*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley*Commissioner* |  |
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# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **Date:**  | May 9, 2018 |
| **Subject:** | Charter Schools – Report on Conditions for Codman Academy Charter Public School |

At its meeting in February 2013, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) authorized the Commissioner to act on its behalf in “(a) granting charter renewals that do not involve probation; (b) approving charter amendments that do not involve changes in grade span, maximum enrollment, or districts served; and (c) removing or continuing conditions imposed on charters of charter schools; provided that the Commissioner shall report to the Board on all charter renewals, charter amendments, and conditions that have been so approved; and provided further, that the Commissioner shall notify the Board in advance of all such intended actions, and a Board member may request that the Commissioner place the charter matter(s) on the agenda of the Board for discussion and action.”

I intend to extend the academic condition currently imposed on the charter of Codman Academy Charter Public School (CACPS). I summarize my rationale for this decision below, details about the school can be found starting on page two of this memorandum.

The school’s charter was renewed with conditions related to academics in 2016 following academic declines over the course of the previous charter term. The school met the first two conditions on its charter, CACPS conducted a self-evaluation of its program and developed an action plan for academic improvement; however, the school has not met the third condition requiring it to demonstrate significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts (ELA), and science.

Please let me know by **Wednesday, May 16, 2018** if you wish to have this proposed action brought to the full Board for review and vote at its meeting scheduled for May 22, 2018.

| **Codman Academy Charter Public School**  |
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| **Type of Charter** | Commonwealth | **Location** | Boston |
| **Regional or Non-Regional** | Non-Regional | **Districts in Region** | N/A |
| **Year Opened** | 2001 | **Year(s) Renewed** | 2006, 2011, 2016 |
| **Maximum Enrollment** | 345 | **Current Enrollment** | 345 |
| **Chartered Grade Span** | PK-12 | **Current Grade Span** | PK-12 |
| **Students on Waitlist** | 3,159 | **Current Age of school** | 17 |
| **Mission Statement:** Our mission is to provide an outstanding, transformative education to prepare students for success in college, further education and beyond. |

**School History**

Codman Academy Charter Public School (CACPS) opened in 2001 serving students in grades 9 through 12. Since its inception, the school has identified itself as an EL Education (EL formerly known as Expeditionary Learning) school. EL Education is an educational model that encourages hands-on learning experiences and taking education outside of the classroom and into the community. The school collaborates with national EL staff to implement the EL educational model.

In 2010, the school submitted, and was granted, an expansion request to increase its enrollment from 120 students to 145 students. Further, in 2012-2013, the school requested, and was granted, an amendment to increase its maximum enrollment from 145 to 345 and increase its grades served to PK through 12. In August 2015, the school submitted an amendment request to further increase its maximum enrollment by 20 seats. The request was not granted. The school reached the full grade span of PK to 12 during the 2016-2017 school year.

In the second year of the school’s expansion, the 2014-2015 Site Visit Report (Year 14) noted significant concerns about instructional quality (specifically in the newly added grades) and about the capacity of teachers and leaders. In response, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) conducted a targeted check-in site visit in October 2015 as well as a full renewal inspection later that fall. In 2016, based on declining academic performance on MCAS and PARCC assessments as well as continued concerns about instructional quality, the school’s charter was subsequently renewed with conditions related to academics. A report on those three conditions is found below.

**Progress Towards Meeting Conditions**

**Condition 1:** By June 30, 2016, CACPS must submit to the Department a comprehensive evaluation of the school’s mathematics, English language arts (ELA), and science programs including (but not limited to) whether and how such programs effectively create an environment conducive to learning and foster student engagement. Such comprehensive evaluation must be conducted by an external consultant(s) acceptable to, and approved in advance by, the Department.

**Status: Met**

The Department approved the school’s selection of EL Education to conduct the comprehensive evaluative of CACPS. The comprehensive evaluation was conducted by EL Education and submitted to the Department on the due date of June 30, 2016. The evaluation included recommendations regarding instructional quality and suggested the school should focus on and improve the following: tasks that students complete during lessons, checking for student understanding throughout the lessons, questions that teachers ask during lessons, and demonstrating crew spirit during lessons.

**Condition 2:** By July 31, 2016, CACPS must submit an action plan to improve academic performance to the Department for approval. Such action plan must specify the strategies to improve mathematics, ELA, and science performance for all student groups. The action plan must set clear and specific implementation benchmarks, with a clear timetable and deadlines for completion of key tasks, to allow the school’s board of trustees and the Department to monitor implementation.

**Status: Met**

Based on the evaluation conducted by EL Education, CACPS developed and submitted its plan on July 29, 2016, prior to the due date. Department staff asked for and received further information from the head of school to clarify some parts of the plan. The action plan included the recommendations from EL Education, strategies for improvement, tactics, start dates, check-in dates, measures of success, and point people. Codman Academy Charter Public School provided an update to the action plan to the Department during the 2018 site visit. Based on evidence from focus groups and documents gathered during the site visit, the school and stakeholders are implementing and monitoring the action plan.

**Condition 3:** By December 31, 2017, CACPS must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence that the school has exhibited significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, ELA, and science.

**Status: Not Met**

Codman Academy Charter Public School was placed on conditions, in part, based on low performance scores from the 2014 (MCAS) and 2015 (PARCC) assessments. Codman Academy Charter Public School continued to demonstrate low performance on assessments in 2016 and 2017, despite meeting gap-narrowing targets in 2016.

In 2016, the school administered the PARCC exam to grades 3-7 in ELA and mathematics. Codman Academy Charter Public School also administered the MCAS in grades 5 and 10 for science and technology/engineering and grade 10 for ELA and mathematics. On the PARCC assessment, 13 percent of students received a Level 4 or 5 in ELA, and 5 percent of students received a Level 4 or 5 in mathematics. At grade 10, 84 percent of students received a proficient or higher on the ELA MCAS, below the state average of 91 percent; and 70 percent of 10th grade students received proficient or higher in mathematics, below the state average of 78 percent. For 5th and 10th grade in science and technology/engineering, 22 percent of students received proficient or advanced, below the state average of 51 percent.

In 2017, the Next-Generation Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (Next-Generation MCAS) was administered statewide for the first time. As such, a majority of schools did not receive accountability levels. Data from CACPS’s administration of the Next-Generation MCAS is below.

In 2017, in grades 3 through 8, 8 percent of CACPS students met or exceeded expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS assessment in ELA, far below the state average of 49 percent. In mathematics in grades 3 through 8, 2 percent of students met or exceeded expectations on the Next-Generation MCAS assessment, far below the state average of 48 percent.

In 2017, CACPS administered the legacy MCAS in science and technology/engineering for grades 5, 8, and 10. In science and technology/engineering, 5 percent of students in grade 5 earned proficient or advanced on the legacy MCAS assessment, far below the state average of 46 percent; 0 percent of students in grade 8 earned proficient or advanced on the assessment, far below the state average of 40 percent.

In 2017, 87 percent of CACPS grade 10 students scored in the proficient and advanced categories on the ELA assessment. In mathematics, 73 percent scored proficient and advanced. These grade 10 scores represent improvement over the school’s 2015 and 2016 assessment results. While CACPS did not meet statewide targets for 4- or 5-year graduation rates, in 2017, the school’s dropout rate was 0.6 percent for all students and zero percent for high needs students.

Please see the attached Year 17 Site Visit Report for additional detail on academic outcomes.

**Additional Evidence**

The Department conducted a site visit to CACPS on February 13, 2018. The Department found that the school has made progress on its action plan and academic program delivery. Additionally, the school has developed capacity of its leadership team, and instruction has improved in classrooms. The Department also found that, while improved, CACPS is still not fully meeting Department criteria for mission and key design elements, instruction, and supports for diverse learners.

Key findings from the Department’s recent site visit to CACPS are as follows:

* School stakeholders share a common understanding of the school’s mission to provide a transformative education to prepare students for future success. The school is working toward more consistently implementing its mission and its key design elements such as preparing students for post-secondary success and providing high-quality instruction via targeted professional development. The school implements many aspects of the EL model.
* The school’s documented curriculum is aligned to state curriculum frameworks; it is aligned horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and vertically between grades at the same grade level; and is regularly reviewed and revised. The school is working to ensure that the curricula support opportunities for all students, including diverse learners, to master the skills and concepts outlined in state curriculum frameworks.
* The school gave the Department a list of common instructional routines and practices prior to the visit. Department visitors observed the common routines in the majority of classrooms.
* In a majority of observed classrooms, visitors observed instructional practices based on high expectations, instruction fostering student engagement, and classroom environments that were conducive to learning.
* The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to improve student outcomes and evaluate the effectiveness of its programs.
* The school has some systems and structures to meet the academic needs for all students, including (but not limited to) students with disabilities and English learners. The Department found some inconsistency in the ways in which CACPS implements a universal screener, provides tiered supports for its diverse learners, provides supports for diverse learners during instruction, and conducts programmatic evaluations for its special education and ELL departments.
* Codman Academy Charter Public School has developed its leadership capacity within the past two years. The school has defined clear roles and responsibilities for its school leadership team and developed a shared decision-making model.
* The school has comprehensive structures for teacher collaboration, professional development, and supervision.
* The Codman Academy Charter Public School board provides adequate governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.

**Recommendation**

Given this evidence regarding state assessment outcomes and recent qualitative observations of school operation, presented in more detail in the attached site visit report, I intend to extend the final condition currently imposed on the charter of CACPS for an additional two assessment cycles. Given that the school is completing its second year of its new, full grade span, I would expect improvement in the school’s 2018 Next-Generation MCAS scores. If the school does not demonstrate improvement in its 2018 assessments scores, I will keep members of the Board informed and consider additional action.

**Condition 1:** By December 31, 2019, CACPS must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence that the school has exhibited significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science. Should CACPS fail to demonstrate improvement based on 2018 statewide assessment, the Commissioner and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will consider further action, rather than wait until December 2019.

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If you have any questions regarding this recommendation or require additional information, please contact Alison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign (781-338-3218); Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner (781-338-3222); or me.

Attachments: Codman Academy Charter Public School Year 17 Targeted Site Visit Report