



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
From: Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner
Date: January 13, 2012
Subject: North Central Charter Essential School – Renewal with Probation

This month, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) will discuss and vote on the charter renewal application for North Central Charter Essential School (NCCES). I recommend that the Board place the school on probation and renew the charter with the conditions described below.

North Central Charter Essential School

Mission Statement: “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.”

<i>North Central Charter Essential School (NCCES)</i>			
Type of Charter	Commonwealth	Location	Fitchburg
Regional/Non-Regional	Regional	Districts in Region	Ashburnham-Westminster, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster, Lunenburg, Nashoba, North Middlesex, Wachusett
Year Opened	2002	Year(s) Renewed	2007
Maximum Enrollment	400	Current Enrollment	360
Students on Waitlist	5	Chartered Grade Span	7-12

Basis of Recommendation Regarding Renewal

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 past 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 superintendents of the districts sending students to NCCES were invited to submit written comment to the Department regarding the renewal of the school's charter. No written comments were received for NCCES.

Recommendation for Board Action

NCCES is before you to receive approval for its second charter renewal. In 2007, NCCES's charter was renewed with four conditions regarding academic performance and leadership structure. As of 2009, the school had met all of the conditions but one, regarding academic performance. At the time, the Board voted to extend the academic performance condition. In January 2011, the Board voted to eliminate the final condition on NCCES's charter based on one year of academic improvement by the school since the 2009-2010 school year. Since the January 2011 vote (performance in the 2010-11 school year), however, the school experienced a decline in academic achievement.

Based on the evidence described in the attached Summary of Review and further summarized below, NCCES has not demonstrated the level of academic performance expected of a charter school in its tenth year of operation. Therefore, I am recommending that the Board place the school on probation and renew the charter with conditions requiring improvements in academic performance. The school's performance in the areas of faithfulness to charter, academic success, and organizational viability is summarized below.

I. Faithfulness to Charter

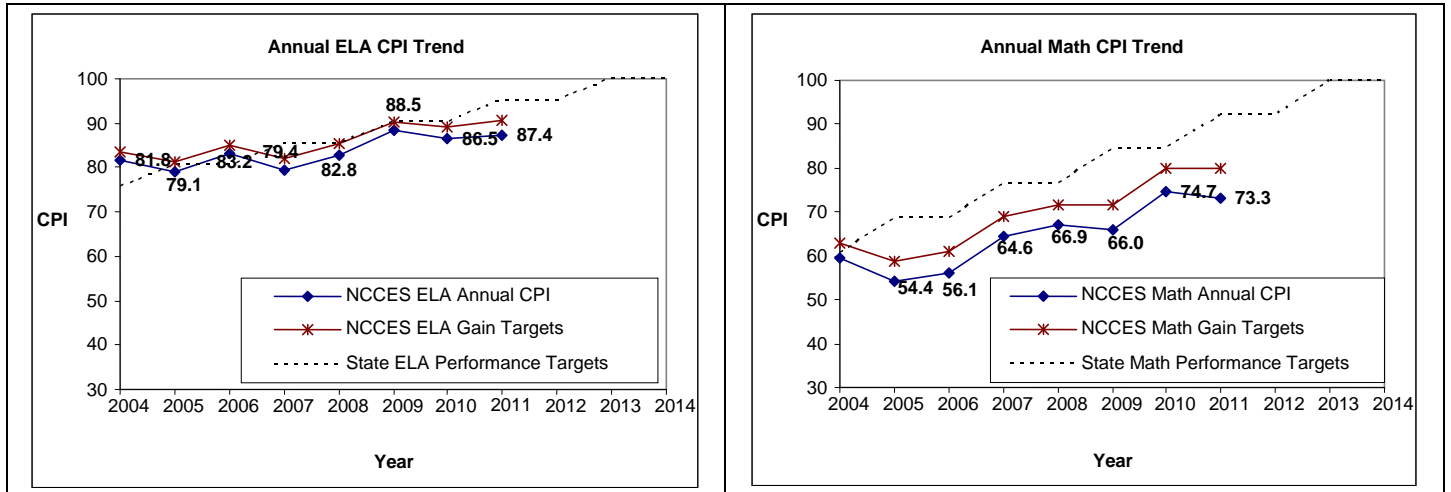
- Over the term of the charter, the school has augmented its academic program to address the needs of students in a manner that is consistent with its founding vision.
- The school has clarified its mission and vision during the charter term.

II. Academic Success

- As shown in the charts below, NCCES students have achieved adequate rates of proficiency on the English language arts (ELA) MCAS assessments over the charter term, demonstrating overall improvement since 2007.
- Absolute CPI performance in mathematics has shown overall improvement since 2007, but declined in 2011 and remains far below state targets.
- In 2011, 50 percent of NCCES students achieved proficiency on the mathematics MCAS

assessment.

- NCCES did not make AYP for mathematics in 2011.
- The school currently has an accountability status of “Restructuring Year 2” for mathematics.
- The school currently has an accountability status of “Restructuring Year 2 – Subgroups” in ELA.
- Over the charter term, NCCES has implemented a robust assessment system and uses data to provide remedial supports for students.



Adequate Yearly Progress History										NCLB Accountability Status
		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	
ELA	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Restructuring Year 2 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	
MATH	Aggregate	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Restructuring Year 2
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	

NCCES Median Student Growth Percentiles (SGP)			
Year	2009	2010	2011
English Language Arts	44.5	46.0	42.5
Mathematics	37.5	50.0	46.0

III. Organizational Viability

- Over the charter term, the school’s enrollment has been below its capacity.
- The school schedule barely meets the minimum requirement for structured learning time.
- Board members and school administrators have developed a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Both entities have clear systems for decision making.
- The school has created a safe school environment.

Conditions for Renewal

I recommend that the following condition be included as part of the school's probation and charter renewal:

NCCES must demonstrate academic success by:

- a. meeting academic growth targets in mathematics and English language arts, as established by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,
- b. demonstrating improvement in absolute CPI scores, and
- c. meeting academic goals and objectives established in the school's accountability plan.

North Central Charter Essential School shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00 and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations and such additional conditions as the Commissioner may from time to time establish, all of which shall be deemed conditions of the charter.

These conditions give the school until December 2013 to demonstrate satisfactory progress through annual results from MCAS tests, site visits by the Charter School Office, information submitted by the school in its annual reports, and other means as necessary. I will provide information to the Board on the school's success in meeting the conditions. Failure to meet the conditions placed on renewal of the charter within the timelines specified may result in summary revocation of the charter by the Board.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Marlon Davis, Director of Charter Schools, Innovation, and Redesign, at 781 338-3222; or Jeff Wulfson, Deputy Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; or me.

Enclosures: Summary of Review for North Central Charter Essential School
Motion