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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Board Documents - Tuesday, January 27, 2009

Regular Meeting Agenda  
 Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
 Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
 75 Pleasant Street  
 Malden, MA 02148  
 Tuesday, January 27, 2009  
 9 a.m.

#### [Briefing](#)

**Comments from the Chair**  
**Comments from the Commissioner**  
**Comments from the Secretary**  
**Statements from the Public**

#### **Routine Business:**

Approval of the Minutes of the December 16, 2008 Regular Meeting and December 15, 2008 Special Meeting - **Vote**

#### **Items for Discussion and Action:**

Charter Schools:



1. Charter Renewals for Six Schools: [Barnstable Horace Mann](#), [Marstons Mills Horace Mann](#), [Boston Preparatory](#), [River Valley](#), [Roxbury Preparatory](#), and [Salem Academy](#) - **Initial Discussion**
2. Charter Renewals for Five Schools: [Berkshire Arts & Technology](#), [Conservatory Lab](#), [Hill View](#), [KIPP](#), and [Robert M. Hughes](#) - **Discussion and Vote**
3. [Uphams Corner Charter School: Commissioner's Recommendation to Revoke Charter](#) - **Discussion and Vote**
4. [Information on New Charter Applicants](#) - **Initial Discussion**

5. [Waiver of Procedural Regulation, 603 CMR 1.04\(3\)\(b\)](#) - **Discussion and Vote**

Other Matters for Discussion and Action:

6. [Update on Curriculum Frameworks and Initial Review of Draft Revised English Language Arts Framework](#) - **Discussion**
7. [State System of Accountability and Assistance: Next Steps in Accountability Redesign](#) - **Discussion**
8. [Proposed Amendments to Regional School District Regulations, 603 CMR 41](#) - **Initial Discussion and Vote to Solicit Public Comment**
9. [Amendments to Vocational-Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00](#) - **Discussion and Vote**

Other Items for Information:

10. Education-Related News Clippings
11. Report on Grants and Charter School Extended Loan Terms Approved by Commissioner
12. Boston Foundation Report on Boston's Charter, Pilot and Traditional Schools 
13. NGA/CCSSO/Achieve International Benchmarking Report 
14. [Quality Counts Report: Massachusetts Excerpts](#)
15. [Directions to the Meeting](#)

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Briefing for the January 27, 2009 Meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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The next regular meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will be on Tuesday, January 27, 2009, at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's new offices at 75 Pleasant Street in Malden. The meeting will start at 9 a.m. and will adjourn by 12:30 p.m. If you need overnight accommodations or any additional information about the schedule, please call Belinda Wilson at (781) 338-3118.

#### Overview

The agenda for our first meeting of 2009 begins with discussion and action on several charter school matters, including votes on five charter renewals and on revocation of one charter. The Board will then discuss a progress report on the curriculum framework review process and an initial review of the draft revisions to the English Language Arts framework; get an update on the work we are doing to redesign our state system of accountability and assistance; take a vote to invite public comment on proposed amendments to the regulations on regional school districts; and take a final vote on amendments to the regulations on vocational-technical education.

#### Comments from the Chair









Chair Banta will report on current issues and activities.

#### Comments from the Commissioner

1. **21st Century Skills Task Force Recommendations.** This month we will discuss two issues linked to 21st century skills. Our discussion on the curriculum frameworks (Tab 6) and on the redesign of the state system of accountability and assistance (Tab 7) both have 21st century dimensions and are informed by the

recommendations of the task force. In addition, we are conducting an inventory of work being done in the Department and in districts across the Commonwealth that relate to 21st century skills. We also are cross-walking the Task Force recommendations with the Board priorities that were established at last summer's retreat. I will bring these to the Board in February.

2. **Budget update.** I will update the Board on our budget planning. Secretary Reville will brief the Board on the education budget perspective from the Governor's office.
3. **Graduation rate data.** The Department will release its annual report on school district graduation rates later this week or next. I will send you a copy at that time. At our February meeting I will make recommendations for some changes to the graduation rate standards used in our determinations of adequate yearly progress, in order to comply with federal requirements.
4. **Reports to the Legislature.** The Department has filed the following reports with the Legislature, in response to directives included in the FY09 budget and the General Laws:

- *Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Strategic Plan*   reports on the state's strategic needs and priorities for education policy. The plan is informed by our retreat in August 2008, discussions with education stakeholders, Governor Patrick's Readiness Project, and our ongoing work on goals and priorities.
- *Audio-Digital MCAS Pilot Program*   reports on the collaboration between the Department and Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic to provide audio-digital read-aloud editions of the Grade 10 English Language Arts and Mathematics MCAS tests for a small number of students with disabilities such as dyslexia and/or vision impairments who use this technology routinely and whose IEP or 504 teams believe it is the most appropriate assessment method.
- *Professional Development Expenditures*   summarizes public school districts' reporting of professional development expenditures as part of the required End of Year Financial Report in four areas: professional development leadership, teacher/instructional staff professional days, substitute salaries for teachers/instructional staff, and professional development stipends, providers, and expenses.
- *Students with Disabilities Annual Report 2007-2008*   addresses the Massachusetts State Performance Plan which the Department prepared with input from educators, administrators, advocates, and other interested parties to set goals and measure our progress on 20 federally specified indicators. It provides data analysis on gender, related services, disability, and placement; MCAS results for students with disabilities; and information on special education finance and educational collaboratives.

#### Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Reville will brief the Board on budget issues and other matters.

#### Items for Discussion and Action

##### Charter Schools:

1. **Charter Renewals for Six Schools: Barnstable Horace Mann, Marstons Mills Horace Mann, Boston Preparatory, River Valley, Roxbury Preparatory, and Salem Academy - Initial Discussion**

Six charter renewals are presented to the Board this month for initial review and discussion: Barnstable Horace Mann, Marstons Mills Horace Mann, Boston Preparatory, River Valley, Roxbury Preparatory, and Salem Academy. Associate Commissioner Jeff Wulfson and Charter Schools Director Mary Street will be at the Board meeting to respond to questions about charter school matters. The Board will vote in February on these six charter renewals.

**2. Charter Renewals for Five Schools: Berkshire Arts & Technology, Conservatory Lab, Hill View, KIPP, and Robert M. Hughes - Discussion and Vote**

The Board had an initial discussion on the charter renewals for these five charter schools - Berkshire Arts & Technology, Conservatory Lab, Hill View, KIPP, and Robert M. Hughes - at the December 2008 meeting. I recommend that the Board vote on these renewals this month.

**3. Uphams Corner Charter School: Commissioner's Recommendation to Revoke Charter - Discussion and Vote**

The Board renewed the charter of Uphams Corner Charter School in 2007 with five conditions that the school had to meet by specified dates. At our December 2008 meeting I reported on the school's progress and presented my recommendation that the Board should revoke the school's charter, based on its failure to meet the conditions, including its persistently low academic performance and its lack of success in taking the steps necessary to relocate to the Uphams Corner area. We have invited the charter school's board chairman (Mr. Binns), executive director and founder (Mr. Mayo) and principal (Mr. Fils-Aime) to address the Board at this month's meeting before you discuss and vote on my recommendation.

**4. Information on New Charter Applicants - Initial Discussion**

At the February meeting I may recommend that the Board grant charters for new charter schools. This month we have included in your materials an overview of the process for reviewing and granting new charters and a summary of the three charter applications that are pending.

**5. Waiver of Procedural Regulation, 603 CMR 1.04(3)(b) - Discussion and Vote**

The charter school regulations call for a member of the Board to attend public hearings about pending charter applications. In this year's application cycle, a Board member was present at the hearings on December 4 and 9, 2008, but despite best efforts, no Board member was able to attend the hearing on December 11. Department staff members were at each hearing, and the Board will receive a full report on the testimony presented. Audiotapes are available as well. To ensure that our process is consistent, I recommend that the Board vote to waive its procedural regulation with respect to attendance at the third public hearing.

**Other Matters for Discussion and Action:**

**6. Update on Curriculum Frameworks and Initial Review of Draft Revised English Language Arts Framework - Discussion**

This month we are updating the Board on our progress in reviewing and revising the curriculum frameworks, with a focus on the English language arts framework. The work is proceeding well. The Board now has the first of several opportunities to review and discuss draft revisions to the English language arts framework. Deputy Commissioner Jeff Nellhaus and Susan Whelple have been guiding this work and will be present to respond to

your questions.

**7. State System of Accountability and Assistance: Next Steps in Accountability Redesign - Discussion**

As we discussed with the Board in October, the Department is undertaking a redesign of the framework for school and district accountability and assistance. Deputy Commissioner Karla Brooks Baehr and Associate Commissioner Lynda Foisy will report on our progress and anticipated next steps. We will also brief the Board on our current review of the Fall River school district, which is going through a leadership transition. The Board-appointed Advisory Council on Accountability and Assistance has been meeting since November and will present its first of two annual reports to the Board at the February meeting, at which time I plan also to present the Board with a progress report on our development of an MCAS growth model.

**8. Proposed Amendments to Regional School District Regulations, 603 CMR 41 - Initial Discussion and Vote to Solicit Public Comment**

This month we are proposing some amendments to the regulations on regional school districts, relating to regional school budgets and formation of regional school districts. With the Board's approval, we will solicit public comment on the proposed amendments and plan to bring them back to the Board in April for final action. Associate Commissioner Jeff Wulfson will be at the meeting to answer your questions.

**9. Amendments to Vocational-Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00 -Discussion and Vote**

In November 2008 the Board voted to solicit public comment on proposed amendments to revise the sections of the Vocational Technical Education Regulations, 603 CMR 4.00, that relate to licensure of vocational technical educators. The amendments would add one new vocational technical teacher license and align the licensure provisions more closely in several areas with the Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations, 603 CMR 7.00, and the Recertification Regulations, 603 CMR 44.00. We have made one wording change based on the single comment we received. I recommend that the Board vote to adopt the regulations.

**Other Items for Information**

**10. Education-Related News Clippings**

Enclosed are several recent articles about education.

**11. Report on Grants and Charter School Extended Loan Terms Approved by Commissioner (if any)**

At our January 27th meeting I will update the Board on any pending grants or extended loan term approvals.

**12. Boston Foundation Report on Boston's Charter, Pilot and Traditional Schools**

The January 2009 report of the Boston Foundation, *Informing the Debate: Comparing Boston's Charter, Pilot and Traditional Schools*, received widespread attention. Board members have received the full report. The introduction and summary of findings are enclosed under Tab 12.

**13. NGA/CCSSO/Achieve International Benchmarking Report**

I am honored to serve on the International Benchmarking Advisory Group convened by the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State Schools Officers, and Achieve, Inc. Enclosed under Tab 13 is the executive summary of the recent report, *Benchmarking for Success: Ensuring U.S. Students Receive a World-Class Education*.

14. **Quality Counts Report: Massachusetts Excerpts**

The *2009 Quality Counts* report on English language learners in Massachusetts, published by *Education Week*, is enclosed for your information under Tab 14.

15. **Directions to the Meeting**

If you have questions about any agenda items, please call me. I look forward to seeing you at our new offices in Malden on January 27th.

last updated: January 23, 2009

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Initial Discussion for Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will have an initial discussion of the charter renewal application of Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School (BHMCS). The Board will vote on this renewal at its meeting on February 24, 2009.

#### Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School

In 1999, BHMCS was created by the conversion of a traditional grade five district school to a Horace Mann charter school. At the beginning of the 2003-04 school year, BHMCS relocated and expanded to include both fifth and sixth grades. The school is chartered to serve all children eligible for entrance into the fifth and sixth grades within the seven villages of the Town of Barnstable: Barnstable, Centerville, Cotuit, Hyannis, Marstons Mills, Osterville, and West Barnstable. In 2008-09, BHMCS serves 847 students in grades five and six and has a maximum enrollment of 1,000 students.

The district of Barnstable, due to budget reductions, is currently developing plans for restructuring of the district, including conversations with BHMCS about the possibility of reconfiguring the school's grade span. BHMCS may be requesting the Board's approval, in the spring, of an amendment to reflect this change.

The school's mission statement reads: "The mission at BHMCS is to inspire all students, faculty, parents, and community members to achieve excellence by creating a school environment that provides a high quality education. We utilize rigorous standards and assessments, provide innovative and creative instruction, and engage parents and the community to prepare students for lifelong learning."

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters



The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary document that follows this memorandum compiles the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review and as further summarized below, I recommend that the Board renew the charter for BHMCS.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### ***I. Faithfulness to Charter***

- BHMCS implements a collaborative leadership and governance structure that contains many of the elements outlined in its charter.
- As outlined in its original charter, the school's educational program is based upon school-wide, standards-based, thematic instruction.

### ***II. Academic Success***

- BHMCS has a curriculum that is documented for all content areas and grade levels and is aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.
- The school incorporates the use of technology in its educational program and has invested in a range of technology hardware, training, and support.
- The school provides an atmosphere of mutual respect, orderliness, and receptive attitudes at all levels.
- Students benefit from the school's collaborative educational environment in which information about students is shared among staff, and special education teachers share a close relationship with paraprofessional staff.
- BHMCS uses a range of assessments to monitor student understanding of content and provide additional support.
- The school's performance on MCAS examinations has been strong throughout the term of its charter, with a composite performance index of 90.7 in English language arts (ELA) and 82.7 in mathematics in 2008.
- NCLB status is Improvement Year 1 for subgroups in mathematics and No Status for ELA.

### ***III. Organizational Viability***

- The board has been consistently described by site visitors as having a clear understanding of their role in oversight of the school.
- The school uses a model of distributive leadership that incorporates staff input into decisions and the development of the school's programs.
- BHMCS has extremely low teacher turnover; most teachers are veterans with many years of experience.
- BHMCS is currently a fiscally viable organization.
- Site visitors and the renewal inspection team have consistently reported that stakeholders are highly satisfied with the school.

#### ***IV. Dissemination***

- Various staff members have shared the BHMCS model of improving education with other Barnstable Public Schools.
- The director of technology provides technology training to teachers throughout the state.
- The school has linked with the town of Barnstable's "No Place for Hate" initiative and shares goals of increasing tolerance and appreciation of diversity.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200; or me.

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Initial Discussion for Marstons Mills East Horace Mann Charter Public School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will have an initial discussion of the charter renewal application of Marstons Mills East Horace Mann Charter Public School (MME). The Board will vote on this renewal at its meeting on February 24, 2009.

#### Marstons Mills East Horace Mann Charter Public School

MME, a Horace Mann charter school, is located in Barnstable. The school opened in 2004 and is chartered to serve kindergarten through grade 4, with a maximum enrollment of 475 and is currently fully enrolled. As described in its original charter application, the school's educational philosophy includes the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Plus model.

The school's mission statement reads: "The mission of the Marstons Mills East Horace Mann Charter Public School is to be a whole school community that provides a challenging and enriching environment for all children, Kindergarten through grade 4; and where all children achieve high academic standards and develop character. We support the whole child and continuous improvement in the teaching process, and consider a whole school community as integral to success."

The district of Barnstable, due to budget reductions, is currently developing plans for restructuring of the district, including conversations with MME about the possibility of reconfiguring the school's grade span. MME may be requesting the Board's approval, in the spring, for an amendment to reflect this change.

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters

The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary document that follows this memorandum compiles the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review and as further summarized below, I recommend that the Board renew the charter of MME.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### ***I. Faithfulness to Charter***

- MME has faithfully implemented the Accelerated Schools Plus (ASP) model described in the original charter application. This model offers to all students the educational methods and programs typically reserved for gifted and talented students.
- The school was chosen as one of eight, national demonstration sites for fully implementing the ASP model and having a direct positive impact on student achievement.

### ***II. Academic Success***

- MME has established a school environment that is student-centered and inclusive. Students in all grade levels show consistently high levels of engagement.
- Teachers at the school have developed a curriculum based on the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks that incorporates ASP's "powerful learning activities."
- The results of a number of internal and external assessments are used to differentiate instruction.
- The school's performance on MCAS examinations has been strong throughout the term of its charter, with a composite performance index of 89.1 in English language arts (ELA) and 90.5 in mathematics in 2008. MME made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA and mathematics in the aggregate and for subgroups annually from 2004 to 2008.

### ***III. Organizational Viability***

- MME has addressed issues surrounding an unexpected operating deficit in FY07. The school is fiscally viable.
- The school has implemented a governance and leadership structure that assures collaborative decision

making. Teachers, board members, support staff, administrators, parents, students, and other community members work together to address the needs of the school.

- MME has extremely low teacher turnover; most teachers are veterans with many years of experience.
- The school has effective board leadership and a sound governance structure.
- The school has maintained a waiting list for the past four years and reported a waiting list of 60 students for the 2008-09 school year. In March 2005, the school received approval to expand its enrollment from 370 to 475 students.
- The school has reported high levels of parent satisfaction throughout the term of its charter.

#### ***IV. Dissemination***

- MME was awarded a dissemination grant from the Charter School Office for the 2007-08 school year to mentor the Silver Hill Horace Mann Charter School - a new charter school in Haverhill that opened in 2008 and adopted the ASP program. Members from the MME staff helped the school develop and implement the ASP model in areas such as leadership, governance, and instructional practice.
- The school has also established a partnership with two local community colleges, Cape Cod Community College and Bridgewater State College. MME served as a site for potential teachers to develop a working knowledge of the charter school philosophy and served as a student-teaching site for potential teachers.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200; or me.

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Initial Discussion for Boston Preparatory Charter Public School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will have its initial discussion of the charter renewal application of Boston Preparatory Charter School (BPCPS). The Board will vote on this renewal at its meeting on February 24, 2009.

#### Boston Preparatory Charter Public School

BPCPS, a Commonwealth charter school, opened in 2004 and is chartered to serve grades six through twelve with a maximum enrollment of 350. In 2008-09, BPCPS serves 292 students in grades six through ten. BPCPS draws its students from Boston.

The mission statement of BPCPS reads: "BPCPS utilizes rigorous curriculum, extended academic time, and a range of supports for children and families to prepare 6th-12th grade students to succeed in college. An environment structured around scholarship and personal growth cultivates students' virtues of courage, compassion, integrity, perseverance, and respect."

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters

The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the

school has made during the first four years of its charter.

The superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, the district sending students to BPCPS, was invited to submit written comment to the Department regarding the renewal of the school's charter. No written comment was received from the superintendent.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary document that follows this memorandum was prepared for you as a compilation of the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review and as further summarized below, I recommend that the Board renew the charter of BPCPS.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### ***I. Faithfulness to Charter***

- BPCPS has a thoroughly documented, rigorous, standards-based, college preparatory curriculum aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. The school maintains a strong, school-wide code of conduct.
- BPCPS combines preparation for college with character education, implemented through classes covering ethics, philosophy, and the college application process.

### ***II. Academic Success***

- MCAS results are strong, with an aggregate Composite Performance Index (CPI) of 88.6 in English language arts (ELA) and 85.1 in mathematics in 2008.
- BPCPS made AYP in ELA in the aggregate and for subgroups in 2006 and 2008 but did not do so in 2007. BPCPS made AYP in mathematics in the aggregate and for subgroups in all years between 2005 and 2008. The school has no status under NCLB in ELA and mathematics.
- The school's core curriculum consists of a mix of internally-created materials and published texts. The middle school curriculum focuses on the fundamentals of literacy and mathematics, gradually shifting to deeper content knowledge in the higher grades.
- The school meets the needs of diverse learners primarily through a full inclusion, co-teaching model which pairs classroom teachers with special educators.

### ***III. Organizational Viability***



- BPCPS is fiscally sound and stable.
- BPCPS is currently governed by an eleven-member board of trustees that understands its role to be that of governance and oversight.

- The head of school, principal, and lead high school teacher have been with the school since it was founded.
- The school reports high levels of parent satisfaction through the results of a parent survey.
- BPCPS maintains a lengthy waiting list.
- The school has experienced significant student attrition in the upper grades.
- The school plans to add grade eleven in 2009-10 and grade twelve in 2010-11.

#### ***IV. Dissemination***

- During the 2006-07 school year, the school's principal presented on best practices at the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association Annual Convention, and the BPCPS support services team hosted a special educator's workshop in which seven charter schools participated.
- In 2007-08, the school's principal worked with the Massachusetts Center for Charter Public School Excellence to develop a program to assist and support new and emerging school leaders.
- BPCPS regularly hosts visitors from a wide range of schools and other institutions.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500, or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200, or me.

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Initial Discussion for River Valley Charter School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will have its initial discussion of the charter renewal application of River Valley Charter School (RVCS). The Board will vote on this renewal at its meeting on February 24, 2009.

#### River Valley Charter School

RVCS, a regional Commonwealth charter school, is located in Newburyport. The school opened in 1999 and received its first charter renewal early, applying for consideration and receiving renewal in 2002. RVCS is chartered to serve grades K-8 with a maximum enrollment of 288. In 2008-09, RVCS is fully enrolled and serving students in grades K-8. As described in its original charter application, RVCS is a Montessori school.

The mission statement of RVCS reads: "The mission of the River Valley Charter School is to provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River valley. Students will reach their full potential as scholars and become self-reliant, productive members of society. They will be adept at critical thinking and creative problem solving and will be fully prepared to succeed in future schools, careers, and civic life."

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters

The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has

considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter.

The superintendents of the Amesbury, Haverhill, Newburyport, Pentucket, and Triton Public Schools, the districts sending students to RVCS, were invited to submit written comment to the Department regarding the renewal of the school's charter. No written comments were received.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary document that follows this memorandum was prepared for you as a compilation of the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review and as further summarized below, I recommend that the Board renew the charter of RVCS.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### ***I. Faithfulness to Charter***

- RVCS provides a Montessori educational program, which uses multi-age classrooms, extended work periods, and hands-on learning. Materials are designed for students to work independently following plans established by teachers with student input. Lessons and projects are designed to be interdisciplinary and research-based, with an emphasis on critical thinking skills.
- The school has undergone highly successful audits by external Montessori evaluators in every year of the charter term.

### ***II. Academic Success***

- The school's aggregate Composite Performance Index in English language arts (ELA) is 93.2 and is 83.9 in mathematics in 2008.
- RVCS made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA and mathematics in the aggregate and for subgroups in all years of both the previous and current charter terms. The school has no status under NCLB in either subject.
- The curriculum is largely based on published Montessori materials merged with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.

### ***III. Organizational Viability***

- RVCS is fiscally sound and stable.
- The fourteen-member board of trustees provides appropriate academic, organizational, and financial oversight of the school.
- Both the school's director and assistant director have served in their current roles for eight years; the curriculum coordinator has been at RVCS since the school's inception.

- The school reports high levels of parent satisfaction through the results of a parent survey.
- RVCS maintains full enrollment and a substantial waiting list.

#### ***IV. Dissemination***

- RVCS faculty and administrators regularly present at Montessori and charter school showcases and conferences.
- RVCS trustees and staff advised and supported the founding group of the Hill View Montessori Charter Public School in Haverhill.
- RVCS regularly hosts visitors from a wide range of schools and other institutions including students, teachers, professors, and professionals from a variety of fields.
- In May 2008, RVCS hosted the first Massachusetts Montessori Public School Conference.
- In 2004, the school received a Massachusetts Department of Education Dissemination Program Grant which enabled it to create a 20-minute video/DVD entitled "Montessori Made Public" focusing on three Montessori public schools: River Valley; a school in Jefferson County, Colorado; and one in Yonkers, New York.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200; or me.

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Initial Discussion for Roxbury Preparatory Charter School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will have its initial discussion of the charter renewal application of Roxbury Preparatory Charter School (RPCS). The Board will vote on this renewal at its meeting on February 24, 2009.

#### Roxbury Preparatory Charter School

RPCS, a Commonwealth charter school, is located in and chartered to serve students from Boston. The school opened in 1999. RPCS is chartered to serve grades six through eight with a maximum enrollment of 300. It is currently serving 230 students in grade six through eight and is gradually expanding to reach a new maximum enrollment, subsequent to a May 2008 amendment in which the school reduced its grade span and maximum enrollment. RPCS has been the recipient of numerous awards, including recognition from the United States Education Department, for its high levels of academic achievement.

The mission statement of RPCS reads: "Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, a public middle school, prepares its students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college. Roxbury Preparatory Charter School is founded on the philosophy that all students are entitled to and can succeed in college preparatory programs when: 1) the curriculum is rigorous, engaging, and well-planned; 2) the school emphasizes student character, community responsibility, and exposure to life's possibilities; and 3) a community network supports students' academic, social, and physical well-being. Roxbury Preparatory Charter School helps students gain admission to outstanding public and private college preparatory high schools."

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters

The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter.

The superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, the district sending students to RPCS, was invited to submit written comment to the Department regarding the renewal of the school's charter. No written comment was received from the superintendent.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary document that follows this memorandum was prepared for you as a compilation of the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review and as further summarized below, I recommend that the Board renew the charter of RPCS.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### ***I. Faithfulness to Charter***

- The school has created an orderly learning environment that emphasizes character development, community involvement, and high expectations for student academics.
- RPCS provides an extended day program: school is in session from 7:45-4:15pm Monday through Thursday, and 7:45-1:15pm on Friday.
- The school has implemented an extensive graduate services program to support and track alumni/ae through high school and college.

### ***II. Academic Success***

- MCAS results are strong, with an aggregate Composite Performance Index of 93.4 in English language arts (ELA) and 90.3 in mathematics in 2008.
- RPCS made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA and mathematics in the aggregate and for subgroups in all years between 2003 and 2008. Under NCLB the school has a no status determination in ELA and mathematics.
- The school has created a rigorous, comprehensive, and fully documented curriculum based on internally created RPCS standards and the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.
- Teachers deliver academically challenging lessons and implement consistent instructional methods that yield high levels of student engagement.

### ***III. Organizational Viability***

- RPCS is a financially sound and stable organization.
- There are currently eleven members on the board of trustees who function in a policy, oversight, and support role.
- The school's co-director model of leadership has been in place since the school's founding. The co-directors' responsibilities are well defined and understood by the school community.
- The school reports high levels of parent satisfaction through the results of parent surveys.
- RPCS provides ample opportunities for teachers to improve their practice and receive feedback from the school's academic leader as well as their peers.

### ***IV. Dissemination***

- Currently, the school participates in Keeping the Promise, the Massachusetts Charter School Dissemination and Replication Project, a three-year, federally funded project undertaken by the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association.
- RPCS regularly welcomes visitors from a wide range of schools and other institutions to observe or research the school.
- RPCS has shared its best practices with other charter and district schools through the Project for School Innovation, Building Excellent Schools, and New Leaders for New Schools.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200; or me.

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Initial Discussion for Salem Academy Charter School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will have an initial discussion of the charter renewal application of Salem Academy Charter School (SACS). The Board will vote on this renewal at its meeting on February 24, 2009.

#### Salem Academy Charter School

SACS, a Commonwealth charter school, opened in 2004. SACS is chartered to serve grades six through twelve with a maximum enrollment of 308. In 2008-09, SACS serves 291 students in grades six through twelve. The school opened with grades six and seven and expanded its grade levels each year; 2008-09 is the first year it has operated with its full six through twelve grade span.

The school's mission is "to educate the diverse student population of Salem and the surrounding communities. Through a unique integration of college preparatory classes with service to the community, the school will graduate informed, articulate, and proactive individuals of strong character."

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters

The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter.

The superintendent of the Salem Public Schools, the district sending students to SACS, was invited to submit written comment to the Department regarding the renewal of the school's charter. The Department received letters from the Superintendent of the Salem Public Schools and from one member of the Salem School Committee. The letters raised concerns that the school's limited English proficient student population was not representative of the district; that the school was not meeting its obligation to provide greater options to parents and students; and that the school was draining funds from the Salem Public Schools.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary document that follows this memorandum compiles the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review and as further summarized below, I recommend that the Board renew the charter of SACS, with the condition that the school establish and operate a program of English language learner education in a manner consistent with the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws chapter 71A. By the end of the 2008-09 school year, SACS will demonstrate that it has met this condition by implementing all elements of the Corrective Action Plan issued by the Department on October 10, 2008. Full implementation of the school's English language learner education program shall be in place by no later than the opening of school fall 2009.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### ***I. Faithfulness to Charter***

- As was described in the original charter, SACS uses a standards-based approach for the development of its academic program.
- The school has established a service learning program designed to provide students with an opportunity to apply their academic learning to real-life contexts, while also providing service to the community.

### ***II. Academic Success***

- SACS has created a detailed curriculum that is aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and the school's mission.
- The school has developed practices that use assessment data to review student performance and plan next steps in curriculum and instruction.
- SACS provides an environment and facility that are safe and conducive to learning.
- Students are not effectively identified or assessed for English language proficiency and the school does not provide sheltered English immersion. The school's deficiencies in these areas were noted in the 2006-07 Year Three Site Visit Report and the June 2007 Coordinated Program Review. A Corrective Action Plan (CAP) was due from the school in July 2007 and was received September 12, 2008. The Department reviewed the proposed CAP, and issued a final CAP plan for the school on October 10, 2008.
- SACS made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA in the aggregate in all years between 2005 and 2008;



- however, the school did not make AYP in ELA in 2008 for the low income and Hispanic subgroups.
- The school made AYP in mathematics in the aggregate in 2007, but not in 2005, 2006, or 2008. The school made AYP in mathematics for subgroups in both 2007 and 2008.
  - NCLB status is Improvement Year 2 for mathematics and No Status for ELA.

### ***III. Organizational Viability***

- SACS is currently a fiscally viable organization, though it has had challenges maintaining adequate cash flow for operations in the latter part of the charter term, which the school attributes to investments in capital and infrastructure.
- SACS has implemented the governance and management structure that was originally proposed in its charter. The school's board of trustees consists of seven members, the minimum required by the school's bylaws.
- The percentage of teachers departing during the school year and/or not returning over the past four years has ranged from a low of 23 percent in 2006-07 to a high of 43 percent in 2005-06.

### ***IV. Dissemination***

- For the past two years, students and staff have shared the school's service learning approach with other schools at the Department's Annual Statewide Community Service-Learning Conference.
- In 2005, SACS conducted two presentations to charter school leaders focused on its standards-based, information management system.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200; or me.

#### **Enclosures:**

Comment from Superintendent, Salem Public Schools

Comment from School Committee Member, Salem Public Schools

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Vote on Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will vote on the charter renewal application of Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School (BArT).

#### Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School

BArT, a regional Commonwealth charter school, is located in Adams. The school opened in 2004. BArT is chartered to serve grades 6-12, with a maximum enrollment of 308. BArT reached its maximum grade span in 2007-08 and is currently serving 246 students in grades 6-12. The school expects to reach its maximum enrollment in 2010-11. BArT is chartered to serve students from Northern Berkshire County and currently enrolls approximately 27% of its students from Adams, 41% from North Adams, 19% from Pittsfield, and the remainder from approximately 12 other communities.

The school's mission statement reads: "The Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School integrates the study of the arts and technology with core subjects to promote mastery of academic skills and content, prepare students for college and graduate independent thinkers, dynamic workers and active citizens for life. The school provides middle school and high school students in Northern Berkshire County with an intellectual community that regards everyone, including teachers and parents, as perpetual learners."

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters

The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the

regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter.

The superintendents of all of the local districts that send students to BArT were invited to submit written comment to the Department regarding the renewal of the school's charter. No written comment was received from the superintendents.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary document that follows this memorandum compiles the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review, summarized below, I recommend that the Board grant a probationary renewal of the school's charter with one condition requiring that, by 2010, the school demonstrate academic success by achieving growth in student achievement against standards set by the Department or by making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2009 and 2010.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### ***I. Faithfulness to Charter***

- BArT's unique mission is to integrate visual and performing arts and technology into the academic curriculum. The school is making progress in implementing this mission.
- The college preparatory aspect of the program has become increasingly central. In the summer of 2008, the school's mission statement was revised to emphasize the goal of preparing all students for college.

### ***II. Academic Success***

- Teachers use the Understanding by Design backwards planning model to create a curriculum that is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. All of the quarterly units contained in the curriculum include performance-based assessments that integrate the arts and technology.
- Increasing the rigor of the academic program is a major focus for improvement. With the assistance of an outside consultant, BArT engaged in a whole school review process during the 2007-08 school year. As a result of this process, several initiatives implemented this year include:
  - the separation of math/science and English language arts (ELA)/social studies into discrete classes taught by highly qualified teachers;
  - grouping students by skill level to better target their needs;
  - the use of formative assessments with quantifiable results that are used to inform curriculum and instruction;
  - frequent, ongoing, and regular assessment of teachers by means of a newly adopted 5-10 minute observation protocol.

- 28% of BArT's students receive special education services, 9% are on 504 plans, and approximately 10% are involved in the state's social service system. The school has met the needs of its population of diverse learners by developing a strongly supportive school culture and offering a full array of special education services. BArT offers its students extensive academic support and remediation services, including a daily targeted supported study period. There are four special education teachers, a student services coordinator, a social worker, and seven special education paraprofessionals on staff.
- BArT has not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA or mathematics in the aggregate or for subgroups during the course of its charter.
- The school's NCLB status is Corrective Action for mathematics and Improvement Year 2 for ELA.



### ***III. Organizational Viability***

- BArT has faced several major challenges during the course of its first five year charter, including the initial inability to secure a facility, a difficult reception from local sending districts and consequent difficulty in attracting sufficient applicants, a disproportionately large population of students with special needs, and persistently low academic performance.
- Though the school was initially unable to secure the financing necessary to obtain a building because it opened at a time when a charter school moratorium was threatened, within six months of opening, it moved from a rented space in a district school to its current facility, which it purchased by the end of its second year of operations.
- The school has not yet reached its maximum enrollment of 308 students, which was set assuming 44 students in each of 7 grades. It expects to reach its maximum enrollment in the 2010-2011 school year, when our original 6th grade reaches 12th grade.
- BArT is fiscally sound and stable. The school has not met its enrollment targets throughout the charter term, but has budgeted carefully, secured a short-term line of credit, and raised additional sources of revenue to support operations.
- The school's executive director has served in that role since the school opened. The principal is new to his role this year, but has worked at the school as dean of students for the past two years.
- The school is governed by a nine member board of trustees, two of whom are founding members of the school. Appropriate channels of communication have been established between the board and school leadership, and the board has been proactive in supporting the school.
- Families and students have consistently expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school

### ***IV. Dissemination***

- The school's board and its executive director have done extensive outreach in the local community to promote the school and correct misperceptions concerning the school's program. Examples include presentations on local access television and radio, speaking at community group meetings, and building relationships with local colleges.
- BArT is a member of the Commonwealth Corporation's Diploma Plus network. Through this network, the school participates in professional development workshops and shares its best practices with other network schools, which are public schools in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York and California (Renewal Inspection Report, p. 26).

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200; or me.

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Vote on Conservatory Lab Charter School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will vote on the charter renewal application of Conservatory Lab Charter School (CLCS).

#### Conservatory Lab Charter School

CLCS, a Commonwealth charter school, is located in Boston. The school opened in 1999. CLCS is chartered to serve pre-kindergarten through grade 5 with a maximum enrollment of 154. The school is currently serving 135 students in kindergarten through grade 5, and plans to add pre-kindergarten in 2009-2010.

The school's mission statement reads: "The Conservatory Lab Charter School will engage all children by using the Learning Through Music curriculum model to ensure every child's academic, creative, and social success, as validated by qualitative and quantitative measures."

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters

The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and progress the school has made during the first nine years of its charter.

The superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, the district sending students to CLCS, was invited to submit written

comment to the Department regarding the renewal of the school's charter. No written comment was received from the superintendent.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The Summary of Review that follows this memorandum compiles the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review and as further summarized below, I recommend that the Board renew the charter of the CLCS with conditions that require the school to implement its Learning Through Music program in alignment with its charter or to amend its charter to accurately reflect the school's current program and require the school to make its current facility programmatically accessible or, if the school moves, ensure that any new facility is programmatically accessible.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### ***I. Faithfulness to Charter***

- The school's original charter proposed an educational model in which students would succeed in traditional academic subjects through the integration of the study of music in all areas of the curriculum. This model was referred to as Learning Through Music (LTM) and the school was proposed as a lab for testing, refining, and ultimately disseminating the model to other educational organizations. The current LTM model includes limited integration of music into traditional academic subjects, with students receiving one, 30 minute interdisciplinary class each week. The school continues to provide violin instruction to all students, beginning in first grade, and daily music classes.
- Part of the school's mission is to validate the efficacy of its LTM curriculum model through qualitative and quantitative research. The school is not currently measuring the LTM program.
- CLCS underwent a full Coordinated Program Review in December 2007. The school's civil rights Corrective Action Plan was approved on August 8, 2008, with the exception of the handicapped accessibility criterion. The handicapped accessibility criterion was not approved because the plan did not fully remedy the accessibility issue of the school. The school was required to submit an action plan, due to the Department on October 15, 2008, to address this issue. As of November 5, 2008, the Department had not received the school's plan, and an overdue notification letter was issued to the school on November 6. On November 10th, CLCS requested and was granted an extension of the due date to November 25, 2008.

### ***II. Academic Success***

- Curriculum materials at CLCS are primarily commercially published texts.
- CLCS made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics and for all sub-groups in 2007. The school made AYP only for mathematics in the aggregate for 2008.
- The school has no NCLB status in ELA or mathematics.
- In response to low MCAS scores, the school has increased the amount of time spent on ELA and

mathematics instruction, while decreasing the extent to which music is integrated into the daily core curriculum.

### ***III. Organizational Viability***

- CLCS is fiscally sound and stable.
- CLCS is currently governed by a twenty-three member board with a wide range of skills and expertise relevant to the school and its mission.
- CLCS maintains full enrollment and a lengthy waiting list.

### ***IV. Dissemination***

- CLCS was the recipient of a state dissemination grant for the 2005-06 and 2007-08 school years to work in collaboration with the Massachusetts Public Charter School Association and Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education for the sharing of best practices with other public schools as part of the "Making Learning Visible" project. This project included charter schools, district schools, and pilot schools.
- In August 2006, a CLCS violin teacher presented a workshop for the Chelmsford Public Schools on the Suzuki group violin techniques that CLCS has modified to work in public schools.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781- 338-3200; or me.



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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Vote on Hill View Montessori Charter School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) vote on the charter renewal application of Hill View Montessori Charter School (HVMCS).

#### Hill View Montessori Charter School

HVMCS, a Commonwealth charter school, is located in Haverhill. The school opened in 2004. HVMCS is chartered to serve kindergarten through grade 8 with a maximum enrollment of 296. The school currently serves 244 students in kindergarten through grade 6 and expects to reach its maximum grade span and enrollment in 2010-2011.

The school's mission statement reads: "The mission of HVMCS is to provide a grade K-8 public education that promotes academic excellence using the Montessori philosophy. In partnership with teachers and parents, children will attain high levels of academic, personal, and social achievement and so prepared, become constructive contributors to our community."

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters

The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter.

The superintendent of the Haverhill Public Schools, the district sending students to HVMCS, was invited to submit written comment to the Department regarding the renewal of the school's charter. No written comment was received from the superintendent.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary document that follows this memorandum compiles the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review and as further summarized below, I recommend the Board renew the charter for HVMCS.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### ***I. Faithfulness to Charter***

- HVMCS is a public Montessori school based on Montessori philosophy and methods, with a curriculum that is aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. The school meets the needs of a diverse group of students, including those with disabilities.

### ***II. Academic Success***

- The new leadership team, hired in 2007-08, has implemented significant changes in the use of formative assessment data, teacher recruitment, hiring, supervision and evaluation, and alignment of curriculum with state standards.
- HVMCS made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in the aggregate and for subgroups in 2007 but not in 2008.
- The school has no status under NCLB.

### ***III. Organizational Viability***

- The school is fiscally sound and stable.
- The school is in the process of purchasing a building for occupancy in 2009-10.
- The school is governed by an eleven member board of trustees. The board provides careful oversight of the school leader. Appropriate channels of communication and collaboration have been established between the board and school leadership.
- The school plans to add grade 7 in 2009-10 and grade 8 in 2010-11.

### ***IV. Dissemination***

- In 2006 and 2007, an HVMCS kindergarten teacher conducted a Saturday seminar in conjunction with Northern Essex Community College Early Childhood program regarding the Montessori method of

educating children.

- The Haverhill Superintendent of Schools, a Haverhill School Committee member, and
- an HVMCS founder co-authored an article about building respectful relationships between charter and district schools for the May/June 2004 issue of MASCD Perspectives. In addition, a best practices paper called *In Service of Children: How Charter and District Schools Can Work Together* was written and presented at the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association conference.
- In 2008, staff from six Massachusetts public Montessori schools, charter and district, held a day-long conference to share best practices.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200; or me.

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Vote on KIPP Academy Lynn Charter School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will vote on the charter renewal application of KIPP Academy Lynn Charter School (KAL).

#### KIPP Academy of Lynn Charter School

KAL, a Commonwealth charter school, is located in Lynn. The school opened in 2004. KAL is chartered to serve grades 5-8 with a maximum enrollment of 320. It is currently serving 333 students in grade 5 through grade 8. As described in its original charter application, the school's educational model follows that of the national KIPP organization.

The mission statement of KAL reads: "KIPP Academy Lynn will create an environment where the students of Lynn will develop the academic skills, intellectual habits and character traits necessary to maximize their potential in high school, college, and the world beyond."

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters

The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the school has made during the first four years of its charter.

The superintendent of the Lynn Public Schools, the district sending students to KAL, was invited to submit written

comment to the Department regarding the renewal of the school's charter. No written comment was received from the superintendent.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary document that follows this memorandum was prepared for you as a compilation of the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review and as further summarized below, I recommend that the Board renew the charter of KAL.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### ***I. Faithfulness to Charter***

- KAL follows the educational program of the national Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), which focuses on four areas: high-quality instruction, character development, a focus on results, and more time on task.
- The school maintains a strong, school-wide behavior management system.
- KAL runs an extended day and extended year: 197 school days, 7:20am-5:00pm Monday through Thursday, 7:20am-3:00pm on Friday, and two Saturdays per month from 9:00am-1:00pm.
- All students visit college preparatory high schools and colleges in the area.

### ***II. Academic Success***

- MCAS results are strong, with an aggregate Composite Performance Index (CPI) of 85.9 in English language arts (ELA) and 87.0 in mathematics in 2008.
- KAL made AYP in ELA and mathematics in the aggregate and for subgroups in all years, 2006 to 2008; no AYP determination was made in 2005. Under NCLB the school has no status in ELA and mathematics.
- Curriculum materials are largely teacher-created, with teachers writing highly detailed lesson plans that align with national KIPP standards and the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.
- Teachers consistently use a wide variety of instructional strategies and multiple modalities. In addition, lessons frequently involve movement, singing, chanting, and rhythmic responses.

### ***III. Organizational Viability***

- KAL is fiscally sound and stable.
- There are currently eight members on the board of trustees, one of whom has been with the board since 2005. The board understands its role to be that of governance and oversight.
- The head of school is the school's founder.
- The school reports high levels of parent satisfaction through the results of a parent survey.
- KAL maintains nearly full enrollment and a lengthy waiting list.

#### ***IV. Dissemination***

- KAL was approved for a math dissemination grant by the Department in November 2006. Teachers from local elementary schools visited KIPP to see the school's math program in action and participated in professional development workshops. The school chose not to apply for a continuation of the grant in 2007-08.
- In addition, KIPP regularly hosts visitors from a wide range of schools and other institutions including students, teachers, professors, and professionals from a variety of fields.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500, or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200, or me.

  [Summary of Review](#)

last updated: January 22, 2009

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Renewal - Initial Discussion for Robert M. Hughes Academy Charter Public School

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will vote on the charter renewal application of Robert M. Hughes Academy Charter Public School (RMH), located in Springfield.

#### Robert M. Hughes Academy Charter Public School

RMH, a Commonwealth charter school, opened in 1999 and is chartered to serve grades K-8, with a maximum enrollment of 180. The school is currently serving 184 students in grades K-8. RMH received its first charter renewal in February 2004 with five conditions, including one for academic concerns and four regarding continuing issues related to the governance and financial management of the school. The school obtained an opinion from the State Ethics Commission concerning a potential violation of conflict of interest law, hired a governance consultant, and revised its bylaws, but did not cooperate with the Office of the State Auditor, meeting all but one of the conditions imposed at the time of renewal.

The school's mission statement reads: "The mission of the Robert M. Hughes Academy Charter Public School is to provide urban students in Springfield, Massachusetts with the opportunity to achieve academic and personal excellence by offering an intellectually challenging curriculum and a supportive environment. Students will graduate from the school with a deep respect for learning and the strength of character required to become future leaders in society."

#### Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters

The charter school regulations state that "[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school's academic program; the viability of the school

as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter" 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (Department) evaluation of the school's performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the school's absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and progress the school has made during the nine years of its charter.

The superintendent of the Springfield Public Schools, the district sending students to RMH, was invited to submit written comment to the Department regarding the renewal of the school's charter. No written comment was received from the superintendent.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary document that follows this memorandum compiles the school's record for the term of this charter.

## **Recommendation for Renewal**

Based on the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review, and as further summarized below, it is my recommendation that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education grant a renewal with conditions to RMH. I further recommend that the conditions imposed require among other things that, by 2010, the school demonstrate academic success by achieving growth in student achievement against standards set by the Department or by making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2009 and 2010; and that the school comply with term limits and the minimum number of board members as stated in the school's bylaws, with appropriate expertise in education and finance.

## **Areas of Charter School Accountability**

### **1. *Faithfulness to Charter***

- RMH operates in a manner that is consistent with and faithful to the school's mission statement.
- RMH has created a stable school culture and an environment that is respectful, orderly, and conducive to student learning.
- Current school operations are inconsistent with several elements of the RMH amended charter, including Saturday school, creation of individualized learning plans for each student, an annual performance audit, and individual professional development plans for teachers.

### **2. *Academic Success***

- RMH did not make AYP in the aggregate and for subgroups in English Language Arts (ELA) in 2008.
- NCLB status is Improvement Year 2 for Subgroups in ELA and No Status for mathematics.
- Composite proficiency index (CPI) trajectories show uneven performance for both mathematics and ELA:
  - ELA scores declined in 2005, 2007, and 2008, with a CPI of 78.4 in 2008.
  - Mathematics scores declined in 2006 and 2007, but showed an increase of 15.8 points to reach a CPI of 74.6 in 2008.
- Documenting and addressing weaknesses in the school's academic program is a major focus for the administrative team who arrived at RMH in 2007. The school has created a school improvement plan, called the School Academic Plan, and is systematically monitoring progress on the plan.



- The school's leadership team has created clear expectations for teachers and instituted daily classroom monitoring procedures.
- Throughout the term of the school's charter, site visitors have observed varied effectiveness of instructional practices.

### 3. *Organizational Viability*

- Over the charter term, various site visit teams have found that the board of trustees has overstepped its role by making decisions that are more appropriately addressed by the administrative team.
- The board of trustees is facing the retirement of four, founding board members. In July 2008, sixteen months after revising bylaws to comply with a Department requirement of three (3) consecutive three year terms, board members requested an amendment to return to original term limits of four (4) consecutive three year terms. The amendment request was denied.
- RMH is currently a fiscally viable organization. The school has met enrollment targets each year, hired a business manager, and recorded annual surpluses during this charter term.
- Over the course of the charter, teacher turnover has ranged between 38-50% each year. Additionally, the school's administration has consistently reported that the recruitment of qualified teachers has been a concern during the current charter term.

### 4. *Dissemination*

- In the school's eighth year, RMH established partnerships with three Springfield public schools: a district middle school, a vocational high school, and a charter middle and high school. The partnership, called the Springfield Urban Schools Consortium (SUSC), intends to share successes and resources with the goal of having teachers at each school meet the definition for "Highly Qualified Teacher."
- According to the Application for Renewal, the school has created two models for replication, an after-school MCAS support program and the SUSC professional development initiative.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200; or me.

  Summary of Review

last updated: January 22, 2009

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Uphams Corner Charter School - Recommendation for Vote on Revocation of Charter

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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In December 2008, the Board discussed my recommendation for revocation of the charter of Uphams Corner Charter School (UCCS) based on the school's failure to meet the conditions imposed in 2007 when the Board renewed its charter, and a lack of sufficient progress to warrant additional conditions or probation. This month, the Board is scheduled to vote on my recommendation. Representatives of the charter school have been invited to address the Board at the January 27th meeting before the vote.

The motion before the Board is framed as a statement of intent to revoke the charter effective June 30, 2009. The school's board of trustees may, if it chooses, request an administrative hearing on the revocation. If we do not receive a request for a hearing within 15 days after the school receives notice of the Board's vote, the Board's revocation action becomes final.

The following information provides an overview of my reasons for making this difficult recommendation. The attached Site Visit Report provides additional information and context.

#### Uphams Corner Charter School

UCCS, a Commonwealth charter school, is located in and chartered to serve Boston. The school opened in 2002 and the charter was renewed with conditions in 2007. UCCS is chartered to serve grades 5 through 8 with a maximum enrollment of 200. In 2008-2009, UCCS is serving approximately 174 students in grades 5 through 8 and reports a wait list of four. The school draws virtually all of its students from Boston.

The school's mission statement reads: "Uphams Corner Charter School offers an academically rigorous, rhetoric centered education in the liberal arts and sciences, leading to sound understanding, earnest reflection, self-discipline,

integrity, and action. Our community is devoted to outstanding student performance and whole character formation. We will graduate all our students as powerful, articulate, moral citizens, working for the benefit of all."

On October 7, 2008, the Charter School Office conducted a site visit to UCCS. Before the visit, the site visit team reviewed the school's Year Six Site Visit Report, the school's 2007-08 annual report, a Progress Report on Renewal Conditions provided to the Board in December of 2007, the school's Accountability Plan, board materials, and recent internal and external assessment data. On site, the team reviewed curricular documents and other information provided by the school. Team members conducted group and individual interviews with trustees, administrators, teachers, students, and parents, and conducted classroom observations.

The site visit had four purposes:

- to review the progress that the school has made in meeting the conditions imposed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education,
- to corroborate and augment the information contained in the school's annual report,
- to investigate the school's progress relative to its Accountability Plan goals, and
- to provide evidence that will support decisions regarding the school's charter.

## Report on Conditions

The following conditions were imposed at the time of the school's charter renewal in 2007.

**Condition 1:** By June 30, 2007, Uphams Corner Charter School shall have submitted to and received approval from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for the following items:

- A school improvement plan, consistent with the Department's standards for a District Plan for School Intervention.
- A charter school Accountability Plan, including goals and annual benchmarks regarding academic success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to charter. The Accountability Plan must be aligned to the school's plan for improvement as referenced above, and must include the school's plan for achieving Adequate Yearly Progress in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups in English language arts and mathematics.
- All relevant amendments to its charter, in accordance with 603 CMR 1.11.

**Status:** Not fully met. The school improvement plan was received and approved in a timely manner. A draft Accountability Plan was received by the Charter School Office on June 28, 2007, but was not finalized until March 2008. An amendment request was received and was approved by the Board of Education on October 30, 2007.

**Condition 2:** By June 30, 2007, the school shall engage a consultant, who shall be approved by the Commissioner, to review the school's leadership structure and provide training and assistance to strengthen the school's management.

**Status:** Not fully met. UCCS received approval from the Commissioner to engage the proposed consultant in June 2007. The consultant issued a report about school leadership but was not contracted to provide training or

assistance to strengthen school management, as required by the condition. In September 2008, the school hired a leadership coach to work with the interim executive director, interim principal, and vice principal.

**Condition 3:** By December 2007, Uphams Corner Charter School shall have met or shall be making substantial progress toward the benchmarks set forth in its approved Accountability Plan.

**Status:** Not met. UCCS did not meet this condition because the school did not have an approved Accountability Plan in place by December 2007. The school's current Accountability Plan was approved by the Charter School Office in March 2008.

**Condition 4:** By December 2008, Uphams Corner Charter School shall demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence that the school has met or is making substantial progress toward meeting all benchmarks in its 2007-2012 Accountability Plan and has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups in English language arts and mathematics for 2008.

**Status:** Not met. UCCS did not make AYP in English language arts and mathematics in the aggregate or for subgroups in 2008. Additionally, according to data submitted at the time of the site visit and in the 2007-08 annual report, UCCS has not met a majority of its academic Accountability Plan goals.

- Currently, the school's NCLB status is improvement year 2 in English language arts (ELA) and corrective action in mathematics.
- CPI trajectories for both mathematics and ELA show uneven but overall declining performance for the past five years. Scores declined in 2008 after showing substantial gains in 2007, although the 2007 CPI was lower in both subjects than in the first year tests were administered. Currently, the UCCS performance rating for mathematics is critically low, with a CPI of 39.9. The performance rating for ELA is moderate, with a CPI of 70.3.
- The school has persistently low proficiency rates, despite improvement in 2007:
  - In ELA, 51 percent or fewer students reached proficiency in all tested grades for all years from 2005-2008;
  - In mathematics, 15 percent or fewer students reached proficiency in all tested grades for all years from 2004-2008.

**Condition 5:** By December 2008, Uphams Corner Charter School shall have completed the necessary property acquisition and fundraising to permit a relocation of the school to the Uphams Corner area no later than September 2009.

**Status:** Minimal progress. At the time of the site visit, the board had not done any in-depth planning for the financial requirements involved with obtaining a new facility, either to lease or purchase. Subsequent to the site visit, the Charter School Office has learned that the site considered to be most probable by the school is most likely to be acquired by another charter school. In the site visit focus group, the board reported that, at this time, they do not know where they will be located in September 2009 and they plan to make a decision by the December 2008 deadline.

## Additional Information

The attached site visit report provides additional information in the three areas of charter school accountability, including the following:

1. *Faithfulness to Charter*

- The school is not consistently implementing the education formats stated in the original charter. Site visitors did not see evidence of Socratic inquiry techniques, use of rhetorical skills, or community orientation during classroom instruction or in curricular documents.

2. *Academic Success*

- In year seven, the site visit team found that the school has not yet created a comprehensive curriculum. The curriculum is lacking a complete set of scopes and sequences, unit plans, and internal assessment documents.
- Curricular unit plans are identical in ELA, science, and mathematics for fifth and sixth grade, requiring students to repeat the same studies for two years.
- Student behavior has impacted the quality and quantity of learning:
  - During the year seven site visit, a majority of students were not engaged in class activities and did not answer teacher questions.
  - In over half of the classrooms, site visitors observed that students ignored posted rules or did not receive consequences for their misbehavior. In approximately 20 percent of classrooms, teachers did not have control over the class.
- In the three years that eighth grade students have taken the MCAS science exam, no eighth grade student at UCCS has reached proficiency.
- In 41 out of 45 comparisons conducted, the performance of UCCS students on MCAS mathematics exams was lower than students in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) at a statistically significant level. In 29 of 31 comparisons conducted, the performance of UCCS students on the MCAS ELA exams was statistically equivalent to that of BPS students.

3. *Organizational Viability*

- In the past seven years, UCCS has occupied three different facilities, none of which were located in the Uphams Corner neighborhood.
- UCCS has struggled with student enrollment, both in attracting students and in maintaining enrollment.
- Since the 2005-06 school year, UCCS has been able to attract only enough students to fill one of two intended sections in fifth grade. In the past three years targeted fifth grade enrollment was 40 students and actual enrollment ranged from 15-18 students.
- For the last several years, the school has lost large numbers of students from one year to the next. For the 2006-07 school year, of the 135 fifth through seventh grade students enrolled on Oct. 1, 2006, 42 (or 31 percent) either withdrew during the school year or did not re-enroll for the 2007-08 school year. The school reports a similar pattern for the 2007-08 school year.
- As a result of student attrition and in order to maintain fiscal solvency, the school has accepted large numbers of students into all grades at the beginning of and throughout each school year for the last several years. This has substantively affected the school's culture and academic program.
- UCCS has struggled to retain teachers. Teacher attrition rates have been persistently high, ranging from a low of 31 percent in the 2005-06 school year, to a high of 61 percent in the 2006-07 school year.

- The year seven site visit team found that the board of trustees is not effectively addressing critical school problems, such as the required acquisition of a permanent facility or the selection of a new executive director.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781-338-3200; Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781-338-6500; or me.

  Uphams Corner Charter School Year 7 Site Visit Report

last updated: January 22, 2009

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter School Applications

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Date: January 16, 2009

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At the February meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, I may recommend that the Board grant charters for new charter schools. In the current application cycle, 18 Commonwealth charters and 41 Horace Mann charters are available. The Department received prospectuses from seven applicant groups in August 2008. All of the prospectuses proposed Commonwealth charter schools. After a review process that included internal and external reviewers using criteria established by the Department, three applicant groups were invited to submit final applications. On November 14, 2008, all three groups submitted final applications.

An executive summary, prepared by each applicant group, is included for your review. The names of the proposed charter schools, their enrollment capacities, and the district(s) they seek to serve are as follows:

**Spirit of Knowledge Academy Charter School (SOKA)**, serving students in grades 6-12 from Leicester, Oxford, and Worcester. Enrollment capacity: 585.

**Gloucester Community Arts Charter School**, serving students in grades K-8 from Gloucester. Enrollment capacity: 240.

**Rediscovery Academy Charter School**, located in Waltham serving students in grades 9-12 from throughout the Commonwealth. Enrollment capacity: 220.

The charter school application review process, which was not complete until mid-January, is rigorous and extensive and includes:

- Review panels, during which internal and external reviewers discuss each final application at length, comparing the applications submitted to the application criteria. Review panels are conducted by the

Charter School Office. A summary of the review criteria is attached.



- Public hearings held in Gloucester, Waltham, and Worcester in early December.
- Written comment, which is solicited from superintendents, school committees, and the public.
- An interview of each applicant group in the third week of January.

Based on the review of each application against the criteria, feedback received from the review panels, public comment, and information from the final interviews, I will determine which, if any, applicants meet the criteria for a Massachusetts charter school and will make my recommendations to you. A detailed description of the review process for charter applications is attached.

If you have any questions on the applications or review process, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781-338-6500; Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781-338-3200; or me.

**Enclosures:**

  Description of the Charter Application Review Process

  Executive Summaries

Charter School Final Application Review Criteria

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Charter Schools-Waiver of 603 CMR 1.04(3)(b)

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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Under the charter school regulations as adopted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board), one member of the Board is required to attend public hearings soliciting comments on the merits of pending applications. The regulation, 603 CMR 1.04(3)(b), states, in relevant part:

The Board and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall hold a public hearing on final applications and solicit and review comments on the application from the school committees of the school districts from which the applicant intends to draw students. At least one member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall attend public hearings soliciting comment on the merits of pending applications.

This year, the hearings on the three applications occurred on December 4th, 9th, and 11th. A Board member was present at the hearings on December 4th and 9th but despite best efforts, no Board member was able to attend the hearing on December 11th. The Board will receive a report on the testimony that was presented at each hearing and audiotapes of the hearings are available upon request. To eliminate any question about the process, however, I recommend that the Board vote to waive its regulatory requirement with respect to the public hearing on December 11th. Attached is a motion to this effect.

Enclosure:

last updated: January 22, 2009



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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Update on Curriculum Frameworks and Initial Review of Draft Revised *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework*

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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The purpose of this memorandum is to update you on our progress in revising the Commonwealth's curriculum frameworks, with a particular focus on the *English Language Arts Framework*. I am pleased to report that we are making good progress on revising the frameworks and in the process being responsive to the Report of the Board's Task Force on 21st Century Skills, which recommends that we "raise the bar on rigor by embedding complementary 21st century skills and content through the Commonwealth's curriculum frameworks in every subject."

#### General Process and Timeline for Framework Reviews

Since passage of the Education Reform Act of 1993, the Board has approved curriculum frameworks in the core subject areas of English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science and technology/engineering, history and social science, foreign languages, visual and performing arts, and health. The curriculum frameworks establish state standards for the content that Massachusetts public schools are expected to cover in locally defined curricula, and form the basis for the MCAS assessments in ELA, mathematics, science and technology/engineering and history/social science.

We can take pride in the fact that the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks are nationally recognized as being strong and sound. At the same time, we are committed to reviewing the frameworks periodically and updating them as needed. In fact, Mass. Gen. Laws Chapter 69, Section 1E directs the Board to "develop procedures for updating, improving or refining" the curriculum frameworks.

In September 2007, the Board voted to endorse a process to review and update the curriculum frameworks, and the Department has proceeded with reviews of the standards for English language arts and mathematics since that time. The process voted by the Board builds in several stages of review. In addition to the review by scholars, educators, the business community, parents, and students, I wish to add specifically a commitment to international benchmarking

against the standards of high-performing countries. Therefore, each framework review will have the following stages:

1. **First stage evaluation of the existing framework by a Review Panel.** The Commissioner will appoint a panel of Massachusetts P-16 educators with expertise in the subject area and in 21st century skills, and representatives from the community to review the framework. This panel will present one or more progress reports of recommended refinements to the Board after approximately six to eight months.
2. **Second stage review draft.** Approximately one year after the beginning of a review, the Commissioner will release a first draft of revised standards in order to solicit preliminary comment and international benchmarking by external reviewers including, but not limited to, the American Diploma Project of Achieve, Inc., scholars in the discipline from Massachusetts public and private universities, Board members and/or individuals or groups recommended by Board members, and representatives of the business community. The second stage review draft will be posted on the ESE website as a Board document.
3. **Third stage review draft, leading to a Board vote to seek public comment.** ESE staff and panel will summarize comment from various sources and write a third stage review draft. The summary and new draft will be presented to the Board for discussion and vote to seek further public comment from Massachusetts educators, the public, and other state departments of education.
4. **Final stage review draft, leading to a Board vote to accept the revised framework.** ESE staff and panel will summarize and respond to public comment and write a final draft that responds to all comments.

In September 2007, the Board voted to review curriculum frameworks in the following order: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering, the Arts, History and Social Science, Comprehensive Health, and Foreign Languages. My recommendation is that we continue to follow this order, adding a review of the *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes*, the document that serves as a basis for local curriculum and instruction in the area of English language acquisition and for the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessments (MEPA), in the 2009-2010 school year.

Table 1 on the following page summarizes the proposed timeline for remaining work on the *English Language Arts Curriculum Framework*, including Board actions, external reviews, local implementation, ESE Curriculum and Instruction support for districts and teacher preparation programs on the revised standards, and incorporation of the revised standards into MCAS.

**Table 1. *The English Language Arts Curriculum Framework* Proposed Timeline**

	1/2009-6/2009	7/2009-6/2010	7/2010-6/2011	7/2011-6/2012
Board Actions	<p><b>January</b> Discussion of second stage review draft, <b>May, June</b> Discussion and vote on releasing third stage review draft for public comment</p>	<p><b>November, December 09</b> Discussion and vote on final draft</p>		

External Reviews	<b>February-March</b> Reviews by Achieve, MA state colleges and universities, Board members and individuals recommended by the Board, MBAE	<b>July-October 09</b> Comment solicited from the public, professional organizations such as MTA, MASS, MASC, other state departments of education	
Local Implementation		Review of public comment draft; planning for implementation	Professional development and implementation
ESE Curriculum and Instruction support for districts, regions and educator preparation programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations on revision process and drafts for Commissioners' districts, regional district groups, professional organizations and educator preparation programs;</li> <li>• Implementation of web-based standards/resources application</li> <li>• Technical assistance with alignment</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical assistance with alignment and professional development in literacy based on the standards</li> <li>• Continued work with professional organizations and educator preparation programs</li> </ul>
ESE MCAS Implementation	Discussion of drafts with ELA Assessment Development Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Item development (selection of reading passages, questions, writing prompts) based on revised standards</li> <li>• Field testing of items based on revised standards</li> </ul>	<b>Spring 2012</b> Operational testing based on revised standards, beginning with the March retest

### Implications for MCAS in the Draft ELA Standards

The 2009 draft contains standards for three modes of writing: informational, persuasive, and literary. As you know, MCAS currently assesses students based on a single mode of writing in each grade: personal narrative in grade 4; expository writing in grade 7; and literary analysis in grade 10. The proposed standards prepare us to introduce additional modes at each grade. The shift from a single writing mode at each grade level will encourage writing instruction that provides students with the opportunity to hone their skills in a wider variety of written expression. Many states, along with NAEP, assess writing in a variety of modes, including personal narratives and essays, imaginative narratives, expository writing, literary analysis, and persuasive writing. I believe that this change will benefit our students and is consistent with the Partnership on 21st Century Skills recommendations to emphasize creativity and critical thinking.

## Next Steps in the Review Process for the *Mathematics and Science and Technology/Engineering Frameworks*

### *Mathematics Curriculum Framework* Progress Report

The *Mathematics Curriculum Framework* Panel has been meeting since April 2008 and has also studied and discussed the Task Force Report and other materials from the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. It will bring a Progress Report to the Board in February 2009. After that, standards will be drafted and external reviews similar to those described for the *English Language Arts Framework* draft will be carried out.

### *Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework* Panel Recruitment

We plan to solicit nominations for a panel to conduct a review of the *Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework* in February 2009, with the expectation that a panel would be appointed in March and hold its first meeting in April. As always, we welcome nominations from the Board and will notify you when application materials are posted.



English Language Arts Curriculum Framework Draft Overview



Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework – Draft Standards by Topic



Massachusetts English Language Arts Curriculum Framework – Draft: Standards and Resources Arranged by Grade (Sample: Grades 3, 8, and 12)

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Update on Redesign of Accountability and Assistance Framework



To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Date: January 16, 2009

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As reported to the Board at its October meeting, the Department is undertaking a redesign of the framework for school and district accountability and assistance. The Board-appointed *Advisory Council on Accountability and Assistance* has been meeting since November and will present its first of two annual reports to the Board at the February meeting at which time I plan also to present the Board with a progress report on ESE's development of an MCAS growth model. In the meantime, we want to update the Board about the emerging design of the new accountability and assistance system and afford Board members the opportunity to pose questions and offer their insights about the work to date and the plans for future action.

The attached   documents outline progress since October:

1. The latest revision of the graphic depicting the emerging framework for district accountability and assistance, *Framework for District Accountability and Assistance*;
2. A graphic depicting information about districts and schools that we expect will be available through the new MCAS growth model, *Growth Model Analysis*; and,
3. Highlights of ESE work on accountability and assistance since October, *Highlights of Progress to Date*.

Deputy Commissioner Karla Baehr and Associate Commissioner Lynda Foisy will address highlights of the framework revisions and respond to Board members' questions.

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Proposed Amendments to 603 CMR 41, Regulations Governing Regional School Districts

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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I have some proposed amendments to the regulations governing regional school districts for your consideration. These changes are described below, and the proposed text is attached. I am asking the Board to vote at the January meeting to send the proposed changes out for public comment. I anticipate a final vote on these amendments at the April meeting.

#### Amendments relating to regional school district budgets

The legal requirements governing regional school district budgets are somewhat complex, because of the interrelationship between the district itself and the cities and towns that are members of the district. In January 2007, the Board issued a set of regulations to clarify some of the ambiguities in the governing statutes and to standardize some practices that varied from district to district. In general the reaction to these regulations was very positive, as most municipal and district officials understood the long-term advantage of a clear and consistent set of rules. At the time of their adoption, we promised to revisit any areas that turned out to be problematic. Based on the feedback we've received, two further amendments are needed, both relating to town meeting votes.

*Municipal votes to approve the use of alternate assessments.* Approval of regional school district budgets requires two separate decisions by the member towns: the amount of the budget (for which a 2/3 vote is required) and the basis for allocating costs among the members (a statutory formula must be used unless all the members agree to use an alternate local formula). In most districts, these two decisions are combined into a single vote at town meeting, and the current wording of the regulations reflects that practice. A few districts, however, ask their member towns to vote separately on the use of the alternate assessment method and on the budget itself. The proposed amendment clarifies that either practice is acceptable and more clearly states the approval criteria in each case.

*Failure to hold a town meeting.* If the member towns do not approve a regional school district budget, state law requires the school committee to make a new budget proposal and requires the towns to convene special town meetings to vote on the revised proposal. Every year there are a few instances where the selectmen in a particular town, for a variety of reasons, refuse to issue a warrant for the required meeting. As there is no practicable mechanism for the district to force the holding of a town meeting, the regulations need to address how to handle this situation. The January 2007 amendments stated that a town's failure to hold a town meeting to consider a revised budget proposal is deemed a negative vote. We've received considerable feedback that this provision was very problematic, making budget resolution more difficult and in some cases forcing towns to hold unnecessary special town meetings. The current proposal reverses this presumption and states that failure to hold a meeting within 45 days will be deemed constructive approval. Most of the school and municipal officials with whom we have consulted have indicated that this is a more workable approach, and that it is also consistent with the long-standing practice in many districts.

### **Amendment relating to the formation of regional school districts**

Based on the recommendations of the Ayer-Lunenburg-Shirley regional planning committee, we are adding a provision to permit the Commissioner to establish a transition period of not more than two years following voter approval of a new regional school district. During this transition period, the existing local school committees would continue to operate the schools, giving the newly-established regional school committee time to hire staff, evaluate curriculum and instructional strategies, develop business systems, and put necessary contracts in place. We agree with the Ayer-Lunenburg-Shirley committee that a transition planning period could help new districts to maximize the benefits from regionalization.

If you have any questions regarding these proposals, please contact me or Associate Commissioner Jeff Wulfson (781-338-6500, [jwulfson@doe.mass.edu](mailto:jwulfson@doe.mass.edu)).

#### **Attachments:**

  Proposed Amendments to Regional School District Regulations, 603 CMR 41

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## The Massachusetts Board of Education

### Amendments to Vocational Technical Education Regulations (603 CMR 4.00)

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

From: Mitchell D. Chester, Commissioner

Date: January 16, 2009

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I am pleased to present for review and Board vote the proposed amendments to the Vocational Technical Education Regulations (603 CMR 4.00). The amendments were first discussed at the November 18, 2008 meeting, at which time you authorized me to solicit public comment. The proposed amendments make the following changes:

- Add one new vocational technical teacher license titled Construction Craft Laborer.

This license would be required for individuals who will teach in a new high school vocational technical education program in the field of skilled construction laboring. The United States Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration - Office of Apprenticeship as well as the Massachusetts Department of Labor and Workforce Development - Division of Apprentice Training have approved a two-year registered apprenticeship program in skilled construction laboring. The high school program in Massachusetts is being developed in partnership with the Laborers International Union. Students who complete the program will receive credit toward the two-year apprenticeship at the postsecondary level through an articulation agreement with the Laborers International Union. Upon completion of the apprenticeship, they will be journey workers engaged in technical work including hazardous materials remediation, remote tunneling, concrete work, and an array of building construction work.

- Align the vocational technical educator licensure provisions more closely in several areas with the *Chapter 71 Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations*, 603 CMR 7.00, and the *Recertification Regulations*, 603 CMR 44.00.

The amendments would add provisions regarding inactive and invalid licenses to the *Vocational Technical Education Regulations*. These provisions are basically identical to the provisions in the *Recertification Regulations* and provide that a license that is not renewed becomes inactive for a period of five years and an

inactive license that is not renewed becomes invalid. The amendments allow educators to become employed under an inactive license and give them two years from the date of employment to renew the inactive license. Educators cannot be employed under an invalid license unless the school district receives an employment waiver from the Commissioner. In addition, the amendments provide for licenses to be valid for five years of employment under the license, in place of five calendar years.

During the public comment period, the Department received only one written comment on the proposed amendments, from an official with the Laborers International Union suggesting that the title of the license be "*Construction Craft Laborer*," rather than Construction Crafts. I recommend that the title of the license be *Construction Craft Laborer* so that the title is consistent with the name of the program. Note that the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA) and the Educational Personnel Advisory Council (EPAC) have indicated support of the proposed amendments that were released for public comment.

The following documents are enclosed for your review:

- Strikethrough version of the Vocational Technical Education Regulations, indicating the proposed amendments. Note: Sections of the regulations that are not being amended are not included in this copy.
- A motion for your consideration.

We will make available the complete set of the Vocational Technical Education Regulations and the written comment on the amendments to any Board member who would like to have them.

Department staff will be at the meeting to respond to your questions.

**Enclosures:**



Proposed Amendments to Vocational Technical Education Regulations - 603 CMR 4.00

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