262 401/863-3552
 646/673-3882 (cell) 401/338-6385 (cell)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (May 1, 2015)

**NASHVILLE METRO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD APPROVES CHARTER SCHOOL
RESOLUTION BASED ON ANNENBERG INSTITUTE ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT**

NASHVILLE – Nashville’s Metropolitan Board of Public Education yesterday approved a resolution that supports independent accountability and transparency standards developed by Brown University’s Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) for all of Metro Nashville’s public schools, along with the application of these standards when making decisions regarding school expansion.

The resolution passed on a 5-3 vote, with an amendment acknowledging the need for legal analysis to ensure that the AISR-developed standards comply with state law. If compliant, the standards go to the school board’s governance committee for implementation.

The seven AISR-developed standards, issued in a report on September 17, 2014, titled *Public Accountability for Charter Schools: Standards and Policy Recommendations for Effective Oversight*, are accompanied by recommended changes to state charter legislation and charter authorizer policies that would reduce student inequities and ensure transparency and accountability to the communities served.

The standards include:

- Traditional school districts and charter schools should collaborate to ensure a coordinated approach that serves all children.
- School governance should be representative and transparent.
- Charter schools should ensure equal access to interested students and prohibit practices that discourage enrollment or disproportionately push out enrolled students.
- Charter school discipline policy should be fair and transparent.
- All students deserve equitable and adequate school facilities. Districts and charter schools should collaborate to ensure facility arrangements do not disadvantage students in either sector.
- Online charter schools should be better regulated for quality, transparency and the protection of student data.
- Monitoring and oversight of charter schools are critical to protect the public interest; they should be strong and fully state funded.

The report was the result of a two-year study by grassroots organizers and education leaders nationwide who, under the auspices of AISR and Communities for Public Education Reform (CPER), examined the impact of rapid charter expansion on parents, students and communities. The group found some common concerns about charter schools: uneven academic performance; practices that pushed or kept students out of charter schools; overly harsh discipline policies; funding patterns that destabilized traditional schools; and a lack of representative governance, transparency and adequate oversight leading to potential conflicts of interests and instances of fraud and other problems.

“The public has granted charter schools a level of autonomy that allows them to test theories of practice and try different strategies, which has led to many successes, but autonomy does not exempt them from the public’s right to expect the same accountability, transparency, democratic participation and compliance with civil rights laws that we require of all public institutions,” said Warren Simmons, AISR’s executive director. “We are very pleased that the Nashville Public Schools have adopted our accountability standards and policies to help ensure that their charter schools are fully transparent and accountable to the community they serve. We hope that Nashville becomes a model for other districts throughout the country.”

More than 82,000 students are enrolled in 154 schools within the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS); nearly half (45 percent) of all students are Black; 32 percent are White, and 19 percent are Hispanic. There are 20 charter schools in the district, in which approximately 5,300 students are enrolled.

About AISR

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) is a national policy-research and reform-support organization, affiliated with Brown University, that focuses on improving conditions and outcomes for all students in urban public schools, especially those attended by traditionally underserved children. AISR’s vision is the transformation of traditional school systems into “smart education systems” that develop and integrate high-quality learning opportunities in all areas of students’ lives – at school, at home, and in the community. AISR conducts research; works with a variety of partners committed to educational improvement to build capacity in school districts and communities; and shares its work through print and Web publications.

###