



# 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:** November 7, 2008  
**Subject:** Boston Renaissance Charter Public School – Extension of conditions of probation

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Boston Renaissance Charter Public School (Renaissance) opened in 1995 and was renewed for the second time in 2005. The 2005 renewal was granted with conditions regarding academic achievement and a reduction of grade span from K-12 to K-6. The conditions also required the school to consider a reduction in enrollment from 1,479 to 1,240 students. The Board voted to reduce the school's enrollment in September 2006. In 2007, at the conclusion of the time period for the conditions, the school was placed on probation for failing to meet the conditions. The Board then voted, on February 27, 2007, to place the school on probation with new conditions. These conditions again focused on improvement in the school's academic performance, as well as a requirement for the school to relocate and further reduce overall enrollment from 1,240 to 880 students by September of 2009.

When Renaissance was placed on probation, the Board committed to reviewing the school's progress toward meeting the requirements of the conditions each year. A summary of information gathered regarding the school since February 2007 was provided to the Board in December 2007. This memorandum includes a summary of information gathered most recently through a site visit conducted by the Charter School Office and serves as a report on the probationary conditions. The Site Visit Report is attached.

In addition, the school has requested an extension of the timeline for changing location and reducing enrollment. Although Renaissance has not met the adequate yearly progress (AYP) condition imposed in 2007, the school has made sufficient progress in moving students to proficiency to warrant my recommendation that the Board grant this request, with a requirement that the reduction in enrollment begin in the fall of 2009. If adopted, this would extend the school's probationary status until a determination is made regarding the school's renewal in FY2010.

**Report on Conditions**

The following conditions were imposed at the time the school was placed on probation.

**Condition 1.** By June 30, 2007, Boston Renaissance Charter School shall have submitted to and received approval from the Department of Education for the following items:

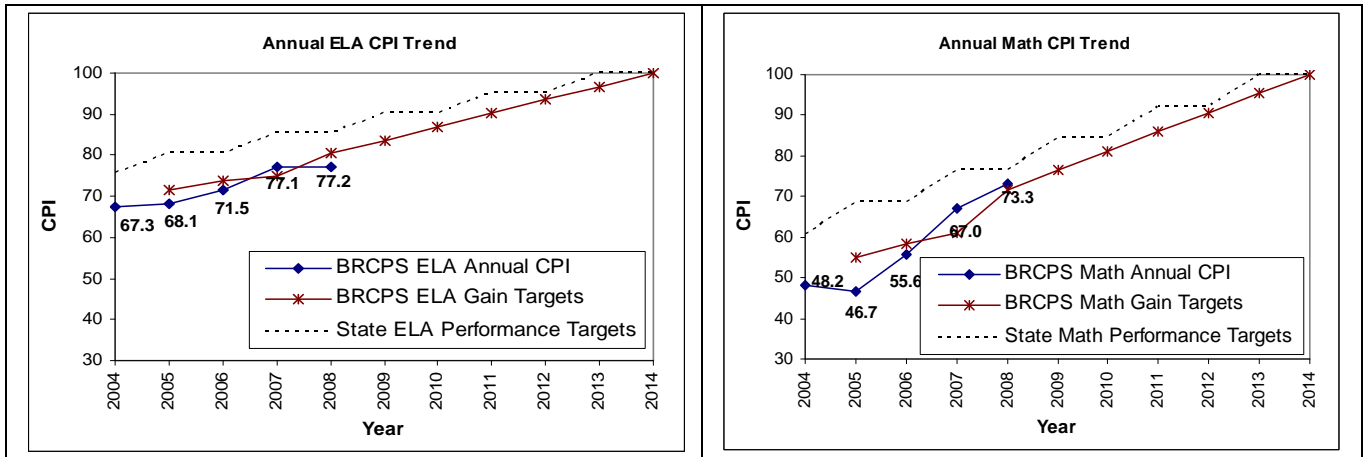
- A school improvement plan, consistent with the Department’s standards for a District Plan for School Intervention, including allocation of resources to achieve the goals of the school’s plan.
- A revised charter school Accountability Plan, including goals and annual benchmarks regarding academic success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to the terms of the school’s charter. The Accountability Plan must be aligned to the school’s plan for improvement as referenced above, and must include the school’s plan for achieving Adequate Yearly Progress in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups in English language arts and mathematics.
- A report from the school on actions taken in response to the recommendations of a consultant hired by the school, upon approval by the Commissioner, to review the school’s leadership structure and effectiveness.

**Status:** The school worked with the Charter School Office to create a school improvement plan and accountability plan, and submitted all required documents by the June 30, 2007 deadline.

**Condition 2.** By December of 2008, Boston Renaissance Charter School shall demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence that the school has met or is making substantial progress toward meeting all benchmarks in its 2007-2010 Accountability Plan and has made Adequate Yearly Progress in the aggregate and for all statistically significant subgroups in English language arts and mathematics for 2008.

**Status:** As detailed in the attached Site Visit Report, the school has met its Accountability Plan goals regarding organizational viability and faithfulness to charter. Accountability Plan goals regarding academic success reflect the school making AYP. These goals and the corresponding condition have not been met, although progress has been made in moving students toward proficiency. The following charts provide details on the school’s AYP status and the trajectory of progress in moving students to proficiency.

Adequate Yearly Progress History						NCLB Accountability Status
		2005	2006	2007	2008	
ELA	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	No	Corrective Action - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	No	
MATH	Aggregate	No	No	Yes	Yes	Restructuring Year 1 - Subgroups
	All Subgroups	No	No	No	Yes	



**Condition 3.** By December of 2008, Boston Renaissance Charter School shall have completed the necessary property acquisition and fundraising to permit a relocation of the school no later than September of 2009.

**Status:** The school has identified and purchased property in Hyde Park for renovation and construction. The sale of its current location on Stuart Street in downtown Boston is in process. The school is requesting an extension to September 2011 of the September 2009 deadline for relocation.

**Condition 4.** Boston Renaissance Charter School will reduce its maximum enrollment, without terminating the enrollment of any student currently attending the school, from 1,240 students to 880 students, beginning in the 2009-2010 school year.

**Status:** The school has also requested an extension of the deadline for reducing maximum enrollment. The Department requested and the school submitted a plan for starting the reduction in enrollment in 2009-10, however, reaching the mandated 880 students no later than September 2011. Should the school take occupancy of its new facility at an earlier date, the enrollment reduction would take effect for that same school year.

While I recommend approval of the school’s request to extend the deadline for relocation and have worked with the school to implement a phased-in reduction in enrollment, the school’s academic performance remains a concern, although it is moving in the right direction. The Site Visit Report provides information that indicates the school has implemented structures to drive improvement, but the results of the 2009 MCAS and information from the renewal inspection will be critical in determining my recommendation to you regarding the school’s renewal.

If you have any questions regarding this amendment or wish to see the school’s full request, please contact Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781-338-3200; Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781-338-6500; or me.