



Massachusetts Department of
**ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION**

Massachusetts Charter School

Common School Performance Criteria

April 2009

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Charter School Office
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148
Phone: (781) 338-3227
Fax: (781) 338-3220

COMMON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

What are the Massachusetts Charter School Performance Criteria?

In the summer of 2005, the Charter School Office contracted with SchoolWorks to provide assistance with the task of reviewing and revising the criteria used for charter school accountability. The goals of this work were:

- to use the experiences of the past to build a stronger accountability system for the future;
- to bring greater alignment to the criteria used across all aspects of charter school accountability, from the application process to the renewal process;
- to provide schools with clear guidance about how the Department defines school success and on what basis they will be judged; and
- to clarify the connections between charter school accountability and state and federal accountability standards.

The following criteria have been developed using the three guiding areas of charter school accountability defined in the current regulations as a starting point.

How do I read the Massachusetts Charter School Performance Criteria?

The three guiding areas of charter school accountability provide the framework for the school performance criteria: academic success, organizational viability, and faithfulness to the terms of the charter. For each area of the three areas of inquiry,

- general categories have been defined, and are in the gray shaded boxes; and
- criteria have been developed, articulating levels or degrees of performance/implementation.

The left most column contains key words so that readers can easily locate specific criteria.

There is a wide range of sources of evidence that will provide the data to help schools, the charter school office, and the Commissioner and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education know if the school has met performance expectations. A partial list of sources of evidence is attached after the criteria.

1. THE SCHOOL IS FAITHFUL TO THE TERMS OF ITS CHARTER.

MISSION OF THE SCHOOL

Mission	The school is faithful to the mission, vision, and educational philosophy defined in the charter application and subsequent approved amendment(s), if applicable.
----------------	---

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Governance/ leadership	The Board of Trustees implements the governance and leadership structure as defined in the charter application or subsequent approved amendment(s), if applicable.
Contractual relationships (if applicable)	<p>The Board of Trustees and school leadership establish effective working relationships with their management company. Changes in the school's relationship with its management company comply with required charter amendment procedures.</p> <p>The Board of Trustees of a Horace Mann charter school establishes and operates under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the host district.</p>

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Academic program	The school establishes an academic program, including pedagogical approach, curriculum, assessment, and other unique elements of the educational philosophy defined in the charter application or subsequent approved amendments.
Student services	The school provides services for all students, including but not limited to those with special education and English language learner needs, as defined in the charter application or approved amendments and as required by law.
Enrollment	The school's student recruitment and enrollment process is faithful to that intended in the charter and as defined by statute and regulation.

2. THE SCHOOL’S ACADEMIC PROGRAM IS A SUCCESS.

STATE MANDATED ASSESSMENT	
MCAS	Students at the school demonstrate Proficiency, ¹ or progress toward meeting proficiency targets on state standards, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Accountability System (MCAS) exams in all subject areas and at all grade levels tested for accountability purposes. ²
Accountability Plan goals	The school meets, or shows progress toward meeting, MCAS goals set in their Accountability Plans. ³
AYP	The school makes Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the aggregate and for all statistically significant sub-groups. ⁴ The school is not identified for accountability purposes (not designated as in Needs Improvement, Corrective Action, or Restructuring).

OTHER ACHIEVEMENT, IMPROVEMENT, AND ASSESSMENT MEASURES	
Accountability Plan goals	The school meets, or shows progress toward meeting, the external assessment goals set in its Accountability Plans.
Internal measures of student achievement	Students demonstrate progress on internal measurements linked with the school’s promotion or exit standards.
Accountability Plan goals	The school meets, or shows progress toward meeting, internal assessment goals set in its Accountability Plans.

¹ ‘Proficiency’ includes attaining either Proficient or Advanced classification

² Accountability purposes” is any test at any grade level that “counts” toward AYP determination

³ Accountability Plans should outline goals for absolute student performance as measured by the MCAS. Goals should be measurable, rigorous, consistent with the school’s mission, vision, and purpose, and the Commonwealth’s School and District Accountability System Adequate Yearly Progress indicators. As noted in the *Guidelines for Writing Charter School Accountability Plans*, “MCAS goals in each accountability plan should be consistent with the overall goals of making AYP. While AYP determinations do not replace the accountability system that has been established for Massachusetts charter schools, charter schools should not overlook the importance of AYP determinations, both in their yearly practice as well as in their Accountability Plan. Objectives indicating successful overall school performance on the MCAS must be consistent with AYP goals” (*Guidelines for Writing Charter School Accountability Plans*, page 5).

⁴ Making AYP requires meeting state determined targets in participation, absolute performance, improvement gains, competency determination, and attendance.

2. THE SCHOOL'S ACADEMIC PROGRAM IS A SUCCESS.

CURRICULUM	
Skills and knowledge expectations	The school's curriculum, as implemented in the classroom, consistently addresses the skills and concepts that all students must know and be able to do to meet state standards, and supports opportunities for all students to master these skills and concepts.
Diverse learners	<p>The school's curriculum articulates the skills and concepts that all students must know and be able to do, and supports opportunities for all students to master established skills and concepts.</p> <p>The school establishes and implements an accommodation plan that addresses the needs of diverse learners.</p>
Program evaluation	The school has systems and structures in place to regularly and systematically review the quality and effectiveness of the academic program.
Implementation of the curriculum	The school's curriculum is documented, and teachers plan and deliver lessons directed by the school's curriculum guidelines.

TEACHING AND LEARNING	
Organization	The classroom and school environment is orderly and supports the goal of student understanding and mastery of skills and is consistent with the school's mission.
Instruction	<p>School-wide instructional practice is aligned with the school design and student learning objectives, is consistently and effectively delivered, and conveys clear expectations to students.</p> <p>Teachers are purposeful in their lessons and students are engaged in meaningful learning.</p>
Assessment and instructional decision-making	Teachers and school leaders use qualitative and quantitative evidence to inform and guide instructional planning and practice.
Instructional leadership	School leaders provide teachers with feedback and guidance that leads to improved instructional practice and student achievement.

3. THE SCHOOL IS A VIABLE ORGANIZATION.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	
Solvency and stability	<p>The school develops budgets that are realistic and in support of student academic achievement.</p> <p>The school demonstrates a history of positive net assets, adequate cash flow to sustain operations, and support the academic program, and consistently operate within budget.</p> <p>The school develops a budget that can be sustained by its enrollment.</p>
Fiscal oversight	<p>The Board of Trustees and school leadership implement effective structures and systems to enable responsible fiscal oversight of the school.</p> <p>The Board of Trustees demonstrates long-term fiscal oversight through appropriate planning processes.</p>
Internal controls	<p>The school implements an effective system of internal controls over revenues, expenses, and fixed assets, and exercises good business practices.</p>

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	
Board accountability	<p>The Board of Trustee is responsible to the school community(ies) it serves.</p>
Decision making and communication	<p>The school has a clear understanding of decision-making and communication that result in a common sense of purpose for all school constituencies.</p>
Roles and responsibilities	<p>The school defines and delineates clear roles and responsibilities among board and staff.</p>
Board oversight	<p>The Board of Trustees regularly and systematically assesses the performance of school administrators against school-wide goals and makes effective and timely use of the evaluations.</p> <p>The Board of Trustee operates with a clear set of goals for the school and has developed a set of tools for understanding progress toward meeting those goals including those outlined in the school's Accountability Plan.</p>
Personnel	<p>The Board of Trustees employs leadership who demonstrate effective leadership of the school's programs.</p> <p>The school's leadership establishes an appropriate professional climate, resulting in a purposeful learning environment, reasonable rates of retention for effective school leadership, staff, and teachers, and manageable levels of overall staff turnover.</p>

3. THE SCHOOL IS A VIABLE ORGANIZATION.

PROGRAM PLANNING AND EVALUATION	
Family satisfaction	The school demonstrates that families are satisfied with the school's program.
Organizational needs	The school has realistic plans for program improvement, possible future expansion, and adequate facilities based on evaluation and analysis of data, if applicable.
Academic program needs	The school evaluates the impact of its academic programs on student achievement and modifies its programs to ensure improvement.

COMPLIANCE	
Coordinated Program Review	The school documents its compliance with the Coordinated Program Review (CPR) process.
Safety	The school establishes and maintains a physically safe environment for students and staff. The school establishes an environment free from harassment and discrimination for students and staff.
Facilities	The school provides facilities that meet applicable state and federal requirements, are suited to its programs, and are sufficient to serve diverse student needs.
Staff qualifications	Staff employed by the school meet all applicable state and federal qualifications and standards.

DISSEMINATION	
Dissemination and best Practices	The school has provided models for replication and best practices.

Possible sources of evidence:

Accountability Documents:

- Original charter application
- Accountability Plan
- Charter amendments
- Annual reports
- Site visits
- Renewal Inspection Report
- Contract and/or MOU

Governance and Leadership:

- Site visits – focus group interviews with leadership stakeholders
- Annual financial audits
- Budgets
- Board minutes
- Staff data reports including exit interview summaries and teacher qualifications
- Staff surveys
- Policy documents
- Parent/family surveys
- Opening Procedures activities
- Board of Trustees self evaluation or self study
- Evaluation of Head of School and/or school leadership
- Handbooks- family, staff, student, board
- Operation manuals, including fiscal policies and procedures guides
- Enrollment numbers and student demographic profile

Student Achievement Data:

- MCAS scores
- Sub-group analysis (including those that may be statistically insignificant for state reporting purposes) for English language learners and special education students
- AYP mid-cycle and end of cycle reports
- School identified and collected data
- Annual reports on progress towards meeting Accountability Plan goals
- Parent/family surveys

Academic Program Components:

- Site visits – classroom observations and school walk-through
- Review of curriculum documents
- Site visits – interviews
- Site visits – sample feedback tools, evaluation instruments
- Internal program evaluation reports

Compliance Documents:

- Coordinated Program Review (CPR) reports & Mid-Cycle Review reports
- Problem Resolution System complaints received and resolution status
- District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP)
- Special Education and English language learners program self-evaluation.
- Verification of compliance with Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) requirements
- Documentation of current Certificate of Occupancy, Health, Safety, and Fire inspections.
- Accessibility analysis