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WELCOME MESSAGE

As the 2014-2015 school year comes to a close, we wanted to acknowledge the ongoing commitment that so many of you have for improving public education for all children throughout the Commonwealth. It was a great pleasure to celebrate 20 years of charter schools in Massachusetts at the 2015 Charter Presentation Ceremony held on May 4, 2015 at Marblehead Community Charter Public School (MCCPS). Thank you to our gracious MCCPS hosts and all the people that helped make the event an exciting celebration. We welcomed two new charter schools and honored all of the schools whose charters have been renewed this year.

As always, we welcome your input and feedback as we move forward together focused on success for all children. This memo provides you with important information about recent news and activities that may need to be completed over the summer. Please review it carefully and pass on the information to others as appropriate.

Call for Charter Application Reviewers

The establishment of high quality charter schools begins with the charter school application process. This year's application cycle should be an interesting one. We strongly encourage members of your leadership team, faculty, or board of trustees to consider the rewarding experience of becoming a charter application reviewer during the upcoming cycle. The Department assigns reviewers based on their areas of expertise and is mindful of potential conflicts of interest in all reviewer assignments. The submission of a potential expansion request does not necessarily eliminate your ability to participate. For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/new/?section=review>. Brenton Stewart has been performing extensive outreach to leadership teams to encourage participation in the application review process. We wish to express thanks to each of you who have already responded and volunteered to participate during the prospectus or final application stages. Please contact Mr. Stewart at bstewart@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-3214 if you are interested in participating this year or can recommend a colleague for participation.

Did You Know?

The Department is in the process of writing its next application for a [federal Charter Schools Program State Educational Agency Grant](#), due by July 16, 2015. Since 1995, Massachusetts has successfully secured tens of millions of dollars from this extremely competitive program to support the start-up of new charter schools and the dissemination of charter school best practices. We may be reaching out for information or support over the next few weeks as we seek to construct the strongest application possible for the next phase of charter growth in Massachusetts. Thanks in advance for your assistance.

POLICY UPDATES

Redefining Low Income - A New Metric for K-12 Education Data

Two years ago, the United States Department of Agriculture introduced the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) as an option for schools and districts with high concentrations of low income students to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. This CEP option did away with the need for families to annually submit paper application forms documenting their household income. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) has recently provided information about a new metric for determining "economically disadvantaged" students. For more information please see the update on our website: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/ed.html>.

Preliminary Assessment and Accountability Release Schedule

The initial version of the Department's [2015 assessment and accountability data review and release schedule](#) has been [posted online](#). While many dates for August and beyond are still to be determined, the Department wanted to give the field a general sense of milestones. Further, we wanted to make sure that you saw the recent posting about [PARCC](#).

Notice of Public Comment: Charter School Regulations

As some of you may already know, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted on Tuesday, May 19, 2015, to [solicit public comment](#) on a [proposed amendment to section 1.04\(9\)](#) of the Charter School Regulations. The proposed amendment is a narrow revision to the regulation that specifies the method for calculating the list of school districts that perform in the lowest 10% on statewide assessments, for purposes of the charter school statute. Under the current regulation, the list is calculated and published fairly late in the charter application cycle. This year, it would be published after final applications have been submitted. The late availability of 2015 performance data creates considerable uncertainty for charter applicants and for school districts under current statutory requirements. The proposed amendment would calculate the lowest 10% based upon data available at the start of the charter application cycle. This would provide school districts and charter applicants the information they need to plan appropriately.

The public comment period is through July 24, 2015. Written comments on the proposed amendment may be submitted by mail to: Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148, by fax to 781-338-3220, or by email to charterschools@doe.mass.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns, as always, feel free to contact Ruth Hersh at rhersh@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-3211.

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

We recently sent a [Charter Amendments Review Process for 2015 Memo](#) outlining the specific details about how we plan to facilitate the review of these important policies, with particular attention to expulsion policies. There is a new [checklist on the website](#) for review of expulsion policies. Please contact Ellie Rounds at 781-338-3212 or erounds@doe.mass.edu if you have any questions about expulsion policies. We have updated the [Charter Amendment Guidelines](#) to support the amendment review process. In the meantime, please feel free to contact your [Accountability Liaison](#) with questions.

ACCOUNTABILITY

2015 Revisions to Accountability Documents: the Application for Renewal, the 2014-15 Annual Report Guidelines, and the Charter School Performance Criteria v. 3.2

We have recently updated the following documents. Please find them on our website: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html>

The **2015 Application for Renewal** is 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>.

The **2014-15 Annual Report Guidelines** are posted on our website. Annual Reports are due no later than July 31, 2015. Please see here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=annual>. We held webinars regarding the 2014-15 Annual Report Guidelines during the fourth week of June. We will be posting the PowerPoint presentation by June 30, 2015 to this page: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/sped/default.html>

In the second week of June we solicited feedback from the field on proposed changes to the **Charter School Performance Criteria v. 3.2**: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=20012>. The changes proposed were minimal. The finalized version will be posted here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/acct.html?section=criteria>

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

Mystery Parent Update and MCPSA National Leadership Activities Grant

As part of ongoing efforts to assess Charter School Performance Criterion #2: Access and Equity, the Department continued its "mystery parent" initiative during the 2014-2015 school year. We are pleased to report that in general, based on this year's calls, the Department has few concerns regarding equal and unfettered access to information about charter school application and enrollment processes for high-need students. Accordingly, for the next school year, the Department anticipates continuing mystery parent calls only when complaints or other related issues arise at particular charter schools. On a related note, we congratulate the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association for a national leadership activities grant from the U.S. Department of Education to the Massachusetts Charter School Collaborative Access Network, the first statewide effort of its kind in the nation, to enhance charter school capacity to serve students with disabilities and English language learners. We shared this promising news with the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education at their [June 2015 meeting](#).

The Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) , the Massachusetts Departments of Mental Health (DMH), and Early Education and Care (EEC) publish: "Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Resources and Services: A Guide for Early Education and Care Professionals."

This guide was developed to support the work of early childhood professionals. It provides basic information on infant and early childhood mental health and includes descriptions of services and supports for families with young children, as well as resources that can benefit both center-based and family providers of early education and care. To engage families in conversations about their children's social and emotional development, the guide has advice on how to share concerns with parents. Also included is a discussion of self-care and suggestions on how programs can support their staff. To download the guide, click the link above or go to www.mass.gov/masshealth/cbhi and click on CBHI Information for Early Education and Care, Pre-K and K-12 School Staff.

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 **no later than July 24, 2015**.

Please note the following:

Your school must have ELL students enrolled (at least one 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 1, you may opt to host the SEI teacher endorsement course with the Equity Alliance.

English Learners with Disabilities

A report and video/presentation is available from the March 2015 panel discussions on English Learners with Disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) and Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) sponsored this one-day program on English Learner Students with Disabilities (ELSWDs), on

March 16, 2015, with the assistance of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and AIR managing researcher Diane August. According to the recently released report on the program, "the purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for experts in the assessment and instruction of ELs with disabilities to present recent research and development efforts in this area, and to discuss key questions related to these topics and needed areas of research." The archived livestream (video and PowerPoint) of the presentation is now available online; a downloadable version of the PowerPoint will be made available soon.

Code of Conduct/Suspension Policies Technical Assistance

In conjunction with the review of all charter school's expulsion policies, the Department also intends on reviewing school's codes of conduct and suspension policies for those schools. The review process will be voluntary and completed via a cohort system. Once the School Safety Discipline Report (SSDR) is finalized in the fall of 2015, the Department will review schools' suspension rates and send out surveys to garner interest in participation in this process. Please be advised that schools who are participating in the Coordinated Program Review process during the 2015-2016 school year will not be eligible to participate in this review; additionally, schools with higher rates of suspension as reported in the SSDR will be have their policies reviewed in the first cohort. If you have any questions about this, please contact Ellie Rounds at erounds@doe.mass.edu.

GOVERNANCE

Board of Trustees – Board Member Management System

Many thanks to all of you who have interacted with the system, provided feedback to the Department, and weathered the storm of interacting with a new system. The Department greatly appreciates your patience with any challenge you, other users, or board members may have experienced in using the new [Board Member Management System](#).

All board members should be well-informed of their obligations and responsibilities as members of a charter school board of trustees. Please direct board members with questions regarding these obligations to an overview on the Department's website at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/?section=trustees>. The Department also has updated information regarding the use of the system to request the approval of new board members, including the content of the request letter uploaded via the system when a new member is created. Please review the information found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/?section=bmms> for instructions.

Please Call Us!

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 jdimai@doe.mass.edu. The system is a work in progress – if you or a member of your team has yet to access the system, a member of our team will contact you directly to support your success within the system and establish appropriate usage of the system's functions.

FINANCE AND DATA

FY14 Fiscal Dashboard

The FY14 fiscal dashboard has been updated to reflect the financial data received from charter school's audits and CSEOFYR, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/dashboard/>. As reported in the previous newsletter, the *Unrestricted Days Cash* indicator has been revised to reflect monthly tuition payments. And a note has been added about the late June 2014 tuition payment.

FY15 Financial Audit and Charter School End of Year Financial Report (CSEOYFR)

The FY15 independent financial audit will be due on November 2, 2015 and the CSEOYFR will be due on November 25, 2015. Because it was decided that the regular public school district End of Year Financial Report and chart of accounts will not be revised this year, only minor changes have been made to the FY15 CSEOYFR so that when district changes are made (planned for FY16) the CSEOYFR can be aligned to it where possible.

Charter School Recommended Fiscal Policies and Procedures (FPP)

The FPP has been updated and posted to be used as a guide for each school's accounting and business staff. It can be found on our website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/auditing/>.

Charter Analysis and Review Tool: CHART – Demographics and CHART – MCAS

The Department has updated the Charter Analysis and Review Tool (CHART) for 2015. CHART – Demographics is designed to assist charter schools in monitoring their progress with their Recruitment and Retention Plans, which is reported on in each school's annual report due on August 1, 2015. We have also finalized CHART – MCAS, designed as a reference tool for charter schools considering expansion or replication to view the performance data on which Proven Provider determinations are made per [603 CMR 1.04\(4\)](#). Please contact James DiMaio at 781-338-3228 or jdimaio@doe.mass.edu if you would like to review your school's CHART-MCAS profile.

FY16 Pre-enrollment Report and Projected Tuition

The March 2015 pre-enrollment report showed that 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>. The Office of School Finance has posted the Projected FY16 Charter School tuition based on the charter school pre-enrollment, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/tuition/fy16/projection.html>.

FY16 Waitlist Report

The annual report on the FY16 charter school waitlists that were collected on March 16th has been posted, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/enrollment/fy2016Waitlist.html>. The Office of Charter School and School Redesign (OCSSR) conducted a preliminary review of submitted charter school waitlist data to identify data errors, such as duplicate records, transposition of digits in dates of birth, and other obvious data entry errors. The Department's Education Data Services Office then conducted the matching process, using students' names (first, middle, last), dates of birth, towns of residence, and grades. Seventy-five waitlists were submitted and identified 37,470 students currently on charter school waitlists. The waitlists will be collected again this fall based on October 1, 2015 data.

NEW SCHOOLS AND EXPANSIONS

New Charter Schools to Open 2015-2016

Two new charter schools will open during the 2015-2016 school year, the Bentley Academy Charter School (BACS) in Salem, and the Springfield Preparatory Charter School (SPCS) in Springfield. BACS intends to serve 350 students in grades K-5 in Salem, and SPCS will serve 486 students in grades K-8 in Springfield. Please join us in welcoming their school leaders, [Justin Vernon](#) of BACS, and [Bill Spirer](#) of SPCS.

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 material 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 can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/governance/?section=amendments>. All types of amendment requests must be submitted to charterschools@doe.mass.edu.

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.

STAFF UPDATES

- **Patrick Buckwalter** has joined the Office of Charter School and School Redesign as the School Development and Accountability Specialist. He will be providing support for charter application and expansion request reviews and site visits to charter schools. Prior to this position, Patrick worked as an Expanded Learning Time Program Specialist within our office. Patrick came to the Department with more than fifteen years of experience in education program planning, development, and assessment.
- **Sara Schnitzer**, Accountability and Finance Specialist, has accepted a position at MATCH Community Charter School, as the Director of the 5th grade math program. If Sara was your school's accountability liaison, please contact Alison Bagg at abagg@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-3218 during the summer if you should have accountability questions.
- **Jane Haltiwanger**, Access and Equity Specialist, will be transitioning to a new role in the Office of Learning Support and Early Learning, to support the Department's efforts to support high quality early learning opportunities.

We wish each of these individuals the best in their new roles. Please note there may be some other minor shifts in responsibilities among team member assignments over the summer. The changes will be reflected on our [contact us](#) webpage, and we will update you on any important shifts in our back-to-school newsletter in the fall.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CONTACTS

Contact You – Summer Update Request

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". **Please be sure you update your school's key contacts within Directory Administration as staff transitions occur over the summer.** If it is inaccurate, your school may miss 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

Please feel free to [contact us](#) in the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign any time with your questions or concerns.