WELCOME MESSAGE

Happy spring! As many of you know, we are excited to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the inaugural group of charters at the 2015 Charter Presentation Ceremony this May during National Charter Schools Week. Since the passage of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, the charter school movement in Massachusetts has grown and has accomplished significant gains for children throughout the Commonwealth. We are pleased to welcome the new charter schools, Bentley Academy Charter School in Salem and UP Academy Charter School of Springfield, and we are eager to honor all of the schools whose charters have been renewed this year. We are especially proud to pay tribute to those initial schools whose chartering marked the birth of a strong charter school sector in Massachusetts. The celebration will be held on Monday, May 4, 2015 at 11:00 a.m. at Marblehead Community Charter Public School. Seating is limited so we are prioritizing space for the schools being recognized; but if you are interested in attending, please contact Lee DeLorenzo at ldelorenzo@doe.mass.edu.

The following schools were renewed by the Commissioner or Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) during January or February of 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Granted</th>
<th>Opened</th>
<th>Years of Operation</th>
<th>Renewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
We truly value the work that these renewed charters and all of our schools do, day in and day out, for families in the Commonwealth. We are committed to working with you to provide rigorous, transparent, high quality charter authorization. We aspire to improve our processes and procedures, while grappling with the dynamic tension between promoting charter school autonomy and holding schools and ourselves accountable for high quality outcomes. As always we welcome your input and feedback as we move forward together focused on success for all children.

POLICY UPDATES

**Updates to Enrollment Policies, Expulsion Policies, Bylaws, Schedules, and Accountability Plans**

As previously outlined in the [December 23, 2014 Updates regarding charter regulations and amendments memo](#), we are asking schools to update their enrollment policy, expulsion policies, bylaws, schedule, and accountability plans in the upcoming months. Many of you are already in the midst of this process, but in early May, we will be providing specific details about how we plan to facilitate the review of these policies, with particular attention to expulsion policies. We will also be updating the [Charter Amendment Guidelines](#) to support the review process. In the meantime, please feel free to contact your [Accountability Liaison](#) with questions.

**Updates to Attorney General’s Open Meeting Law Guide and Online Webinar in April**

The newly revised guide includes information from the Attorney General’s Office regarding remote participation, the level of detail required in meeting notices, the public’s right to record open meetings, the approval of meeting minutes, and the release of executive session minutes.

The Attorney General’s Office has resources on its website to assist boards of trustees with understanding and complying with the OML, including checklists about meeting notices, minutes, and executive sessions; and an online training video that can be accessed through the OML web page at: [http://www.mass.gov/ago/government-resources/open-meeting-law/video-trainings/](http://www.mass.gov/ago/government-resources/open-meeting-law/video-trainings/).

The Attorney General’s Office will be conducting an online webinar on Tuesday, April 14 from 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Attendees can participate entirely online and will be able to submit written questions during the training and receive real-time responses from the Attorney General’s Division of Open Government attorneys. If you are interested in registering or receiving additional information about the webinar, please email [OMLTraining@state.ma.us](mailto:OMLTraining@state.ma.us).

ACCOUNTABILITY

**2015 Revisions to Accountability Documents: Annual Report Guidelines and the Application for Renewal**

By May 15, 2015, we will post the 2014-15 Annual Report Guidelines. Each school must submit an Annual Report by August 1 of each year.
We have recently updated the Application for Renewal. The 2015 Application is now posted on our website. Applications for Renewal are due no later than July 31, 2015. Please see here for the revised Application: http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=renew.

Accountability Liaisons – Please Call Us!
Each staff member on the Accountability and Access and Equity teams has an assigned cohort of charter schools. In addition to a staff list and area of specialty, we have posted the list of liaisons on our website: http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/ContactLiaison.html. Do not hesitate to call your liaison if you have any questions about accountability or as an initial point of contact with the Department in general. We are here to assist you and answer your questions.

ACCESS AND EQUITY

A REGIONAL TRAINING SERIES: New Start: Supporting Multilingual Children and Immigrant & Refugee Families
More than 1 in 4 children in Massachusetts under age 6 live in households that speak a language other than English. In order to prepare children in immigrant and refugee families from birth to school readiness, a focus on early learning for these children and meaningful engagement of their parents and communities is essential. This new regional training series, presented in partnership with the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition, the Department of Early Childhood and Care, and the MA Office for Refugees and Immigrants, will equip providers, stakeholders and other professionals with knowledge on immigration policy, cultural competency, and child development and educational principles in the context of multilingual homes and multicultural environments.

The Spring 2015 Regional Trainings will be held in the following dates and locations:

Saturday, May 16, 9:30AM – 4:00PM Public Library, Worcester

Friday, May 29, 9:30AM – 4:00PM Middlesex Comm. College, Lowell

Friday, June 12, 9:30AM – 4:00PM Berkshire Comm. College, Pittsfield

For more information, please contact Jeff Gross, MIRA Coalition jgross@miracoalition.org 617-354-5480 x228. To register, please visit newamericanchildren.eventbrite.com.

SEI Teacher Endorsement Courses
The OELAAA is in the process of setting up registration for the final year of free SEI teacher endorsement courses. As many of you know, we have partnership with The Equity Alliance from Brown University for charter schools to provide free SEI teacher endorsement courses. If you are interested in working with Brown during the upcoming school year to host an SEI teacher endorsement course at your school, please contact Sara Smith at sara_smith@brown.edu.

Please note the following:
• Your school must have ELL students enrolled (at least on ELL student should be enrolled in each teacher’s class who is taking the course).
• Only core academic teachers may enroll in the course.

If your school is in Cohort 2 or 3, and your school would like to host an SEI endorsement course, please contact Mary Freed at mfreed@doe.mass.edu.

If your school is in Cohort 1, you may opt to host the SEI teacher endorsement course with the Equity Alliance. However, please note that your teachers will not be able to register at any other SEI courses.

DID YOU KNOW?
Five charter schools—Community Day Gateway (73%), Community Day—Kingman Webster (53%), Lowell Community (47%), Bridge Boston (40%), and Community Day – Prospect (39%) top the list of English Language Learner enrollment among ALL Massachusetts public school districts. Prior to consolidating with Match Charter Public School, Match Community Day had the highest ELL enrollment at 82% last year.
**GOVERNANCE**

**Board of Trustees – New Online Board Member Management System Launch**

The Department is excited to announce the launch of an online board member management system this spring. The focus of the online system will be to communicate directly with current board members regarding their individual obligations, and to manage requests for the approval of new board members. In the future, we hope to expand the system’s functions based on user feedback.

The system will eliminate the submission of the hard copies of documents to the Department associated with the special state employee requirements for members of your board of trustees. Board members will be able to submit materials directly via email and eliminate the need for members of your staff to collect materials from board members for submission to the Department. Full details about the new system can be found [here](http://www.doe.mass.edu).

The Department is looking forward to launching this system in April and working with schools to ensure board member information, especially email addresses, is accurate. The Department will provide webinar trainings to all system users to support their success in using the new system. All school leaders and current Directory Administrators will receive notifications regarding the dates and times of upcoming trainings to take place in late April and early May. Board members will also receive preliminary notifications regarding the system’s launch and the changes to expect. We believe this new system will benefit you and your trustees while minimizing the support school employees often provide to board members regarding completion of these requirements. We greatly appreciate your patience with any minor challenge that may occur during the new system launch.

If you have any questions regarding the obligations of board members or the new online system, please contact Alyssa Hopkins, at 781-338-3219 or ahopkins@doe.mass.edu; or James DiMaio, at 781-338-3228 or jdimiao@doe.mass.edu. Once the system is in operation, the Department will also seek your input in any areas of improvement you may identify as users of the system.

**Charter Amendment Guidelines – Annual Update**

All schools are encouraged to proactively communicate with their Accountability Liaison regarding any proposed changes to policies or practices that are considered materials terms of the charter. By communicating with your Accountability Liaison about changes being considered, you will be able to plan accordingly and determine if such a change requires a board of trustees vote, a formal request to the Department, and approval by the Commissioner and the Board. The Charter Amendment Guidelines are a helpful resource to determine the steps required. The guidelines are updated each May at [http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/?section=amendments](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/?section=amendments).

If your school plans to submit a request to change the districts served, grades served, or maximum enrollment, please contact Alyssa Hopkins, Coordinator of New Schools Development and Governance, at ahopkins@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-3219 in advance of the August 1, 2015 deadline. Ms. Hopkins will answer questions regarding seat availability, submission requirements, proven provider requirements as applicable, and the Department’s review process, including school and board leadership interviews.

**FINANCE AND DATA**

**FY16 Pre-enrollment Report**

By March 16th, all of the charter schools completed their FY16 pre-enrollment report through the security portal. Thanks to everyone for helping make this year’s processes a success. This report helps to satisfy the statutory requirement for the Department to inform all state superintendents of the expected charter school students from their district for the following year. Charter schools have reported a total of 41,082 students have been pre-enrolled for next year including 37,070 Commonwealth charter school students and 4,012 Horace Mann students. The pre-enrollment memo and report were posted on the charter school website on April 1 at [http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/enrollment/FY2016.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/enrollment/FY2016.html).

**FY16 Waitlist Report**

The FY16 charter school waitlists were due from all charter schools on March 16th as part of the statutory requirement.
(M.G.L. c.71 § 89(n)). The FY16 Massachusetts charter school waitlist report is currently being compiled and will be posted by April 30, 2015. We are still trying to work out the kinks in the waitlist compellation process and welcome your input. Please ensure that your school is keeping accurate records and following the Massachusetts state regulations (603 CMR 1.08(6)) regarding proper maintenance of their waitlist. Remember: the information provided must include, but is not limited to, students’ names (first, middle, last), dates of birth, towns of residence, and grades. Every charter school must update this waitlist data as required by the Department.

FY14 Fiscal Dashboard
The fiscal dashboard has been updated to reflect the financial data received from charter school’s audits and CSEOYFR. The Unrestricted Days Cash indicator has been revised to reflect monthly tuition payments. The dashboard is posted in draft form on the charter school website and the survey for comments can be found at http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1436673/MA-Charter-School-Financial-Dashboard-Comment-Survey. Any comments or feedback should be provided no later than April 24, 2015 (date extended) as we plan to finalize and post the dashboard by the end of April.

Charter School Lottery Regulations
As a reminder, as part of the pre-enrollment and waitlist report collection process, it is very important that all charter school lotteries take place between January 1st and March 15th, of each year. Please ensure that your school follows the state charter school regulations regarding conducting a lottery, (603 CMR 1.05(3)(c)) including the section on deadlines: Every charter school shall conclude its principal enrollment process no later than March 15th of each year. If you have questions about conducting any subsequent lotteries, please contact: Claire Smithney at csmithney@doe.mass.edu or Alison Bagg at abagg@doe.mass.edu.

We have convened a working group to improve and revise the CSEOYFR. Thank you for all of the volunteers. If you are part of this group you will be hearing from us soon to schedule or first set of meetings which will be based on the interests listed in your survey. If you would like to part of this group, please contact Joanna Laghetto at jlaghetto@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-3221 with questions.

NEW SCHOOLS AND EXPANSIONS

New Charter School Application Review Process
Two new charters are awarded by the Board at their February 24, 2015 meeting, Bentley Academy Charter School in Salem, and UP Academy Charter School of Springfield. Both schools are Horace Mann charter schools that will restart a district school. The Bentley Academy Charter School intends to serve 350 students in grades K-5 in Salem, and the UP Academy Charter School of Springfield will serve up to 800 students in grades 6-8 in Springfield. The Bentley Academy Charter School proposes to open in 2015 in the current Bentley Elementary School as an option for current Bentley students as well as other Salem students. The UP Academy Charter School of Springfield proposes to open in 2016 in a Springfield public middle school that will be identified by November 2015.

Charter School Expansion Requests
This year, the Department received requests from seven Commonwealth charter schools and one Horace Mann charter school to change the districts served, the grades served, and/or the maximum enrollment specified in the school’s charter. The Board granted the requests of four schools to expand and amend their charters. The four schools were the Hampden Charter School of Science, KIPP Academy Lynn Charter School, Salem Academy Charter School, and UP Academy Charter School of Boston. If you are interested in learning more about these expansions, please visit the website at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/2015-01/item3.html. The Board also granted conditional approval of the expansion request of Mystic Valley Regional Charter School, contingent on the completion of three conditions to be certified by the Commissioner. For additional information on the conditional status of the approval, please visit the website at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/2015-03/. One school withdrew their amendment request, and two schools were not recommended by the Commissioner to the Board for consideration.
COMMUNICATIONS AND CONTACTS

Contact You: School and District Profiles and Directory Administration
The Department collects a variety of data from schools and districts through Directory Administration, some of which is published on the Department’s School or District Profiles page. Contact information, multiple directories, and a variety of reports from individual organizations can also be found here. Charter Schools appear as both a “District” and as an individual “School”. It is imperative that the information contained in your district, as well as your school profile, be accurate, especially at the start of the school year. If it is inaccurate, your school may be missing important Department communications. In particular, the email address for the individual identified as “charter school leader” and “charter school board chair” in Directory Administration should have received this message directly. If for some reason they did not, your school’s directory administrator(s), the individual(s) who are authorized to edit information about their school in Directory Administration, should update this information. See http://www.doe.mass.edu/InfoServices/data/diradmin/list.aspx to identify your school’s directory administrator(s).

Contact Us
Contact information for Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign staff can be found at http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/contact.html#. Please feel free to contact us at any time with your questions or concerns.