

**TOOL FOR ANALYSIS
Charter School Plan for School Improvement**

Summary Questions

This page contains summative questions that should serve as the focus for plan review. These questions should be answered *after* Steps 1 through 3, on subsequent pages, are completed.

1. Has the charter school presented a responsive and coherent (integrated/logical/prioritized) plan for improving student performance?

Evidence

The written plan is responsive to the school’s major performance issues, as detailed in the root cause analysis and hypotheses presented in the document. The improvement focal areas are prioritized through number notations (*1-Least Important* through *3-Most Important*) in the *Assessment of Necessary Conditions* section of the plan. Details about why the focal areas have been prioritized in the manner presented are stated through notations about what has recently been put in place at the school, what has worked and has failed to work for the school in the past, and the current status of each Condition and its fit into the broad picture of whole-scale improvement. However, DOE reviewers note that the action plan that begins on p29 of the document is less coordinated and user-friendly than the rest of the school improvement plan. The action steps listed have merit; however, they are divided by category (for example, Assessment, Curriculum, and Instruction; Professional Development, Supervision, and Evaluation; School Culture) and timeline (example, Spring 2007; 2007-2008), and this forces users of the document to look at multiple pages to determine what they are responsible for undertaking. The plan does not go beyond 2009.

2. Does the plan seem feasible and viable in this charter school?

Evidence

The Board of Trustees’ support of this plan is evidenced by the fact that Board members participated in plan development, so they are aware of the implications (financial, human resources, structural, and other implications) of each planned improvement. The plan’s viability rests, in part, in the fact that some of the improvements that are detailed in the document are already being undertaken by the school—for example, some were put in place in the past academic year and are noted by plan developers as requiring more implementation time and/or more focus to truly take hold and to result in significant performance gains. Considering that much of the effort at the school will involve continuing the implementation of initiatives or strengthening initiatives, school personnel and key stakeholders seem poised to undertake these action steps.

3. Does the charter school demonstrate a sense of commitment and urgency to making whatever changes in the school's systems, personnel, and practices are necessary for implementing the plan?

Evidence

Yes, the school's strategic personnel additions, publisher program adoptions, curriculum work, and other undertakings demonstrate commitment and urgency. However, the review team would like the school to return to the CPI targets it has set to determine whether or not these projected gains are sufficient to allow the school to make AYP in the aggregate and for all subgroups each year through 2014.

4. Is the plan an effective tool for communication with faculty, the Board of Trustees, and other stakeholders?

Evidence

The plan was created with significant stakeholder input (p3): Administrators, teachers, members of the Board of Trustees, and parents were involved. This stands to serve the school well as it disseminates information about causal analysis and planned improvements to an even broader group of stakeholders. The school can ensure that stakeholder viewpoints and expertise were utilized in the consideration and adoption of improvement initiatives.

5. Do plan reviewers have additional questions that need to be answered? If so, please note them below.

Evidence

1. Root causes of performance issues change somewhat significantly from year to year in the *Data Analysis* section (p8) of the plan. Is the school confident that it has identified the key causes of performance problems?
2. The plan notes that students who spend more time at Uphams Corner (for example, those who entered in 03-04 versus 05-06), pass MCAS at a greater percentage than those who enter the school later. However, this analysis does not appear to hold true for ELA. Does this data need to be revisited by school leaders and personnel?
3. How are math tutoring activities (p19) aligned with core mathematics instruction during regular class periods?
4. When and how will performance and implementation benchmarks be established?
5. How will the school ensure that administrator evaluations take place at the start of SY07-08? Will they be tied to student performance and/or planned improvement targets?
6. Readers of the plan learn that "the Principal is primarily responsible for classroom observations and feedback" (p24). How is this function distributed to other leaders, as well?

**Draft TOOL FOR ANALYSIS of
District Plan for School Improvement**

Use the following criteria to evaluate the charter school plan. Note evidence that coincides with your evaluation of this part of the plan.

STEP 1. Self Analysis

<p>1. <u>Performance Targets:</u> The plan includes performance targets for the school to make AYP in the aggregate and subgroups and substantially increases the percentage of students attaining proficiency.</p>	
<p>A. ELA Student performance targets to reach AYP in ELA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated accurately for the aggregate and subgroup populations. ▪ Composed to significantly increase the numbers of students performing at proficient and advanced. ▪ Focused on subgroups and grade levels exhibiting the greatest need. 	<p><i>Evidence (Provide numeric targets and use AYP data.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase ELA CPI from 71.3 in 2007 to 75.4 in 2008, 79.5 in 2009, 83.6 in 2010, 87.7 in 2011, 91.8 in 2012, 95.9 in 2013, and 100 in 2014. ○ Plan includes CPI targets only, without specifying movement of students into the Proficient category and above. ○ The focus on subgroups can be improved in plan updates/refinements.
<p>B. Mathematics Student performance targets to reach AYP in Mathematics are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stated accurately for the aggregate and subgroup populations. ▪ Composed to significantly increase the numbers of students performing at proficient and advanced. ▪ Focused on subgroups and grade levels exhibiting the greatest need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase Math CPI from 43.6 in 2007 to 51.7 in 2008, 59.8 in 2009, 67.9 in 2010, 76.0 in 2011, 84.1 in 2012, 92.2 in 2013, and 100 in 2014. ○ Plan includes CPI targets only, without specifying movement of students into the Proficient category and above. ○ The focus on subgroups can be improved in plan updates/refinements.

2. Hypotheses: Plan includes the charter school’s analysis about the underlying reasons for the school’s performance problems. It identifies the barriers, policies, or past practices that inhibited establishing the conditions for effective practice, as well as what it will take to eliminate the barrier(s). It provides an overview of past efforts to resolve these impediments.

<p>A. Identification of Barriers and Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The charter school’s analysis draws conclusions about barriers to improving student performance. ▪ The analysis considers and addresses barriers to improving performance in all student groups for which targets are set. 	<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The school's identified barriers/root causes of problems change significantly from year to year, 2004 through 2006 (see p8). Different key problems are cited each year. Is this accurate? ○ Subgroup analysis needs to be strengthened. The school contends that “all subgroups have performed at low levels. Therefore, we believe the problems lie in broad, school-wide curricular and instructional issues, rather than the emergent needs of any particular subgroup” (p9). DOE reviewers would like the school to revisit subgroup performance data to ensure that no targeted teaching and safety nets are required for specific subgroups. Non-compliance issues related to working with subgroups, cited in the <i>Uphams Corner Charter School Summary of Review 12/14/06</i>, are not specifically addressed in the plan.
<p>B. Elimination of Barriers</p> <p>The charter school addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How it will eliminate barriers to establishing conditions for effective practice at the school. ▪ Its past efforts to remove barriers for establishing conditions for effective practice and how its current preparations ensure a more effective result. 	<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planned improvements are connected to root causes of problems. Some of the items listed among action steps at the end of the plan appear more disjointed than the improvements detailed in the narrative section. However, this can be strengthened by the school as it starts to undertake this improvement work. ○ Sufficient information about past practices, evaluation of those practices, and the rationale for future/changed practice is provided.

3. Assessment of Necessary Conditions: The charter school describes the extent to which essential personnel and related infrastructure establish the conditions for improved student achievement. A Worksheet is provided at the end of this document to collect evidence that will lead you to answers to the following:

<p>A. Assessment The charter school’s assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thoroughly documents the current status of the necessary conditions in the major levers (aligned curriculum, data to inform instruction, time for students and teachers, instructional leadership, and governance). ▪ Reflects systemic, integrated analysis of present conditions. 	<p><i>Evidence</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The school's state of having the Necessary Conditions in place is fairly clear in the plan's narrative. However, clarification around the structure of the tutoring program (a safety net) would be useful. How aligned is this work to the core work in the regular math classes? ○ Details about time for teachers to collaboratively develop lessons and to evaluate and use formative data to adjust instruction—professional learning community endeavors—is needed. Also, the extent to which administrator and teacher evaluations are tied to student performance gains seems minimal. Nevertheless, the school’s sharing of its teacher evaluation system is commendable. ○ The school's analysis of present conditions is systemic and integrated.
<p>B. Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides evidence of the implementation of the essential conditions, looking critically and honestly at what is in place and what is lacking. ▪ Where the conditions are in place, the charter school demonstrates a good understanding of why the essential conditions have not yet had sufficient impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes, the plan provides an honest evaluation of the state/quality of each Necessary Condition. Conditions that need to be strengthened are addressed through planned improvements. ○ A few areas of the <i>Assessment of Necessary Conditions</i> section (pp23-28) need to be reconsidered. For example, curriculum implementation is monitored through lesson plan review and looking at the posting of objectives. However, there is no indication of the frequency with which leaders at the school visit classrooms and provide feedback on instruction and curriculum implementation. Readers of the plan learn that “the Principal is primarily responsible for classroom observations and feedback” (p24). How is this function shared with other leaders?
<p>C. Prioritization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The charter school provides a rationale for prioritizing implementation of the conditions in its plan, if applicable. ▪ The charter school’s choices emphasize systemic approaches. ▪ A feasible plan for instituting all conditions over time is provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All focal areas for improvement are prioritized in the school's <i>Assessment of Necessary Conditions</i> (pp23-28). Prioritization is indicated through a numbering system, and this is helpful for plan users. ○ Planned improvements are specified only through 2009. The feasibility of carrying out initiatives over a longer period cannot be determined.

STEP 2. Planned Improvements

1. Planned Improvements: The charter school identifies needed changes in essential personnel and conditions, describes the redeployment of existing personnel and the redesign of existing infrastructure, describes how the Board of Trustees will monitor and evaluate the school’s progress and take action, describes how the Board of Trustees will evaluate school leadership, provides a timeline for key changes, and defends its prioritization of changes and the feasibility of its proposals.

A. Addressed Needs and Powerful Levers

The charter school’s planned improvements:

- Respond to its hypotheses and conditions.
- Identify the expected impact on meeting performance targets for identified groups of students.
- Are integrated into a coherent system.
- Are prioritized based on an articulated rationale.
- Are feasible.

Evidence

- The planned improvements appear to respond to the root cause analysis and assessment of conditions.
- The school did not identify the expected impact of meeting performance targets for all subgroups.
- The action steps could be listed in a more manageable, consolidated format, rather than being divided into categories/conditions.
- Feasibility would be more evident to readers if there were additional details provided about long-term endeavors (beyond 2009).

B. New and/or Reallocated Personnel and Conditions

The charter school:

- Identifies changes in personnel and essential conditions at the school level and specifies how they will result in improvements.
- Uses a systemic approach to reallocating and realigning personnel and infrastructure at the school.
- Shows how it is taking responsibility for maximizing the use of the personnel and infrastructure changes in implementing improvements.
- Describes and provides details on any changes in resource allocation.

Evidence

- Changes in personnel and factors affecting the essential conditions are specified. The leadership structure and team have been reconfigured; more faculty are being added to the mathematics teaching force; there has been increased staffing in Special Education; and tutorial instruction has been added.
- Consultants are being used for Special Education, and high school and college-age tutors are being used in the math tutoring program. Coaches are neither full-time nor embedded at the school. There is little indication of how these roles will be brought in-house and made full-time/permanent.

<p>C. Timeline The charter school provides a timeline that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sets annual goals and/or meets the terms of conditions specified. ▪ Maps out the narrative’s plan for improvements to teaching and learning. ▪ Expedites the implementation of the current year’s planned improvements. ▪ Schedules sessions needed to plan improvements for the following years. 	<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Annual AYP goals are clearly articulated. ○ Timelines end with 2009.
<p>D. Governance The charter school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gives specific information on how the Board of Trustees will monitor and evaluate progress, and take action if goals are not being met. ▪ The Board of Trustees makes strategic decisions based on data. ▪ Gives specific information on how and with what tool the Board of Trustees will evaluate school leadership. 	<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The plan provides specifics on how the Board of Trustees will receive monthly reports on the school’s progress toward meeting the goals of this plan and on the school’s standardized test results (p28). ○ The plan notes that the Board supports the leader of the school in making hiring/removal decisions, and provides a forum for discussing the school’s results and needs. ○ The plan notes that “members of the administrative team... have not been evaluated formally against established goals to date” (p28), and the evaluation process is not yet defined. However, the school has hired a consultant to develop goals and procedures for leadership evaluation.

<p>2. Benchmarking Progress and Impact: The charter school, through its Plan and Accountability Plan, describes how it will monitor progress and measure the impact of changed expectations to school organization and student learning experiences.</p>	
<p>A. Monitoring and Measuring Progress The charter school Plan and Accountability Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitors progress, measures impact of initiatives. 	<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the school improvement plan, details about monitoring could be better articulated. However, broad information is provided on how the Board of Trustees will keep apprised of progress. ○ Benchmarking needs to be improved.
<p>B. Addressed Needs and Powerful Levers The charter school’s planned improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to its hypotheses and conditions. ▪ Identify the expected impact on meeting performance targets for identified groups of students. ▪ Are integrated into a coherent system. ▪ Are prioritized based on an articulated rationale. ▪ Are feasible. 	<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evidence exists.
<p>C. Benchmarks The charter school establishes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student-learning benchmarks that are aligned to its planned improvements, are achievable, and are rigorous. ▪ Clear and high standards for adult performance. 	<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The plan maps out Composite Performance Index (CPI) gains through the year 2014. Implementation and performance benchmarks are not provided.
<p>D. Standards-Based and Observable Practices The charter school’s expectations for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students are defined by observable practices and behaviors that are standards-based. ▪ Adults are tied to observable practices or behaviors and are clearly linked to student learning. 	<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No, there are Success Indicators, but more details are needed in this part of the plan.

School: Uphams Corner Charter School

Reviewers: Kristin Burke & Eve Laubner

Step 3. Outcomes The charter school reports on this Plan and on its Accountability Plan as determined by the charter school statute and regulations, by the terms of any conditions placed on the school's charter, and as may be otherwise required.

<p>A. Monitoring, Measuring Progress, and Reporting The charter school Plan and Accountability Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Establishes processes for monitoring progress and measures the impact of initiatives.▪ Is reported on in the school's Annual Report, which provides comprehensive information on the status of all goals and benchmarks defined in the Improvement Plan and the Accountability Plan.	<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Implementation and performance benchmarks will make this plan stronger.
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