

Innovation Schools Update

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Background

Innovation Schools are a signature component of Governor Patrick's Achievement Gap Act of 2010. The Innovation Schools legislation allows a wide range of community stakeholders (including teachers, school and district leaders, school committee members, parents, union representatives, non-profit charter management organizations, non-profit business partners, institutions of higher education, or other community partners) to develop Innovation School plans that take advantage of autonomies and flexibilities in order to significantly increase student achievement. These in-district public schools retain local funding, are approved by local school committees, and can be established in any school district in Massachusetts. There is no cap on the number of Innovation Schools that can be established.

Support for Innovation School Applicants

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Executive Office of Education (EOE) have worked collaboratively to support the establishment of Innovation Schools. The DESE and the EOE have provided information and guidance to potential applicants and other stakeholders, and have secured funding for planning and implementation grants as well as to provide site-based technical assistance for applicants. Funding to support this initiative has come from state Race to the Top (\$1.5 million) funds as well as grants to the EOE from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Boston Foundation, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

In March 2011, 24 planning grants of up to \$15,000 were awarded by the DESE/EOE to support the establishment of 26 schools in districts across the state. The deadline for the second round of planning grants is November 15, 2011 and the grants will be awarded in December 2011.

The deadline for the first round of implementation grants is June 30, 2011, and awards in the range of \$25,000 - \$75,000 will be announced in early August. Recipients will use the funding to support the operation of their approved Innovation Schools for one school year.

Schools Approved to Date

Three Innovation Schools are concluding their first year of operation – the Paul Revere Innovation School (**Revere** School District), the Pathways Early College Innovation School (a collaboration between the **Mahar** School District and Mount Wachusett Community College) and the Massachusetts Virtual Academy (**Greenfield** Public Schools).

There is a growing interest in establishing Innovation Schools across the state. Six new Innovation Schools have been approved to date this spring, and all will open this coming September.

In May the **Worcester** School Committee approved 5 Innovation Schools, the first district in the state to approve multiple Innovation Schools. To celebrate this milestone, Governor Patrick and Secretary Reville visited Woodland Elementary School on May 20th. (*See attached press release.*) The Worcester Innovation Schools (three elementary schools, one middle school academy, and a grade 7–12 school) will implement different strategies to increase learning time, provide more targeted instruction to students, increase professional development and planning time for educators, and provide more comprehensive social and health services to students and their families. In particular, the Chandler Magnet School will provide dual language instruction in Spanish and English, the Goddard Scholars Academy will serve highly motivated middle school students, and University Park Campus School will expand its successful efforts to increase college and career readiness. The Goddard School of Science and Technology, University Park Campus School, and Woodland Academy are also part of the Main South Promise Neighborhood initiative, an effort to coordinate the efforts of educators, social service providers, community members, and city leaders in order to improve the lives of children.

The **Dennis-Yarmouth** School Committee also approved the Marguerite E. Small Innovation School, a 4th/5th grade school which will increase instructional time for students and professional development time for teachers by implementing a creative school schedule. (*See attached press release.*)

Looking Ahead

There are several Innovation School plans in the pipeline for September 2011, and local school committees will vote on these plans during the next month. Additionally, there are approximately twelve other Innovation School plans already in process for schools that, if approved, would open in the fall of 2012.

The DESE/EOE will continue to provide technical assistance as well as award planning and implementation grants to Innovation School applicants in the coming school year. Similar to last year, we will also organize informational and working sessions for interested stakeholders, and will provide additional information about these events in September.

Representative Alice Peisch and Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz, Co-Chairs of the Joint Education Committee, have scheduled a legislative briefing on Innovation Schools on Thursday, June 23rd. The briefing will be conducted from 10:30 -11:30 a.m. in the House Members Lounge.

Innovation Schools provide an opportunity for reform from the inside-out and a unique opportunity for increased educator and community ownership of schools. We are looking forward to the opening of this new crop of Innovation Schools and will continue to share periodic updates on their development.