*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

### 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-5023 Telephone: (781) 338-3000

##  TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 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:**  | January 15, 2010 |
| **Subject:** | Renewal with Conditions Recommendation for Two Charter Schools: City on a Hill Charter School and Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School |

This month the Board will discuss and vote on charter renewal for City on a Hill Charter School and Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School. I recommend that the Board renew the charters for these schools with conditions.

**Basis of Recommendations Regarding the Renewal of Charters**

The charter school regulations state that “[t]he decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the success of the school’s academic program; the viability of the school as an organization; and the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter” 603 CMR 1.12. Consistent with the regulations, recommendations regarding renewal are based upon the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (Department) evaluation of the schools’ performance in these areas. In its

review, the Department has considered both the schools’ absolute performance at the time of the application for renewal and the progress the schools have made during the past four years of their charter.

The accountability process for charter schools recognizes that in exchange for increased freedom, a school must demonstrate results within the term of its five-year charter or risk non-renewal. The summary documents that follow this memorandum compile the schools’ record for the term of this charter.

The superintendents of the districts sending students to these schools were invited to submit written comment to the Department regarding the renewal of each school’s charter. No written comments were received.

**City on a Hill Charter School**

Mission Statement: City on a Hill graduates responsible, resourceful, and respectful democratic citizens prepared to advance community, culture, and commerce and to compete in the 21st century.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Charter: | Commonwealth | Location: | Boston |
| Regional/Non-Regional: | Non-Regional  | Districts in Region: | NA |
| Year Opened: | 1995 | Years Renewed: | 2000, 2005  |
| Maximum Enrollment: | 280 | Current Enrollment: | 284 |
| Students on Waitlist: | 137 | Grades Served: | 09-12 |



**Recommendation for Renewal**

City on a Hill Charter School (COAH) is before you to receive approval for its third charter renewal. As can be noted from the graphs provided above and as you will read in the school’s Summary of Review, COAH is an academically successful school. However, over the course of the school’s history, the Department’s Program Quality Assurance Unit and the Charter School Office (CSO) have repeatedly found that the school has not established a program for English language learners in compliance with state and federal requirements. The CSO federal programs renewal inspection, conducted in November 2009, made the following findings:

* The current number of ELL students enrolled at COAH is unknown because initial identification and assessment procedures have not yet been completed for the current year.
* A program of sheltered English immersion is not available for ELL students. English language development instruction is not available from a qualified instructor, or in the amounts recommended by the Department.

Based on these findings and the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review, I recommend that the Board renew the charter of COAH with the condition that the school establish and operate a program of English language learner education in a manner consistent with the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws chapter 71A by December 31, 2011, a deadline that gives the school adequate time to provide all four categories of sheltered English immersion training. COAH will demonstrate that it has met this condition through, at a minimum, an inspection visit conducted by the Charter School Office. I will provide information to the Board on the school’s success in meeting the condition.

**Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School**

Mission Statement: The mission of Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School (LMACS) is to enable its students to achieve academic, social, and career success. This supportive school community identifies, encourages and develops interests and abilities, while acknowledging and respecting each student’s personal and cultural identity.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Charter: | Commonwealth | Location: | Lowell |
| Regional/Non-Regional: | Non-Regional | Districts in Region: | NA |
| Year Opened: | 1995 | Years Renewed: | 2000, 2005 |
| Maximum Enrollment: | 150 | Current Enrollment: | 119 |
| Students on Waitlist: | 19 | Grades Served: | 9-12 |



**Recommendation for Renewal**

LMACS is also before you to receive approval for its third charter renewal. The school’s mission is to enable at-risk students who would have otherwise dropped out of school to achieve academic, social, and career success. LMACS exclusively enrolls students ranging in age from 16 to 21 who have left their district high school prior to graduation. LMACS aims to provide a second chance to students who have accumulated very few high school credits, those who face ongoing obstacles to regular school attendance, and those who confront personal challenges. Given the school’s targeted population, its ability to meet the needs of special education students is a critical component of the program. However, in accordance with what was also seen during Coordinated Program Review activities, the CSO federal programs renewal inspection, conducted in October 2009, made the following findings:

* Identification and assessment is done improperly, using a standard battery of tests with no individualized assessment;
* LMACS special education program does not offer adequate services to students with diverse needs.
* The school does not employ a reliable procedure through which lesson plans are shared with the special educator. Therefore, there is limited capacity for needed curricular modifications to be made by the special education teacher in advance of the presentation of the material.

Based on these findings and the evidence gathered in the attached Summary of Review, I recommend that the Board renew the charter of LMACS with the condition that the school establish and operate a program for special education students in a manner consistent with the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws chapter 71B by September 1, 2010. LMACS will demonstrate that it has met this condition through, at a minimum, an inspection visit conducted by the Charter School Office. I will provide information to the Board on the school’s success in meeting the condition.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner, at 781 338-6500; or Mary Street, Director of Charter Schools, at 781 338-3200; or me.

Enclosures:

[Summary of Review for City on a Hill Charter School](http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2010/0110/item5-COAHrevsum.docx)

Motion to Renew

[Summary of Review for Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School](http://www.doe.mass.edu/bese/docs/fy2010/0110/item5-LMACSrevsum.docx)

Motion to Renew