



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Criteria for Review of Charter School Amendments involving Changes to Grade Span and Maximum Enrollment¹

Any Commonwealth or Horace Mann charter school must request approval from the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to change the grades being served by the school and/or its maximum enrollment.

Selection of Evidence for Inclusion in Expansion Requests

The criteria for amendment requests include additional optional criteria to consider including in your request. Each [OPTIONAL] criterion serves to augment current accountability documentation and allow schools to present the most complete picture of their record of performance for all interested stakeholders. Schools are strongly encouraged to respond to the [OPTIONAL] criteria to adequately demonstrate capacity to implement the proposed request, and maintain or improve upon current performance of the school under the proposed expansion.

The following criteria are to be addressed in the request's supporting documentation, as applicable.

I. Mission and Key Design Elements

- ✓ Describe how the amendment request is consistent with the school's mission.
- ✓ [Grade Span Change Only] Describe how this amendment enhances or expands the educational opportunities currently available to the targeted student population. Incorporate a discussion regarding the key design elements of your school into your response.
- ✓ [Grade Span Change Only] Describe how the proposed change to grades served will impact any key design elements of the current educational program or curriculum model. Provide examples of how the key design elements of the current school model will be reflected in the additional proposed grades.
- ✓ [OPTIONAL] Schools are encouraged to summarize briefly within their request the school's track record of success in demonstrating faithfulness to its mission, implementing the key design elements outlined in its charter, and substantially meeting its accountability plan goals. The summary should provide additional context to any recent circumstances in the school's history involving these areas of the school's performance, including charter conditions, probation, recent amendments, performance against CSPE as reported in site visit reports, or charter renewal.

¹ *Charter Amendment and Notification Guidelines 2015*

II. Access and Equity

- ✓ Describe how the charter school has determined a need to increase maximum enrollment and/or increase the grade span. Strong evidence includes feedback from parent and faculty surveys, a historical pattern of an increase in submitted admission applications, and a growing population of eligible students in local region.
- ✓ Describe how the school has determined that there is sufficient parent support to fill existing and proposed seats and/or grades at the school under the proposed amendment.
- ✓ Provide a brief summary of the school's efforts to eliminate barriers to program access, including but not limited to, recruitment and enrollment practices, retention practices, and school policies, such as student support and discipline systems. Describe the progress made in attracting, enrolling, and retaining a student population that is demographically comparable to similar grades in schools from which the existing charter school(s) enrolls students. Describe actions taken and reported in their recruitment and retention plan to address challenges in any of these areas of school performance. Indicate how the school's efforts may need to evolve during implementation of the proposed expansion.
- ✓ Explain trends and/or anomalies in attendance, retention, attrition, in-school suspension rates, out-of-school suspension rates, and if applicable, graduation and dropout data over the past four years. The Department performs a review using available student data in the aggregate, and by targeted subgroups, and grade cohorts using the CHART tool at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/chart/>. Schools should explain any unique circumstances related to published school data, and corrective actions taken to address challenges in any of these areas of school performance.
- ✓ Indicate, in a table, both the historical distribution of enrolled students in the present grade span, and the projected distribution of students by grade, including the primary entry points for new students, and the grades where backfilling will occur. The Department strongly encourages schools to promote new student access under the proposed expansion, and to explicitly indicate access for new students at as many grade levels as possible. The table should reflect the implementation timeline, projecting a five-year enrollment pattern, or more if necessary, to project the maximum enrollment and/or grade span requested. In your projection, indicate clearly the potential for variation in enrollment to safeguard against the need for a future minor amendment if granted.
- ✓ Submit a draft enrollment policy and application for admission which reflects the proposed change to entry point(s) and backfilling of vacancies, as applicable. The Department strongly encourages schools to promote new student access under the proposed expansion, and to explicitly indicate access for new students at as many grade levels as possible. [If granted, the school must amend its enrollment policy and application for admission and receive Commissioner approval prior to implementation.]

III. Compliance

- ✓ [OPTIONAL] Schools may choose to summarize briefly within their request the school's record of compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws and regulations over the past four years, both in reference to school and board operations. Indicate in the summary any corrective action taken in response to challenges, and the implementation of any safeguards to maintain compliance with all legal requirements. The summary should provide additional context to any recent circumstances in the school's history involving these areas of the school's performance, including charter conditions, probation, recent amendments, performance against CSPC as reported in site visit reports, or charter renewal.

IV. Dissemination

- ✓ [OPTIONAL] Schools may choose to summarize briefly within their request the school's efforts to provide innovative models for replication and best practices to other public schools in the district where the charter school is located. The response may also include dissemination to other schools, districts, and organizations beyond the district of location. The summary should provide additional context to any recent circumstances in the school's history involving these areas of the school's performance, including past or present grant awards related to dissemination practices.

V. Student Performance

- ✓ [OPTIONAL] The Department will review the school's academic performance based on available MCAS data, including student subgroups. Schools should explain any unique circumstances related to published school data, and corrective actions taken to address challenges in any of these areas of school performance within their request. The Department typically reviews the most recent 3 or 4 years of student data, as available.
- ✓ [OPTIONAL] Schools may submit student performance data for other standardized assessments in English Language Arts and mathematics as additional evidence of academic student achievement. Please indicate and define the metric used in your submission. Schools are required to submit at least three years of data for all students and one or more targeted subgroups.² Targeted subgroups may include, but are not limited to students with disabilities; students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch; and English language learners. If the number of students in one or more targeted subgroups is below the threshold of students required for reporting based on the metric³, schools may include a high needs⁴ student subgroup where student data is aggregated into a 'super' subgroup of students with high needs adjusted for enrollment.

VI. Program Delivery

- ✓ [Grade Span Change Only] Describe any schedule changes anticipated with implementation of the new grade span, including length of school year, week, or day. Describe how the change in grade span will impact the mechanics of the educational program in terms of the daily and weekly organization of students and faculty.
- ✓ [Grade Span Change Only] Provide an overview of **how** the current educational program, curriculum model, or whole school design, including curriculum and instruction, will be adapted to serve younger or older students, as applicable.
- ✓ [Grade Span Change Only] Briefly describe the process that is used to align curriculum to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Include in your response the processes used to

2 If available, the submission should include comparative performance data, national, statewide, or district(s), for all students and for one or more targeted subgroups in comparable grades.

3 For example, the Department does not report MCAS *achievement percentages* for subgroups with fewer than 10 students included, or MCAS *growth percentiles* for subgroups with fewer than 20 students included.

4 A student is *high needs* if he or she is designated as either low income, or ELL, or former ELL, or a student with disabilities. A former ELL student is a student not currently an ELL, but had been at some point in the two previous academic years.

align curriculum to the 2011 Mathematics and English Language Arts curriculum frameworks incorporating the Common Core State Standards, and to incorporate the World-class Design and assessment English Language Development (WIDA ELD) standards into content area curricula as an example of prior effective implementation.

- ✓ [Grade Span Change Only] Describe the process used to develop horizontally and vertically aligned curriculum for the new grade span and a timeline for curriculum development and implementation, if applicable, including the individuals involved.
- ✓ [Grade Span Change Only] Describe the process and procedures used to evaluate whether curriculum and instruction is effective and successfully implemented. Include in your response a brief summary of the assessment system implemented at the school, and any modifications if request is granted.
- ✓ [Grade Span Change Only] Provide an outline of the curriculum scope and sequence that will be used in the new grade levels, including the content and skills to be taught in the core content areas at each new grade level, if applicable.
- ✓ Briefly describe the supports provided to meet the academic needs of all students, including but not limited to students with disabilities, and English language learners. Indicate how the strategies may need to evolve during implementation of the proposed expansion.

VII. Culture and Family Engagement

- ✓ Briefly describe the strategies used to create a safe school environment, and to address the physical, social, emotional, and health needs of your students. Indicate how the strategies may need to evolve during implementation of the proposed expansion.
- ✓ Briefly describe how the school develops strong working relationships with families/guardians in order to support students' academic progress and social and emotional well-being. Indicate how the strategies may need to evolve during implementation of the proposed expansion.

VIII. Capacity

- ✓ Describe how the staff will implement the request effectively and evaluate its success. Indicate the individuals involved throughout the process of implementation, and the systems in place for decision-making and communication among all members of the school community.
- ✓ Provide an action plan for implementation. Describe the proposed strategies that will lead to a successful implementation of the proposed changes. Include: a timeline, action(s) to be taken, designated point person, and start date and projected completion date.
- ✓ Provide a complete staffing chart and detailed narrative staffing plan to support the planning and implementation of the proposed increase in enrollment and/or grade span.
- ✓ If the school contracts with an EMO, describe how the EMO will support the planning and implementation of the proposed amendment.

IX. Governance

- ✓ [OPTIONAL] Schools may choose to summarize briefly within their request board activities that demonstrate effective governance, including compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and examples of corrective action in response to identified challenges. The summary may include specific achievements over the most recent charter term; analyses of stakeholder satisfaction surveys; board and school leadership evaluations; board of trustees' self-evaluation; and strategic planning. The summary should provide additional context to

any recent circumstances in the school's history involving these areas of the school's performance, including charter conditions, probation, recent amendments, performance against CSPC as reported in site visit reports, or charter renewal.

- ✓ Describe how the board of trustees will implement the request effectively and evaluate its success. Provide details of the board's role in planning, and monitoring progress of the expansion.
- ✓ Provide approved board minutes for the twelve months prior to the submission of this amendment request on August 1. (If the school has submitted any of the requested board minutes previously to the Department, please submit only the minutes that have not yet been collected by the Department.)

X. Finance

- ✓ [OPTIONAL] Schools may choose to summarize briefly within their request board activities that demonstrate effective financial management, as well as compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The summary may include information regarding real estate acquisition, loan agreements and debt repayment, and fundraising, as applicable. The summary should provide additional context to any recent circumstances in the school's history involving these areas of the school's performance.
- ✓ The Department will review the school's financial history, including the Financial Dashboard at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/dashboard/>, as part of the amendment request. Schools should explain any unique circumstances related to published school data, and corrective actions taken to address challenges in any of these areas of school performance within their request.
- ✓ Describe the financial resources that are necessary to implement the school's expansion, including the projected sources of revenue that will ensure the fiscal viability of the school and the successful implementation of the proposed change(s). Describe contingency planning for potential challenges in cash flow or budget shortfalls due to lower than anticipated student enrollment or other financial challenges in the early years of expansion, include specific strategies.
- ✓ Provide financial projections performed in planning for the proposed expansion. Financial projections should reflect both immediate and long-term considerations that the board and school leadership have identified in implementation of the proposed amendment. Provide a detailed narrative explaining the financial forecasts, and the underlying assumptions.
- ✓ Describe the facility that will be used to meet the school's needs and how it is accessible to individuals with physical disabilities and able to accommodate all students, and if modifications will be required. Indicate if the current facility will accommodate the expansion, or if additional space and/or renovations will be required.
- ✓ Describe how transportation services are provided to all eligible students, and if modifications will be required. Please note: charter schools must notify the district(s) providing transportation no later than February 1st prior to the start of the school year of all transportation needs, including any changes resulting from the granting of an amendment.