



**Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools  
Final Application Review Opening School Year 2013-2014**

**FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW**

<b>Proposed School Name:</b>	Massachusetts Virtual Academy at Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School
<b>Grades Served At Full Capacity:</b>	K-12
<b>Number of Students At Full Capacity:</b>	1250
<b>Proposed School Location:</b>	Greenfield
<b>Proposed Opening Year:</b>	2013-2014

**Mission Statement:**

“The mission of the pioneering Massachusetts Virtual Academy at Greenfield Commonwealth Virtual School is to provide a standards-based, Massachusetts public education to the very small percent of students statewide who for specific reasons could not or would not participate in their brick-and-mortar school. A second goal is having a cost-effective virtual school model for local school districts. A third goal is figuring out how to blend virtual education with district public school education since this model was not available in New England.”

**Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:**

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	K-12	750*
Second Year	K-12	1000
Third Year	K-12	1250

\*Only allow 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade student enrollment s for school year 2013-2014, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graded enrollments on an exception basis

**Guiding Principles and Core Values**

**Primary Strengths**

- The application clearly identified the populations the school plans to serve, although it is unclear how the school will serve each group of students. (Section I.A.)

**Primary Weaknesses**

- The application did not specifically address the school’s core values. (Section I.A.)
- The guiding principles described in the application are actually school functions, rather than education-based principles. (Section I.A.)
- The application did not demonstrate how the existing school improved instructional practices based on lessons learned from its three years of experience. (Section I.A.)

### **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The application listed different instructional methods that the school will use. (Section I.B.)
- The application described how the school will monitor student progress. (Section I.B.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- Condition: Although the application included plans for monitoring student progress, intervention plans for struggling students were unclear. (Section I.B.)
- The application was unclear regarding how the school would migrate to the new MA standards. (Section I.B.)
- Some MA standards were included in the K12 curriculum but taught at different grade levels than the MA standards require, sometimes by more than a difference of two years. (Attachment D.)
- The English language arts curriculum did not include the teaching of the MA standards for speaking and listening. . (Attachment D.)
- Some MA social studies standards were not covered. (Attachment D.)
- The health curriculum was missing many of the MA standards for physical and ecological health. (Attachment D.)
- The application was unclear about how self-paced and synchronous learning opportunities would be provided. (Section I.B.)
- The application did not provide specific details about how school would assist students who need additional support. (Section I.B.)
- The application did not address how hands-on activities would be monitored for special needs students. (Section I.B.)
- The application did not address how the school would help facilitate the transition for students who decide to return to their brick and mortar school—for example, by providing a report listing standards that the student mastered). (Section I.B.)

### Student Services and Supports

#### Primary Strengths

- The application included a description of extracurricular opportunities the school will offer; however, they are dependent on additional funding. (Section I.C.)

#### Primary Weaknesses

- Condition: The application was unclear about how English Language Learners (ELLs) would be supported and whether the school would require that educators have the proper license/endorsements. (Section I.C.)
- The application did not address the qualifications of the individuals who would provide the support to students. (Section I.C.)
- Students' social emotional growth did not appear to be a priority for the school. (Section I.C.)
- The application was unclear about how the school would support students of all ages. (Section I.C.)

### Governance

#### Primary Strengths

- The application stated that Greenfield will provide some services and that they will work to ensure there is no conflict of interest between the two school committees. (Section II.A.)

#### Primary Weaknesses

- Although this has been resolved, members of the Board of Trustees were not identified at the time the application was submitted. (Section II.A.)

### Partnerships

#### Primary Strengths

- Because the school plans to continue its existing partnerships, it already has working relationships with them. (Section II.B.)

#### Primary Weaknesses

- The application referred to a possible partnership with local YMCAs across the state, but the status of this agreement was unclear and it was not included in the school's budget. (Section II.B.)
- The application lacked details regarding criteria that were used to vet partnerships. (Section II.B.)
- The application quoted survey data but lacked information about who participated in the survey. (Section II.B.)
- The proposed partner has not demonstrated positive academic results in MA and the application did not indicate how the partner will improve its services for students. (Section II.B.)

### **Staff**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The school will require certified teachers for most curriculum areas. (Section II.C.)
- The school will recommend that teachers have 1 to 3 years of training in virtual teaching, if possible. (Section II.C.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The staffing plan was not complete. It was not clear how the school would recruit teachers and what the minimum qualifications would be. (Section II.C.)
- Condition: The application indicated that classes with fewer than three MA students would not be required to have a MA certified teacher. (Section II.C.)
- The application raised concerns with the proposed student/teacher ratio. (Attachment E.)

### **School Finances**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The \$5000 fee, which is based on school choice fee, may not accurately reflect the needs for a virtual school to provide all of its services. (Section II.D.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The budget was unclear about what the K12 expenditures cover. Additional details are needed. (Section II.D. and CMVS Budget Template.)

### School Characteristics

#### Primary Strengths

- Although the program is based on a 900-hour, 180-day plan, the school will offer flexibility in the specific days of the week that students must participate. For example, a student may substitute a Saturday for a Friday. (Section III.A.)

#### Primary Weaknesses

- Since the school did not request a seat time waiver, it needs to clarify which options will definitely be available to students who finish a year's curriculum before they have completed the required number of seat time hours. The application indicates only that they "may" have supplemental work or "may" start higher level work. (Section III.A.)
- The application was unclear about how the school would reach out to parents/guardians who are not English proficient. (Section III.A.)
- The application was unclear regarding how the application lottery would be designed in order to give priority to the targeted student population. (Section III.A.)
- The application states, "Greenfield's virtual CMVS will also have a site location available for course-taking, tutoring, and assessment overseen by virtual school personnel." If a physical site is only in Greenfield, services may not be equitable to students across the state. (Section III.A.)

### School Operations

#### Primary Strengths

- The technical supports were clearly described. (Section III.B.)

#### Primary Weaknesses

- Condition: The school has no plans for providing meals to students outside the Greenfield area who qualify for free and reduced price meals. (Section III.B.)
- The school's plans to deal with truancy were unclear. The application narrative contradicted the executive summary, which said that enrollment would end after 15 days of inactivity. (Section III.B.)
- The application was unclear about how teachers and parents would be informed about school policies. (Section III.B.)

### **Accountability Plan and Process**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- Although the school has not yet developed an accountability plan as a CMVS, it will be able to reference the plan that was approved when it was a Virtual Innovation School so that it will not need to start from scratch. (Section IV.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The application did not fully address this topic, despite the fact that the school has been in operation for three years. (Section IV.)
- The application referenced the school's Virtual Innovation School accountability plan, which has not resulted in improvement from year to year. Also this plan does not adhere to areas required by the application. (Section IV.)
- The application did not indicate who will be creating the accountability plan. (Section IV.)