



Via Email

November 22, 2024

To: Dr. Abdi Warfa; Board Chair, SciTech Academy

Re: Concern Letter; Corrective Actions Needed

Greetings Dr. Warfa,

After reviewing the responses received so far regarding the unratified charter contract and noting the lack of responsiveness and attentiveness between SciTech Academy and the Minnesota Guild, the Guild has serious concerns about SciTech’s ability to fulfill its administrative and reporting responsibilities. As a fundamental tenet of the Minnesota charter school model, the authorizer has primary responsibility for overseeing a charter school’s performance and compliance under Minnesota Statutes, Section 124E, and the charter contract terms between the authorizer and school board. While Guild oversight prioritizes and fully supports school autonomy and independence, the Guild is also required to notify a school’s board when significant concerns arise and then take responsive and immediate corrective action to address those concerns. For more detailed information, please refer to your contract (*specifically Articles III & VI; Role of the Guild & Operating Requirements*), the [MDE’s renewal review rubric \(linked here\)](#) of the current unratified charter contract, and [SciTech’s Performance Improvement Plan \(PIP\)](#). Meeting the requirements outlined in the PIP is critical for SciTech Academy to receive the final two years of its current three-year unratified conditional contract term.

(1) Capacity Concern: Communications

Non-responsiveness/incomplete responses to requests from the Guild

Background/General Feedback:

There have been multiple instances where deadlines were not met. Communications from the Guild have not been followed. Examples include the format for the PIP and the submission of the Annual Report. Please see the selected details below.

Key Dates	Comments
May 9, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Guild reached out to the SciTech Executive Director but received no response. ● The Guild subsequently reached out to the SciTech Board Chair, “.....we have been unable to reach Abdi via email or phone for several weeks. Specifically, Glory has been trying to connect with him regarding PIP progress before our scheduled meeting on May 31. Do you happen to know whether he returned from Africa?”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Guild received a response following Dr. Warfa’s communication to the school.
July 2, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SciTech received an email from the MN Department of Education stating, “SY25 ESEA Consolidated Application today before 3 p.m.” The Guild requested a status update and to be cc’d on the application. The Guild did not receive a response.
November 12, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SciTech Executive Director was notified that the Annual Report was not submitted by the required November 1, 2024 due date. The Annual Report was not submitted until the Guild communicated with the Board Chair on November 15, 2024 about a separate matter (MDE complaint re: teacher licensure status) SciTech Annual report submitted via Google Classroom November 18, 2024.

(2) Capacity Concern: Charter Contract Ratification	
<p>Background/General Feedback: On February 20, 2024, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) sent a review, requesting corrections and necessary changes to the current contract between SciTech Academy and the Guild for ratification. Despite multiple communications from Guild representative Glory Kibbel to SciTech Academy regarding the bylaws, these requests went unanswered and remained unresolved until November 2024. As a result, the required corrections to the current contract were not made in a timely manner, nine months after the MDE’s initial communication. The Board Chair was contacted to help resolve the issue concerning the unratified contract.</p>	
Key Dates	Comments
February 20, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MN Department of Education (MDE) forwarded a review of the proposed current charter contract and requested corrections and required changes for final ratification.
March 9, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guild communication to SciTech outlining the information needed to submit to MDE.
March 20, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication from the Guild to SciTech Academy as to unresolved issues with SciTech bylaws.
March 26, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication between the Guild and SciTech approving the bylaws. SciTech Executive Director stated the bylaws would go to the board for approval in April.
May 26, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SciTech sent the early childhood policy, part of the MDE communication, which needed adjustments. The bylaws, a major component, were not submitted with the early childhood policy.
June 4, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guild letter to SciTech board and school leader with missing information: all the contract changes required by MDE had not been submitted.
June 12, 2024	

- Communication between SciTech and the Guild regarding the bylaws indicating that before the board signs, they need to be submitted to the Guild for approval. The bylaws were not submitted to the Guild.

April 10, 2024, April 16, 2024, May 9, 2024:

- Communication between SciTech and Guild regarding the bylaws.

May 16, 2024

- Guild sends an email stating the bylaws were reviewed and completed.

May-October 2024

- Comments in SciTech board minutes indicated that the school was reviewing the bylaws and needed a signature.

November 2024

- The Guild sent a communication to SciTech asking for signed bylaws. The school submitted the signed bylaws to the board.

(3) Capacity Concern: Annual Report

Background/General Feedback:

For the FY23 Annual Reports, schools received feedback following the required submission on November 1, 2023. SciTech Academy received feedback regarding compliance issues on December 1, 2023. Since SciTech Academy did not submit any changes, it received a rating of "not met." The Annual Report is significant because it serves as one of the key documents for future contract renewal.

Concerns:

- On October 1, 2024, the Guild conducted a workshop and technical assistance webinar focused on the Annual Report. SciTech Academy did not have a representative attend this Guild-sponsored workshop, despite receiving multiple invitations. This session provided valuable insights for effectively completing the Annual Report, including updates on statutory law changes from the 2024 Minnesota legislative cycle.
- Per the Annual Report Instructions Guide and the technical assistance meeting the following items were missed:
 - (1) SciTech Academy's FY2023 Annual Report fell short of statutory and contractual requirements when submitted in 2023, and there will not be an opportunity to correct non-compliant items for FY24.
 - (2) According to meeting instructions, "FY24 annual charter school/WBWF reports are due to the Guild by November 1, 2024," to provide necessary information before the Guild's authorizer report is due on January 15. Submissions after this date are unacceptable.
 - (3) Financial audits do not need to be included in this report, as noted in the instructions and technical assistance meeting. On November 15, 2024, the Guild received an email from SciTech stating the reason the Annual report was not submitted was because the school was waiting for the financial audit.
 - (4) SciTech Academy was notified on November 12, 2024, that the Annual Report deadline was not met. As mentioned, there was no response until November 15, 2024, when addressing another issue, with the full report finally being submitted on November 18, 2024.

Please Note:

- Although not mandatory, participation in Guild-sponsored training sessions is particularly important for schools to help them stay up-to-date and facilitate compliance with state law.

(4) Capacity Concern: Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

Background/General Feedback:

SciTech’s contract was renewed for FY24 with a three-year term, primarily due to an incomplete Renewal Application. Because of the missing items, it was determined that SciTech should submit the documents/processes that will be used moving forward as opposed to what the school had not included previously.

Information to date indicates insufficient progress toward meeting PIP indicators. If the PIP is not met, the school may face closure at the end of the current three-year conditional term, which is now in its second year.

The first formal meeting on the PIP was held on October 11, 2023. The Guild Executive Director sent relevant information to the Educational Consultant on October 9, who provided feedback the same day to prepare for the meeting. On October 20, the Guild sent a summary of the meeting and a format for future PIP responses.

On January 19, 2024, the Guild sent a letter detailing the school’s status and included the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) for approval. Dr. Warfa had previously requested quarterly meetings with the Guild. The first meeting occurred on January 22, 2024, but Dr. Warfa could not attend the May meeting, and the school did not schedule any further meetings.

Key Dates	Comments
May 10, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school sent a document titled “Renewal Evaluation Report Redo.” However, the necessary document was the PIP in the defined format. The submitted document lacked the required information and proper formatting.
May 14, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Guild Educational Consultant responded to this document. In the response, they specified where the necessary responses should be submitted (in a Google Doc) and pointed out that the document sent on May 10, 2024, did not contain the required information. A comment from this communication stated, “While you do have some good information in the document you sent, there are still several missing pieces.”
May 26, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Guild Educational Consultant sent an email containing the PIP link for submissions.
June 4, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Guild sent a letter to the board and school leader, highlighting the missing information and the updated PIP.

In conclusion, although not an exhaustive list, the summary of examples provided above and below illustrate the unresponsiveness of SciTech Academy and highlights capacity issues and an inability to meet critical requirements:

- In the fall of 2023, communication was sent regarding the reporting format for the Performance Improvement Plan. However, the school did not respond appropriately, providing very limited information to the Guild throughout FY2024.
- The FY2023 Annual Report was not amended and received an "unmet" rating. This occurred despite SciTech's assurance to the Guild that the Annual Report would be updated according to the instructions provided in December 2023.
- Additionally, the Guild requested that all board information be sent to Glory Kibbel when distributed to the board, but monthly updates have not been provided.
- Furthermore, the Minnesota Department of Education notified SciTech that the SY25 ESEA application was not submitted. The Guild sent a reminder and requested a response on the day the Guild memo was issued, but no response regarding the SY25 ESEA application was received.
- While SciTech requested quarterly meetings with the Guild to assist in addressing the PIP, they did not follow through on this commitment.

While some of the Minnesota Guild’s requests for information have been addressed, many remain unresolved. The issues outlined above are serious and require immediate attention from SciTech’s board and administration. Failure to address the concerns identified in this letter may lead to further intervention by the Minnesota Guild, which could include the termination of SciTech's charter contract in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.10, and the charter contract between the Minnesota Guild and SciTech. Please reference the table below for the key next steps:

Timeline	Next Steps/Corrective Action
Nov 27, 2024	Please forward a timeline for when all previously requested information will be submitted to the Guild for review.
Dec 13, 2024	All requested information is due to the Guild.
Dec 30, 2024	Guild feedback and/or clarification requests are due to SciTech.
Jan 17, 2025	SciTech Board Meeting: Ratification of updated contract.
Jan 23, 2025	Guild Board meets to ratify updated contract.
Jan 24, 2025	Guild staff submits changes to MDE Charter Center.

The Minnesota Guild is deeply committed to the success of SciTech Academy and the students and families you serve. We are here to support your school so please do not hesitate to contact us as you address the areas identified in this letter. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to [Guild Executive Director Dr. James Zacchini](#) at your earliest opportunity with any questions you have as you move forward.

Sincerely,

Lynn Nordgren

Lynn Nordgren, Board Chair

James E. Zacchini

Jim Zacchini, Executive Director

CC: Abdi Abdulle, SciTech Academy K-12 Principal
Minnesota Guild Board of Directors

