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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Board Documents - Tuesday, February 24, 2009

Regular Meeting
 Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
 Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
 75 Pleasant Street
 Malden, MA 02148
 Tuesday, February 24, 2009
 8:30 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 January 27, 2009 Regular Meeting - Vote

Items for Discussion and Action:

1. Mass TeLLS (Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey) Report- **Discussion**
2. [Update on State Education Budget](#) - **Discussion**
3. [MCAS History and Social Science/U.S. History Assessments: Suspension of 2009 and 2010 Testing](#) - **Discussion and Possible Vote to Waive Regulation**
4. [State System of Accountability and Assistance: Next Steps in Accountability and Assistance Redesign](#) - **Discussion**
5. [Proposed Revisions to Graduation Rate Standard for FY09 AYP Determinations](#) - **Initial Discussion**
6. Charter Schools:
 1. [New Charter Applicants](#) - **Discussion and Vote**

2. [Charter Renewals for Six Schools: Barnstable Horace Mann, Marstons Mills Horace Mann, Boston Preparatory, River Valley, Roxbury Preparatory, and Salem Academy](#) - **Discussion and Vote**
3. Report on Conditions for [Benjamin Banneker](#) and [North Central](#) Charter Schools - **Discussion and Vote**

Other Items for Information

7. Education Related News Clippings
8. Report on Grants and Charter School Extended Loan Terms Approved by Commissioner
9. [Inventory of Department Activities Related to 21st Century Skills Task Force Recommendations](#)
10. Directions to the Meeting

last updated: February 20, 2009

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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Briefing for the February 24, 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: February 13, 2009

The next regular meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will be on Tuesday, February 24, 2009, at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's offices at 75 Pleasant Street in Malden. The meeting will start at **8:30 a.m.** (coffee will be available at 8) and will adjourn by 1 p.m. If you need overnight accommodations or any additional information about the schedule, please call Beverley O'Riordan at (781) 338-3118.



Overview

The agenda for our February meeting includes a presentation on the Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey (Mass TeLLS) report; an update on the state education budget, discussion of the suspension of MCAS history and social science testing in 2009 and 2010 and a possible vote this month on waiving the Competency Determination requirement in history for the classes of 2012 and 2013; a report on the work we are doing to redesign our state system of accountability and assistance; initial discussion of proposed revisions to the graduation rate standard for FY09 AYP determinations; and discussion and vote on a proposed new charter, six charter renewals, and conditions for two charter schools.

Comments from the Chair

Chair Banta will report on current issues and activities, including her appointment of a committee on the proficiency gap and her work on the governmental affairs committee of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE).

Comments from the Commissioner

1. Rennie Center report on promising practices to reduce the dropout rate. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education co-sponsored an event on February 12th with the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy and the Youth Transitions Task Force/Boston Private Industry Council/Jobs for the Future to focus attention on a new Rennie Center policy brief, "Ahead of the Curve: Promising Practices for Reducing the Dropout Rate." The Rennie Center's research on schools and districts that have reduced their dropout rates over the past four years is encouraging. We will continue to work closely with schools and districts as well as our partner organizations on this important initiative.
2. Fall River Public Schools. Early in January 2009, Fall River Mayor Robert Correia agreed that the Fall River school district was in critical need of an evaluation by our Department in light of the recent transition of school leadership. The mayor shared my belief that a comprehensive external review of district practices could yield findings and recommendations that would benefit the students and schools of Fall River. The review team spent several days in Fall River gathering information, observing classroom instruction, and conducting extensive interviews. I expect to have the team's report in time for our Board meeting on February 24th, and we will discuss it in connection with agenda item 4.
3. Reports to the Legislature. The Department is filing several reports with the Legislature, in response to directives included in the FY09 budget and the General Laws:
 - *Equity Effects of Regional Allocation Methodology on Regional Vocational Technical Schools*   reports on the current method, used since FY05, designed to eliminate the underlying inequities in the base contributions of towns belonging to multiple school districts to ensure that a town's required school contributions are fairly allocated amongst the various school districts to which it may belong.
 - [*School Breakfast and Summer Food Service Outreach*](#) reports on these two key programs with the goal of increasing participation in both programs, with state emphasis on increasing the participation of needy children. Statistics from 1993 to 2008 are included.
 - [*Mathematics and Science Teacher Content-Based Professional Development*](#) continues to address the critical need for state funds to support mathematics and science in education and the work the Department is doing in Teacher Professional Development Institutes, Massachusetts Intel Mathematics Initiative, ALEKS Mathematics MTEL Preparation Study, and the Massachusetts Mathematics and Science Initiative.
 - [*Kindergarten Development Grants: Transition Planning for Full-day Kindergarten and Quality Full-day Kindergarten*](#) provides an update on the status of universal, voluntary full-day kindergarten as a component of an early education and care system for children birth to third grade and the two grant programs implemented by the Department to provide transition assistance from part-day programs to full-day programs and to improve the quality of full-day kindergarten programs.

Comments from the Secretary

Secretary Reville will brief the Board on current issues and activities.

Items for Discussion and Action

1. **Mass TeLLS (Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey) Report - Discussion**

Representatives from the Massachusetts Teachers Association will be at our meeting to present the results of

the Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey (Mass TeLLS). This statewide survey was conducted by the New Teacher Center at the University of California-Santa Cruz and was sponsored by a coalition of seven Massachusetts education groups, two foundations, two policy centers, and Governor Patrick. More than 40,000 teachers and administrators - over half the state's teaching force - participated in the survey last year. The survey's findings are very interesting and I expect they will play a role in our work going forward as we examine teaching conditions and professional development offerings.

2. Update on State Education Budget - Discussion

I will update the Board on our budget planning, including the latest information we have on the federal economic stimulus package. Secretary Reville will brief the Board on the education budget perspective from the Governor's office.

3. MCAS History and Social Science/U.S. History Assessments: Suspension of 2009 and 2010 Testing - Discussion and Possible Vote to Waive Regulation

I recommend that the Board vote to waive the history and social science requirement for a Competency Determination (CD) for the classes of 2012 and 2013, because budget constraints will not allow us to implement the full MCAS testing program as planned. In order to preserve the current English language arts, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering assessment program, we must suspend MCAS history and social science testing scheduled for spring 2009 and 2010. Without the 2009 and 2010 administrations of the history and social science tests, we cannot set standards and provide curriculum feedback to students and schools in time for the scheduled implementation of the history requirement for the CD in 2012 and 2013. In addition, I believe it is imprudent to add history to the CD requirement when state funding for academic support and other resources for intervening with students who have not yet met the requirement are unlikely to increase and may be reduced.

This is listed as a "possible vote" on waiving the CD regulation because the usual course under the Board's bylaws is to discuss policy matters at one meeting and vote at the next meeting. I would encourage the Board to waive its bylaw and vote this month, to give the field as much advance notice as possible. Alternatively, the Board may choose to wait and vote in March.

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

We deferred this item from the January 2009 meeting. As we discussed with the Board in October 2008, 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 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 its chair, Joseph Esposito, will present a report to the Board this month. I will also update the Board on our progress in developing an MCAS growth model.

5. Proposed Revisions to Graduation Rate Standard for FY09 AYP Determinations - Initial Discussion

The Department released the annual report on school district graduation rates on February 4th. At our February 24th meeting we will have an initial discussion of changes I am recommending to the graduation

rate standards used in our determinations of adequate yearly progress (AYP) in order to comply with federal requirements. The Board will vote on this matter next month.

6. Charter Schools:

1. New Charter Applicants - Discussion and Vote

Last month we provided the Board with an overview of the process for reviewing and granting new charters and a summary of the three charter applications that were pending. After careful review, I am recommending that the Board grant a charter to the Gloucester Community Arts Charter School, which would open in 2010 on condition that the final approved FY10 state budget provides full foundation funding to Gloucester. Detailed information about the review process and the proposed charter school is enclosed. Associate Commissioner Jeff Wulfson and Charter Schools Director Mary Street will be at the Board meeting to respond to questions about charter school matters.

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

The Board had an initial discussion on the charter renewals for these six charter schools - Barnstable Horace Mann, Marstons Mills Horace Mann, Boston Preparatory, River Valley, Roxbury Preparatory, and Salem Academy - at the January 2009 meeting. I recommend that the Board vote on these renewals this month. By the way, the education-related news clips in your materials under Tab 7 include a recent article from *Education Week* about the impressive performance of Roxbury Preparatory Charter School in preparing middle school students for success in high school and college.

3. Report on Conditions for Benjamin Banneker and North Central Charter Schools - Discussion and Vote

The Board renewed the charter of Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School in Cambridge with three conditions in January 2006. This month I am reporting on the school's progress and recommending that the Board place the school on probation with specified conditions. The Board renewed the charter of North Central Charter Essential School in Fitchburg with four conditions in February 2007. The school has met three of the conditions, and I am recommending that the Board extend the fourth condition.

Other Items for Information

7. Education-Related News Clippings

Enclosed are several recent articles about education.

8. Report on Grants and Charter School Extended Loan Terms Approved by Commissioner

Under Tab 8 is a report on grants that I have approved, per the Board's vote in October 2008 to delegate grant approvals to the commissioner. This authorization allows us to make decisions and inform grant applicants on a timely basis. The Board also delegated authority to me to approve extended loan terms for

charter schools, a routine administrative matter. I have not approved any such loan terms since my last report.

9. Inventory of Department Activities Related to 21st Century Skills Task Force Recommendations

In advance of further discussion of the report of the Board's Task Force on 21st Century Skills, we are providing, for your information, two documents to illustrate the connections between the work of the Department, the goals and priorities agreed to by the Board last summer, and the Task Force's recommendations. We are continuing to learn about initiatives underway in schools and districts in Massachusetts that integrate these skills in the classroom and will compile this information for a report to the Board in the spring.

10. 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 February 24th.

last updated: February 19, 2009

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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Governor's FY2010 Budget Recommendations "House 1"

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

Date: February 19, 2009February 13, 2009

On January 28, 2009, the Governor released "House 1," his Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Recommendations to the Legislature, as well as, a second round of 9C cuts to the FY2009 Budget (DESE was cut an additional \$7.1 million for FY2009, for a total cut, including the October 9C cut of \$37.4 million.) The Governor's FY2010 Budget is based on significantly fewer projected FY2010 revenues and the Department's (DESE) FY2010 funding reflects this downturn in projected revenues at the national, state and local levels. Even with the dramatic reductions in FY2010 projected revenues, the Governor kept his promise not to cut Chapter 70, Foundation Aid. House 1 level funds Chapter 70 at the FY2009 amount of \$3.949 Billion.

The non-Chapter 70 Department accounts are funded at a total of \$544.6 million in FY2010. This represents a reduction of \$28.8 million from our FY2009 post 9C appropriated level of \$573.4. There are two actions/initiatives that the Governor is proposing in House 1 that account for the \$28.8 million reduction.

First, the Governor is proposing a state-wide Information Technology (IT) Consolidation Initiative. All DESE IT resources currently funded in FY2009 will be transferred under this initiative, to the Secretary's Office under the direction of the Secretary's Chief Information Officer. This IT Initiative will transfer approximately \$7.0 million and 30 IT staff from the Department's FY2010 Budget to the Secretary's FY2010 Budget. Each agency within the Secretariat will maintain and continue IT and data services under the direction of the Secretary's Chief Information Officer. The specific details of how this IT Initiative will work in FY2010 and beyond, have not yet been distributed to departments.

Second, House #1 also proposes the consolidation all of the Department's similar programs into substantially fewer consolidated programs. A sample of the program consolidations is the three literacy programs in FY2009, totaling \$6.6 million (Bay State Reading of \$1.2M, John Silber Literacy of \$3.2M and Early Tutorial Literacy of \$2.2M) into one new Literacy Program in FY2010 totaling \$4.6M. The new Literacy Program contains line item language that

specifically names the original three programs, but is silent on the FY2010 allocations to any of the three programs listed within the new program. The new FY2010 new Literacy Program funding is \$1.8 million less than the FY2009 post 9C spending of \$6.6 million.

House 1 anticipates that the IT Initiatives and the Program Consolidations will result in cost efficiencies and greater DESE latitude to address education priorities and reduce administrative costs.

The attached chart details the Department's House 1 funding Recommendations. The chart lists the columns from left to right:

- The account number.
- The account name, the new consolidated accounts are in blue text.
- The FY2009 Budget as appropriated in July, before any 9C reductions.
- The total of all 9C reductions, rounds 1 & 2, in October and January.
- The Department's FY2009 spending levels, post 9C reductions.
- The approved FY2009 staffing level for each administrative account.
- The House 1 Budget Recommendation. Below the House 1 Recommendation is the variance between the FY2010 recommendation and the FY2009 post 9C spending level, and immediately to the right is the percent variance between the two columns previously referenced.
- The FY2010 approved staffing level for the each administrative account.

Also, each account/program that is impacted by the Governor's IT Consolidation Initiative has two notes, in blue text, immediately below the account funding details. The first note lists the funds and staff that are transferred to the Secretary as part of the IT Initiative. The second note lists the actual dollar and percent variance to FY2009 spending levels, when adjusted for the IT transfers.

I am aware that the attached chart is substantially different from all previous charts that have been sent for your review. We are available to help walk you through the House 1 recommendations and related consolidations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at #3100, Tony DeLorenzo at #6598 or Jeff Wulfson at #6500.

Attachment

 Analysis of ESE's FY2009 Funding to the Governor's Consolidated House #1 Recommendation

last updated: February 19, 2009

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The Massachusetts Board of Education

MCAS History and Social Science Tests: 2009-2010

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

Date: February 13, 2009

I am recommending that the Board vote to waive the history and social science requirement for a Competency Determination (CD) for the classes of 2012 and 2013, because budget constraints will not allow us to implement the full MCAS testing program as planned. In order to preserve the current English language arts, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering assessment program, we will have to suspend MCAS history and social science testing scheduled for spring 2009 and 2010. Without the 2009 and 2010 administrations of the history and social science tests, we will be unable to set standards and provide curriculum feedback to students and schools in time for the scheduled implementation of the history requirement for the CD in 2012 and 2013. In addition, I believe it is imprudent to add history to the CD requirement at a time when state funding for academic support and other resources for intervening with students who have not yet met the requirement are unlikely to increase and may be reduced.

The Department administered MCAS history and social science pilot tests in grade 5 (North American geography and early American history), grade 7 (world geography and ancient/classical civilizations) and grades 10/11 (United States History) in 2007 and 2008. Our plan had been to administer operational tests this spring and report performance levels and scaled scores at the student, school, and district levels this fall.

I have not come lightly to the decision to suspend these tests. I am deeply committed to the teaching and learning of history and social science as part of a well-rounded curriculum, and understand the role that MCAS can play to promote this important work. However, there are very strong indications that the Department's budget next year, including the budget for student assessment, will be funded at a lower level than this year. Even at current funding levels, we will have insufficient funds to maintain our current program and transition our pilot history and social science tests to a fully operational assessment program. While our history and social science tests are part of our state education reform program, unlike reading, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering tests, they are not required by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. If the budget cuts currently projected are realized,

there will be additional impacts to the MCAS program, beyond the impact to history and social science assessments.

The Board voted in October 2006 to require that students, starting with the class of 2012, meet or exceed the Needs Improvement scaled score of 220 in history and social science (in addition to requirements in English language arts, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering) as a condition for high school graduation. I recommend that the Board vote to waive this requirement of the CD regulation, 603 CMR 30.03(4), for the classes of 2012 and 2013 as a consequence of the suspension of the administration of history and social science assessments in 2009 and 2010. The effect of this temporary waiver would be that students in the graduating classes of 2012 and 2013 must meet the CD standards in English language arts, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering, but not history and social science, as a condition of high school graduation.

While the usual course under the Board's bylaws is to discuss policy matters at one meeting and vote at the following meeting, I would encourage the Board to waive its bylaw and take the vote this month in order to give the field as much advance notice as possible. Alternatively, the Board may choose to wait until the March meeting to vote on this matter.

I will monitor future years' budgets with the goal of establishing a timeline for reinstating the MCAS history and social science assessments and implementing the history and social science requirement for the CD as expeditiously as possible. If the state appropriation for student assessment in FY11 is sufficient, and MCAS history and social science testing resumes in spring 2011, I will recommend that the history and social science requirement for the CD first apply to the class of 2014. This will provide schools with scaled scores and performance level results to analyze before the administration in spring 2012 that will, for the first time, count for the CD for grade 10 students who will be members of the class of 2014.

I regret having to make these recommendations, but the difficult times that confront us require difficult decisions. While I understand that school districts face their own serious fiscal challenges, I will be asking them to continue to devote appropriate instructional time to the core academic standards for history, geography, civics, and economics as identified in the History and Social Science Curriculum Framework.

I also want to note that the Department will take this opportunity to consider how we may further expand the MCAS history and social science assessments, including performance-based, curriculum-embedded components consistent with the recommendations of the Board's Task Force on 21st Century Skills as well as with the direction that I shared with the Board in April 2008 for the next generation of MCAS. I will communicate with you the results of our research, as well as our plan for augmenting the assessment of these skills, as we move forward.

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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

Date: February 13, 2009

As reported to the Board at its October, the Department is undertaking a redesign of the framework for school and district accountability and assistance. By way of background, we have included here as an attachment the August 29, 2008 memo that outlines the roles of the Board, Department and Advisory Council on Accountability and Assistance as delineated in the statute signed into law this past summer.

At the February Board meeting we will provide an update on 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 Board-appointed *Advisory Council on Accountability and Assistance* has met three times since its appointment in November. (One meeting was canceled due to inclement weather.) On behalf of the Council, Chair Joseph Esposito will be presenting the first of its two reports to the Board this year.

The attached documents outline progress since October:

1. The latest revision of the graphic depicting the emerging framework 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. Advisory Council Chair Joe Esposito will report on the Advisory Council's assessment of the emerging framework.

Enclosures:

-   Framework for District Accountability and Assistance
-   Growth Model Analysis
-   Accountability and Targeted Assistance – Highlights of Progress to Date
-  August 29, 2008 Memo on District and School Reviews – New Legislation and Next Steps

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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Recommended Graduation Rate Standard for 2009 AYP Determinations

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

Date: February 13, 2009

The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires every state to establish a graduation rate standard and to use that standard as part of the "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) determination for each of its public high schools.

At its January 2008 meeting, the Board voted to establish the following standard for use in the 2008 AYP determinations, to be applied in the aggregate and to all student subgroups meeting the minimum group size requirements:

- a four-year graduation rate of 60 percent applied to the 2007 graduation cohort, or
- a five-year graduation rate of 65 percent applied to the 2006 graduation cohort, or
- a two percentage point increase in the four-year graduation rate compared to the four-year graduation rate for the previous year.

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) did not approve our request to use a five-year rate, but did approve the other two components of this standard for the 2008 AYP determinations only. USED indicated that they expected Massachusetts to provide a "more challenging" graduation rate standard in future years.

It is my recommendation that the Board establish the following standard for use in the 2009 AYP determinations, again to be applied in the aggregate and to all student subgroups meeting the minimum group size requirements:

- a four-year graduation rate of 65 percent for the class of 2008, or
- a two percentage point increase in the four-year graduation rate from the class of 2007 to the class of 2008.

While most high schools will meet this revised standard in 2009 for students in the aggregate and their subgroups, an expectation of continued improvement will encourage those schools with high student drop-out rates or low rates

of competency determination attainment to maintain their efforts to engage and support those students to meet our state's AYP graduation rate standard in future years.

In making this recommendation, I took several factors into account:

- We apply the graduation rate standard to each student subgroup, in order to support our efforts to hold districts and schools accountable for all of the children in their care. While the statewide average graduation rate for students in the aggregate was just over 81% in 2008, average rates for our student subgroups ranged from a high of 87% for White and Asian students, to 68% for African-American/Black students, 65% for low-income students, 64% for special education students, 58% for Hispanic students, and 56% percent for students with limited English proficiency. Sixty-five percent is a realistic short-term target for our lowest performing schools.
- By including an option for demonstrating improvement, a school or district with a student subgroup rate below the 65 percent standard has a realistic opportunity to meet their AYP goal for the current year. I am very concerned by the low graduation rates for certain student subgroups, and I think it is essential that we credit, within our school accountability system, schools' efforts to improve their ability to engage students through graduation.
- Because the graduation rate calculation takes into account students who drop out over a four-year period, even the most effective remedial efforts will take some time to be fully reflected in the rate.
- Beginning next year with the class of 2009 cohort, we plan to amend our graduation rate cohort definition to include students who were enrolled in grade 8 in a district but who did not subsequently enroll in grade 9. This change in cohort definition will identify these students as non-graduates, and we anticipate a one-time downward impact on the four- and five-year graduation rates next year as a consequence of this reporting change.

Earlier this month I sent you copies of our recently released graduation rate report, which includes data on both the four-year rate for the class of 2008 and the five-year rate for the class of 2007. This report is also available on our website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/>. Note that although we calculate both four- and five-year graduation rates, the U.S. Department of Education requires us to use the four-year rate for AYP purposes.

Following our initial discussion of this issue at the February Board meeting, I will ask the Board to vote on the standard at our March meeting. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Matt Pakos, the Department's Director of School Improvement Grant Programs, at 781-338-3507; Rob Curtin, our Director of Data Analysis and Reporting, at 781-338-3582; or me.

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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Charter School Applications - Recommendations for New Charters - Application Cycle 2008-2009

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

Date: February 13, 2009

In this charter application cycle, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) received seven prospectuses in August 2008. Following a review of these prospectuses by the Department's staff and external reviewers, three applicant groups were invited to submit final applications in November:

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

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

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

The Department's Charter School Office conducted a rigorous, multi-step review of the final applications that included:

- A panel review of each application that included both Department staff and external reviewers. Panel members individually reviewed each application based on published evaluation criteria, and then the entire panel met as a group to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each application.
- Public hearings were held in each of the three districts where the proposed charter schools would be located. Recordings of these public hearings and records of which individuals signed up to speak are available. Additional public comment was solicited through the Department website. The superintendent and school

committee in each district proposed for the charter schools received copies of the application and were invited to comment.

Interviews were conducted with members of the founding groups and proposed boards of trustees, focusing on the concerns and questions raised in relation to the application criteria in the panel review, public hearings, and public comment.

After a careful review of the results of this process, I recommend the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education award the following charter:

Gloucester Community Arts Charter School

Location: Gloucester
Number of Students: 240
Grade Level: K-8
Opening Year: To be determined



As a result of the review process, I determined that the two other proposals needed further development and revision with respect to one or more of the criteria. I strongly encourage these groups to consider reapplying during next year's application cycle. Each of the applicant groups will be offered an opportunity to receive feedback on their application from the Charter School Office staff. I would also note that it is not uncommon for applicant groups to return with a second or even third application, after improving the quality of their application based on feedback from the Department. Since 2001, seven of the twenty-three schools that have been chartered have gone through the application process twice.

Included in this packet are a detailed description of the final application review process and criteria for review; a list of all submitted applications; a list of reviewers; and a schedule of public hearings. The packet also includes, for the recommended applicant, an application summary, proposed board of trustees, summary of public comment, the written record of the interview with the applicant group, data on the overall student performance of its composite proposed sending district, information related to net school spending in the proposed district, and copies of written comments submitted to the Charter School Office by superintendents and public officials. Copies of all written public comment, audio/video recordings or public hearings, and sign-in sheets at public hearings are available at your request.


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.

Attachments:

  The Final Application Review Process and Criteria for Review

  List of All Submitted Applications

  [List of Prospectus and Final Application Reviewers](#)



 [Schedule of Public Hearings - Application Cycle 2008-2009](#)

Information on application recommended for a charter:

  [Charter Applicant Information Sheet](#)



  [Application Summary](#)

  [Proposed Board of Trustees](#)

  [Summary of Public Comment](#)

[Copies of Public Comment received from Public Officials](#)

  [Interview Record](#)

  [MCAS Performance and Net School Spending of Proposed Sending District](#)

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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Renewal Decisions for Six Charter Schools

(Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School, Boston Preparatory Charter Public School, Marstons Mills East Horace Mann Charter Public School, River Valley Charter School, Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, Salem Academy Charter Public School)

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

Date: February 13, 2009

Last month, the Board discussed charter renewals for Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School, Boston Preparatory Charter Public School, Marstons Mills East Horace Mann Charter Public School, River Valley Charter School, Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, and Salem Academy Charter Public School. The Board is scheduled to vote on these renewals at its meeting on February 24, 2009. I recommend that the Board renew the charters for all of these schools.

For Salem Academy Charter Public School (SACS), I recommend that the Board renew this school's charter 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 no later than the opening of school for fall 2009.

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 schools' performance in these areas. In its review, the Department has considered both the schools' absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and

the progress the schools have made during the past four years of their 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 documents that follow this memorandum compile the schools' record for the term of this charter.

Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School

In 1999, Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School (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 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."

Boston Preparatory Charter Public School

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."

Marstons Mills East Horace Mann Charter Public School

Marstons Mills East Horace Mann Charter Public School, is located in Barnstable. The school opened in 2004 and is chartered for and is serving kindergarten through grade 4, with a maximum enrollment of 475. 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."

River Valley Charter School

River Valley Charter School (RVCS), a regional Commonwealth charter school, is located in Newburyport. The school opened in 1999 and is chartered to serve grades Kindergarten through grade 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."

Roxbury Preparatory Charter School

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 its 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 school's mission statement 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."













Salem Academy Charter School

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 grade levels each year; 2008-09 is the first year it has operated with its full 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."

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:

-   Summary of Review for Barnstable Horace Mann Charter School
Motion to Renew
-   Summary of Review for Boston Preparatory Charter Public School
Motion to Renew
-   Summary of Review for Marstons Mills East Horace Mann Charter Public School
Motion to Renew
-   Summary of Review for River Valley Charter School
Motion to Renew
-   Summary of Review for Roxbury Preparatory Charter School
Motion to Renew
-   Summary of Review for Salem Academy Charter Public School
Motion to Renew

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The Massachusetts Board of Education

Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School - Report on Conditions and Recommendation

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

Date: February 13, 2009

The charter of Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School (BBCPS) was renewed with three conditions in January 2006. At this time, the school has not met two of the three conditions, including the requirement that the school make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2008 and make substantial progress toward meeting its academic improvement accountability plan goals. Based on evidence provided through the charter school accountability process and my own visit to the school, I recommend placing the school on probation with the condition that the school make AYP in the aggregate and for all subgroups for the 2009 MCAS test administration and meet or make progress toward meeting the academic goals in its accountability plan and that enrollment remain at 325 students.

Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School

BBCPS, a Commonwealth charter school, is located in and chartered to serve Cambridge. The school opened in 1996 and the charter was renewed with conditions in 2001 and 2006. BBCPS is chartered to serve kindergarten through grade six with a maximum enrollment of 325. In 2008-09, BBCPS is serving 313 students. The school draws its students primarily from Boston (179) and Cambridge (66) as well as from twenty additional districts.

The school's mission statement reads: "the Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School is an urban K-6 science and technology school, committed to excellence in education. We believe all students can excel as learners and citizens when provided with a rich, supportive, and stimulating educational environment. The BBCPS is the inspiration of concerned community leaders, parents, and educators, with the common vision and purpose of providing all Cambridge and local youth, regardless of race, culture, language, or socioeconomic status, with a high quality education."

On October 23, 2008, the Charter School Office conducted a site visit to BBCPS. Before the visit, the site visit team

reviewed the school's 2007-08 annual report; the school's accountability plan; the Year 12, 2007-08 Site Visit Report; board of trustees materials; and recent internal and external assessment data. On site, the team reviewed curricular documents and other information provided by the school; conducted group and individual interviews with trustees, administrators, teachers, students, and parents; and observed classes.

The site visit had four purposes:

- to review the progress that the school has made in meeting the conditions imposed by the Board,
- to corroborate and augment the information contained in the school's annual report,
- to determine 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

Condition 1: The Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School will make Adequate Yearly Progress in the aggregate and no longer be identified in English language arts and mathematics under the Massachusetts School and District Accountability System when results are reported for the 2007-08 school year.

Status: Not met. BBCPS did not make AYP in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in the aggregate or for any subgroups in 2008.

Condition 2: The Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School will meet, or make substantial progress each year towards meeting, the goals in its Accountability Plan for 2006-11 in the area of student academic success.

Status: Not met. According to data submitted at the time of the site visit and in the 2007-08 annual report, BBCPS has achieved three of the ten measures related to academic success in its accountability plan. One measure was partially met, three were not met, and it is not possible to assess whether the school achieved an additional three measures.

Condition 3: For the 2006-07 school year, enrollment at the Benjamin Banneker Charter Public School is limited to 325 students. When the school demonstrates that both academic success conditions above have been met, enrollment may increase to a maximum of 350 students.

Status: Met. The school reduced its maximum enrollment to 325 students.

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*

- In year thirteen, the school is in the process of redefining the science and technology aspect of its mission. Last spring, the school convened a meeting of a science advisory board to discuss this aspect

of the school's mission and what types of partnerships the school could further formalize or forge with outside organizations. The school is counting on improving its image as a science and technology school to bring in more students from Cambridge.

- In keeping with its mission, the school is well equipped with instructional technology. Teachers regularly incorporate devices such as personal computers, Alphasmarts, Smartboards, and a Promethean Activboard with an Activote system into lessons.

2. Academic Success

- CPI trajectories show declining performance for ELA and no significant change in mathematics for the past five years. Scores declined in 2008 after showing some gains in 2007. The overall CPI in ELA is 67.3 and in mathematics is 60.6.
- In ELA, 58 percent or fewer students reached proficiency in all tested grades for all years from 2005-08; in mathematics, 51 percent or fewer students reached proficiency in all tested grades for all years from 2004-08.
- In the past five years, between 16 and 29 percent of grade five students have reached proficiency on the MCAS science exam.
- In year twelve, the school articulated in writing its definitions of and expectations for teaching and learning. The year thirteen site visit team found that the school's teaching and learning model had been partially implemented. School leaders acknowledged and site visitors confirmed that the goals of differentiating instruction; reducing teacher talk time; and increasing the extent to which students think, speak, and are engaged in classroom activities have not yet been attained.
- Student behavior has had an impact on the quality and quantity of learning. During the year thirteen site visit, visitors observed a significant amount of student misbehavior in approximately one-third of the twenty-seven lessons observed.

3. Organizational Viability

- Although chartered to serve the district of Cambridge, BBCPS continues to draw a high percentage of its students from Boston (57%). Enrollment from Cambridge is 21% of the student body, with the remaining 22 percent coming from approximately twenty other towns. In order to support those students travelling long distances, the school offers free transportation to all students, at an annual cost to the school of over \$300,000.
- The school's leadership and curriculum team have created a root cause analysis document to reflect on why BBCPS did not achieve AYP in either ELA or mathematics in 2008. Among other factors, the drop in scores is attributed to the fact that 2008 was a transitional year, with a new executive director and many new and inexperienced staff members who received insufficient support and training.

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.

Attachment: Site Visit Report

last updated: February 20, 2009



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The Massachusetts Board of Education

North Central Charter Essential School - Report on Conditions and Recommendation

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

Date: February 13, 2009

The charter of North Central Charter Essential School (NCCES) was renewed with conditions in February 2007. At this time, the school has met three of the four conditions imposed. Progress has been made toward meeting the fourth condition requiring the school to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and make progress toward goals outlined in its accountability plan. Based on evidence provided through the charter school accountability process and my own visit to the school, I recommend that the Board extend the fourth condition to require that the school make AYP on the 2009 MCAS test administration and that the school continue to meet or make progress towards meeting the academic goals in its accountability plan.

North Central Charter Essential School

NCCES, a regional Commonwealth charter school, is located in Fitchburg. The school opened in 2002 and is chartered to serve grades seven through twelve with a maximum enrollment of 400. In 2008-09, NCCES is serving 344 students. The school draws approximately half of its students from Fitchburg, with students also enrolling from Leominster, Gardner, North Middlesex, Ashburnham-Westminster, and other communities in central Massachusetts.

The school's mission statement is: "NCCES is a free public school where students are known personally, challenged intellectually, and expected to participate actively in their learning. Guided by our commitment to diversity and inclusiveness, our goal is to send graduates into the world who think for themselves, care about others, and act creatively and responsibly."

On October 9, 2008, the Charter School Office conducted a site visit to NCCES. Before the visit, the site visit team reviewed the school's 2007-08 annual report; the Year 6, 2007-08 Site Visit Report; board of trustees materials; and

recent internal and external assessment data. On site, the team reviewed curricular documents and other information provided by the school; conducted group and individual interviews with trustees, administrators, teachers, students, and parents; and observed classes.

The site visit had four purposes:

- to review the progress that the school has made in meeting the conditions imposed by the Board,
- 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, the school shall submit a report on actions taken in response to the recommendations of a consultant, who shall be approved by the Commissioner, hired to complete a review of the school's leadership structure and to provide assistance in the hiring process for school leadership.

Status: Met. In April 2007, the school received approval from the Commissioner and engaged the educational consulting firm, Class Measures, to conduct a review of the school's leadership structure and to provide assistance in the hiring process for school leadership. On June 22, 2007, it submitted to the Charter School Office a report in response to the recommendations. The school's written response included the recommendations made by the consultant, the school's adoption of those recommendations, and a plan for continued collaboration between the school and the consultant.

Condition 2: By June 30, 2007, NCCES must submit to the Department's Charter School Office a school improvement plan created through the Department's process for creation of a District Plan for School Intervention.

Status: Met. The June 30, 2007 deadline was met for submission of the final draft of the NCCES Plan for Charter School Improvement (Plan). Staff members in the Accountability and Targeted Assistance unit of the Department reviewed the Plan in lieu of a state review panel. The school received the comments of these reviewers and was informed in October 2007 that the Plan should be implemented and the school should conduct ongoing evaluation to determine if the Plan is successful and if changes need to be made, in collaboration with the Charter School Office.

Condition 3: By June 30, 2007, NCCES must have a five year accountability plan approved by the Charter School Office. The accountability plan must include annual benchmarks against goals and objectives that align to the school's plan for improvement as referenced in Condition 1. Benchmarks within the accountability plan must include the school making AYP in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups on all applicable tests.

Status: Met. The school submitted its draft plan in a timely fashion, received feedback from the Charter School Office, and submitted a final version by June 30, 2007.

Condition 4: NCCES must demonstrate that it is an academic success by December of 2008 by providing evidence that the school has met or is making substantial progress toward meeting benchmarks in its 2007-12 accountability plan and has made AYP in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups on all applicable tests on the spring 2007 and spring 2008 MCAS test administrations.

Status: Partially met. In 2007, In ELA, NCCES did not make AYP in English language arts (ELA) in the aggregate and for its two subgroups. NCCES made AYP in mathematics that year in the aggregate and for one of its two subgroups. In 2008, the school made AYP in ELA in the aggregate, and for two of its three statistically significant subgroups. In mathematics, the school showed growth but did not make AYP in the aggregate, missing the improvement target by 0.3 CPI points. Two of three subgroups made AYP.

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*

- Stakeholders are familiar with and committed to the school's mission, which is reflective of its status as a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools.
- Stakeholders express an understanding and commitment to the Think/Care/Act philosophy of the school.
- Conflict and disciplinary issues are addressed through structures that are aligned to the school's mission, such as peer mediation and the advisory program.

2. *Academic Success*

- The school is in the process of reorganizing, documenting, and reviewing its baseline curriculum using web-based curriculum mapping software.
- The school has implemented a program that is designed to provide targeted ELA and mathematics instruction to students according to their most urgent needs.
- Classrooms were observed to be purposeful and focused on learning.
- The school has expressed a commitment to developing assessments and data analysis systems that are tied to state standards. This year, the school received a \$120,000 grant from the Peabody Foundation that is designed to better integrate the school's collection of and use of data.
- MCAS scores for NCCES students have been inconsistent over the past three years with the overall composite performance index showing improvement as grades progress.

3. *Organizational Viability*

- Administrators have developed a reporting structure for keeping the board of trustees informed about progress on the school's accountability and school improvement plans.
- The board is clear in its understanding of its role and has developed an effective committee structure.
- Achieving maximum enrollment continues to be a challenge. The board of trustees identified improving the school's image and increasing enrollment as a priority.
- Parents and students are very satisfied with the school and deeply appreciate the teachers' dedication.

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.

Attachment: Site Visit Report

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The Massachusetts Board of Education

ESE Work Tied to 21st Century Skills Recommendations

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

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





Date: February 13, 2009

For your information this month we have provided two documents to illustrate the connections between the work of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), the goals and priorities agreed to by the Board last summer, and the recommendations of the Board's Task Force on 21st Century Skills. The two documents are:

1. A partial inventory of ESE work directly linked to specific recommendations of the Task Force. Some are examples of efforts currently underway; others are examples of initiatives expected to begin over the next calendar year.
2. A "crosswalk" between the Board's goals and priorities and the recommendations of the Task Force. Some elements of the Board's goals and priorities - such as the accountability redesign elements - have no direct link to the Task Force recommendations. Others, such as goals around curriculum and instruction and educator development are more closely tied.

I am providing you with these documents in advance of further discussion of the Task Force recommendations so you will have information about where these skills are being infused in our work, and where there is still room for growth. Later this spring I will provide you with exemplars from schools and districts that have developed unique ways to integrate these skills in the classroom.

Enclosures:

-   Crosswalk: Board Goals and Priorities and Task Force on 21st Century Skills Recommendations
-   Partial Inventory of Current ESE Work Tied to 21st Century Skills Recommendations

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