

**Prospect Hill Academy Charter School**

**Tiered Focused Monitoring Report**

**For** **Group B Universal Standards**

**Tier Level** **2**

**Dates of Onsite Visit: November 29-30, 2022**

**Date of Final Report: February 24, 2023**

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Team Members:**

**Erin VandeVeer, Chairperson**



Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**TIERED FOCUSED MONITORING REPORT**

**Prospect Hill Academy Charter School**

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**MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**REPORT INTRODUCTION**

During the 2022-2023 school year, Prospect Hill Academy Charter School participated in a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review (TFM) conducted by the Department’s Office of Public School Monitoring (PSM). The purpose of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Review is to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements focusing on special education and civil rights. **The Department is pleased to report that the school was found to be in compliance with all criteria reviewed; no corrective action is required at this time.**

Each school district, charter school, vocational school, and virtual school undergoes a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review every three years. The statewide Tiered Focused Monitoring cycle is posted at <<https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/6yrcycle.html>>.

Regularly monitored standards are divided into two groups, known as Group A Universal Standards and Group B Universal Standards. Districts and schools are monitored on an alternate set of Universal Standards every three years.

Group A Universal Standards address:

* Student identification
* IEP development
* Programming and support services
* Equal opportunity

Group B Universal Standards address:

* Licensure and professional development
* Parent/student/community engagement
* Facilities and classroom observations
* Oversight
* Time and learning
* Equal access

The Department has also reserved a specific set of criteria, collectively known as Targeted Standards, employed if LEA or school level risk assessment data indicate there is a potential issue; the identified Targeted Standards are assessed in addition to the Universal Standards.

Universal Standards and Targeted Standards are aligned with the following regulations:

Special Education (SE)

* Selected requirements from the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-2004); the federal regulations promulgated under that Act at 34 CFR Part 300; M.G.L. c. 71B, and the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Special Education regulations (603 CMR 28.00), as amended effective March 1, 2007.

Civil Rights Methods of Administration and Other General Education Requirements (CR)

* Selected federal civil rights requirements, including requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, together with selected state requirements under M.G.L. c. 76, Section 5 as amended by Chapter 199 of the Acts of 2011 and M.G.L. c. 269 §§ 17 through 19.
* Selected requirements from the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Physical Restraint regulations (603 CMR 46.00).
* Selected requirements from the Massachusetts Board of Education’s Student Learning Time regulations (603 CMR 27.00).
* Various requirements under other federal and state laws.

**PSM Team:**

Depending upon the size of a school district and the number of special education programs to be reviewed, a team of one to four Department staff members conducts onsite activities over one to five days in a school district or charter school.

**Tier Level:**

The level of monitoring varies based on tier designation, aligning supports to the level of need and ensuring that districts and schools with greater needs receive appropriate supports to make sustained improvements.

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| Tier | Title | Description |
| 1 | Self-Directed Improvement | Data points indicate no concern on compliance and student outcomes. |
| 2 | Directed Improvement | No demonstrated risk in areas with close link to student outcomes. |
| 3 | Corrective Action | Areas of concern include both compliance and student outcomes. |
| 4 | Cross-unit Support and Corrective Action | Areas of concern have a profound effect on student outcomes and ongoing compliance. |

For the 2022-2023 school year, the tier assignments are based on:

* Annual drop-out rate for students with disabilities
* Five-year cohort graduation rate for students with disabilities
* Public School Monitoring compliance data from the previous review
* Problem Resolution System data, specifically findings of noncompliance
* Special education SPP/APR compliance Indicator data for Indicators 4B, 9 & 10
  + Indicator 4B: Significant discrepancy by race or ethnicity in removal of students with

IEPs greater than 10 days

* + Indicator 9: Overall disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups identified

as eligible for special education

* + Indicator 10: Disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups within specific

disability categories

* Special education SPP/APR performance Indicator data for Indicators 5 & 6
* Indicator 5: Education Environments (6-21)
* Indicator 6: Preschool Environments
* Significant Disproportionality data 2021-2022 & 2022-2023

Tiering adjustments may be made for districts engaged in work with the Department’s Statewide System of Support and have schools identified as requiring assistance and intervention. Tiering assignments may also be adjusted for schools and districts unable to remedy noncompliance within one year of the previous TFM review, as well as for charter schools requiring additional oversight based on conditions of their charter.

For more information regarding the TFM Review Process, including district and parent resources, please visit < <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/tfm/default.html>>.

# **TIERED FOCUSED MONITORING FINAL REPORT**

**Prospect Hill Academy Charter School**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education conducted a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review at Prospect Hill Academy Charter School during the week of November 28, 2022, to evaluate the implementation of Group B Universal Standards in the program areas of special education, civil rights, and other related general education requirements. The team appreciated the opportunity to interview staff and parents, to observe classroom facilities, and to review the programs underway in the district.

The onsite team would like to commend the following areas that were brought to its attention and that it believes have a significant and positive impact on the delivery of educational services for students enrolled in the school. These areas are as follows:

*Prospect Hill Academy (PHA) Charter School, a regional charter school, serves students in Pre-K through grade twelve across four campuses in Somerville and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Document review, interviews, and observations indicate that while PHA’s Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook and codes of conduct contain all required information, the charter school takes specific actions to further affirm and support its diverse community of students and families as evidenced by the following actions:*

* *Launching annual professional development with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Office of Safe and Supportive Schools to explore topics related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and school climate;*
* *Orienting every faculty and staff member to Zaretta L. Hammond's Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students;*
* *Developing a webpage dedicated to anti-racism and related resources which states, "In our restorative school community at Prospect Hill Academy, we are a uniquely diverse community of belongingness and inclusiveness. While we embrace and build upon the collective strength of our differences, we fiercely reject racism, bigotry, and hate";*
* *Developing a Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity policy;*
* *Actively planning and implementing a health curriculum to provide a structure and space for students to make sense of self-regulation, human development, gender identity, and consent grounded in the belief that health education can be inclusive and absent of assumptions;*
* *Investing in families by employing a Family and Community Engagement Coordinator and family liaisons capable of communicating in the top three languages. The family liaisons run routine forums for families to connect, share, and learn, thus allowing parents to be active stakeholders who provide feedback on and influence the school's direction;*
* *Hosting a weekly virtual gathering (Family Advisory Board: FAB HOUR) for families to discuss all aspects of PHA, build community and support among families, and deepen connections with teachers and staff;*
* *Addressing food insecurity through Thrive, a volunteer group of families, staff, and community members who provide weekend snacks, grocery bags, or grocery gift cards to students who do not have regular access to food during weekends and school breaks. During the COVID school closure, Thrive coordinated a weekly COVID food relief program for school families. While Thrive centers around the weekly snack bags, the group also developed a free monthly community dinner to build community among school families, students, staff, and faculty. In addition, Thrive runs a monthly free School Market providing the PHA community with fresh produce and staple groceries items. While Thrive was founded by two parents and a PHA nurse in 2014, the growth and success of Thrive led the school to allocate a full-time school staff member to support the work; and*
* *Implementing the New & Returning Student & Family Orientation Program for grades seven through nine when students returned to school in-person in fall 2021, in response to concerns from both parents and students that they felt detached from and unfamiliar with school. PHA now provides an orientation that includes presentations from teachers, school administrators, and other key staff to ensure families and students receive a warm welcome and are provided with necessary information about PHA.*

*The affirmation of these efforts is evident in the students' attendance rates, as described below.*

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|  | *Overall*  *Attendance Rate* | | *10% Chronic*  *Absenteeism Rate* | | *20% Chronic*  *Absenteeism Rate* | |
|  | *PHA* | *State* | *PHA* | *State* | *PHA* | *State* |
| *African American/ Black* | *93.5%* | *90.6%* | *16.8%* | *32.0%* | *4.5%* | *11.1%* |
| *Hispanic or Latino* | *90.9%* | *88.5%* | *29.6%* | *42.3%* | *8.1%* | *14.5%* |
|  | *The overall attendance rate for Hispanic/Latino and African American/Black students at PHA is higher than the statewide average. The difference in days is nearly four additional days of school for Hispanic/Latino students and nearly five days of school for African American/Black students.* | | *The 10% Chronic Absenteeism rate at PHA is significantly lower than the state rate for Hispanic/Latino students, and nearly half the state rate for African American/Black students.* | | *The 20% Chronic Absenteeism rate at PHA is significantly lower than the state rate for Hispanic/Latino students, and less than half the state rate for African American/Black students.* | |

In preparing this report, the team reviewed extensive written documentation regarding the operation of the school's programs, together with information gathered by means of the following Department program review methods:

**Self-Assessment Phase:**

* School review of special education and civil rights documentation for required elements including document uploads.
* Upon completion of the self-assessment, the school submitted the data to the Department for review.

**On-site Phase:**

* Interviews of administrative, instructional, and support staff consistent with those criteria selected for onsite verification.
* Interviews of parent advisory council (PAC) representatives and other telephone interviews, as requested by parents or members of the general public.
* Review of additional documents for special education and civil rights.
* Surveys of parents of students in special education: Parents of students in special education were sent a survey that solicited information regarding their experiences with the school’s implementation of special education programs, related services, and procedural requirements.
* Observations of classrooms and other facilities.

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**DEFINITION OF COMPLIANCE RATINGS**

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| **Commendable** | Any requirement or aspect of a requirement implemented in an exemplary manner significantly beyond the requirements of law or regulation. |
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| **Implemented** | The requirement is substantially met in all important aspects. |
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| **Implementation in Progress** | This rating is used for criteria containing new or updated legal requirements; the district has implemented any old requirements contained in the criterion and is training staff or beginning to implement the new requirements in such a way that the onsite team anticipates that the new requirements will be implemented by the end of the school year. |
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| **Partially Implemented** | The requirement, in one or several important aspects, is not entirely met. |
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| **Not Implemented** | The requirement is totally or substantially not met. |
| **Not Applicable** | The requirement does not apply to the school district or charter school. |

**Prospect Hill Academy Charter School**

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| **SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE CRITERIA INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT**  **RECEIVING A COMMENDABLE RATING**  **FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION** | | | |
| **Universal**  **Standards**  **Special**  **Education** | **Universal Standards**  **Civil Rights and Other General Education Requirements** |
|  | CR 10A |

**SUMMARY OF COMPLIANCE RATINGS**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Universal Standards**  **Special Education** | **Universal Standards**  **Civil Rights and Other General Education Requirements** |
| **IMPLEMENTED** | SE 15, SE 32, SE 35, SE 36, SE 50, SE 51, SE 52, SE 54, SE 55, SE 56 | CR 3, CR 7, CR 7A, CR 7B, CR 7C, CR 8, CR 10B, CR 10C, CR 12A, CR 16, CR 17A, CR 20, CR 21, CR 22, CR 23, CR 24,  CR 25 |
| **PARTIALLY**  **IMPLEMENTED** | None |  |
| **NOT**  **IMPLEMENTED** | None |  |
| **NOT**  **APPLICABLE** | SE 52A |  |

The full list of criteria and information regarding the requirements can be found in Appendix B of the Tiered Focused Monitoring Toolkit available at < <https://www.doe.mass.edu/psm/resources/tfm-toolkit.docx>>.