Governor Deval Patrick's Education Reform Package: Turning Around Low-Performing Schools and Promoting Innovation for All



Executive Office of Education
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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Purpose

Governor Patrick's education reform package will launch the next chapter of education reform in Massachusetts.

By jump-starting the process of intervening in underperforming and chronically underperforming schools and promoting widespread innovations in schools across the state, the Charter School "Smart Cap" bill and the Readiness Schools bill deliver a bold new installment of the Readiness Project just in time to qualify Massachusetts to be competitive for federal "Race to the Top" funding.

More importantly, this legislation seeks to offer educators and students real choices while moving aggressively to close achievement gaps.

<u>Goals</u>

- Turn around low-performing schools more quickly and effectively and also provide targeted support to students most in need of assistance.
- Promote innovative in-district schools for all Massachusetts students and families.

Why We Must Act

Massachusetts ranks at or near the top on national and international measures of reading, mathematics, and science achievement such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). However, our public schools are still failing to effectively serve too many of our students.

- In 2008, 70 percent of English Language Learners and 40 percent of low-income students in the Class of 2010 failed to meet MCAS graduation requirements.
- Based on 2008 statewide graduation data, approximately 70 percent of African American and 60 percent of Latino students graduated from high school in four years compared to approximately 90 percent of White students.
- On the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress, compared to other states, Massachusetts had some of the largest achievement gaps between White students and both African-American and Latino students and between lower- and higher-income students in reading and mathematics.

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: Charter School "Smart Cap" Bill

Guiding Principles:

- New and expanded charter schools will be created only in the lowest performing districts.
- New and expanded charter schools will serve the neediest students.
- Only proven providers will be authorized to operate these schools.

Charter School "Smart Cap" Bill (continued)

- In the lowest-scoring 10 percent of school districts (as measured by MCAS results), the current statutory limitation on a district's net school spending on charter schools will increase from 9 to 18 percent.
 - Includes 33 districts, 7 that are close to the current 9 percent cap
 - The number of available seats statewide will increase from 10,000 to 37,000
 - The number of available seats in Boston will increase from 660 to 6,600

Charter School "Smart Cap" Bill (continued)

- The new or expanded charter schools will be required to recruit and retain specific groups of students:
 - Low-income students;
 - Students receiving special education;
 - Limited English proficient students;
 - Sub-proficient students as measured by MCAS data (and other outcome data as necessary);
 - Students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out; and
 - Other groups of students (as determined by board regulations).
- Different tools will be used to support the implementation of targeted recruitment and retention strategies:
 - School districts will provide addresses for all eligible students to a third party mail house; and
 - Charter operators will submit annual progress reports to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: Readiness Acceleration Schools

In the Readiness Acceleration Schools, conversions of underperforming and chronically underperforming schools, the state will initiate a set of decisive, direct actions to remedy conditions of persistent underperformance, including:

- 1) Modifying existing district and union rules;
- 2) Offering additional curricular and instructional tools; and
- 3) Providing additional supports such as health and human services and additional learning time.

Readiness Acceleration Schools (continued)

The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education will identify underperforming and chronically underperforming schools (pursuant to regulations of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education), and designate these schools as **Readiness Acceleration Schools**. The Commissioner will conduct assessments of these schools to identify the factors that inhibit school performance and student achievement.

- In collaboration with a group of stakeholders, the Commissioner will then develop an "innovation plan" and performance contract for each Readiness Acceleration School.
 - For underperforming schools, the superintendent will be held accountable for implementing the innovation plan and meeting the terms of the performance contract.
 - For chronically underperforming schools, an external receiver will be held accountable for implementing the innovation plan and meeting the terms of the performance contract.

Readiness Acceleration Schools (continued)

The innovation plans will include different types of strategies to remedy chronic underperformance.

Modifying Existing Rules

- Providing more funds to the school from the district budget
- Expanding the school day or year
- Exempting or waiving selected collective bargaining provisions as necessary to accelerate improvement
- Removing teachers or school leaders as necessary
- Suspending burdensome district policies
- Evaluating school performance annually

Readiness Acceleration Schools (continued)

Using Additional Tools

- Changing the curriculum
- Providing additional job-embedded professional development for teachers and school leaders
- Providing additional time for teacher planning and collaboration

Providing Additional Support

- Wrap-around health and human services
- Workforce development services
- Increased time for student learning through enrichment activities and after-school or summer programs

Promoting Innovative In-District Schools: Readiness Advantage and Alliance Schools

The Readiness Schools bill will also establish two types of innovative, in-district public schools that will:

- Feature high degrees of flexibility and autonomy in the areas of curriculum, budget, school schedule and calendar, staffing (including voluntary exemptions or waivers from teacher contract provisions), and school district policies;
- Promote high levels of student achievement through the use of a performance contract;
- Foster innovation by allowing parents, teachers, universities, museums, non-profit organizations, and other groups to submit proposals to create new schools or convert existing schools; and
- Allow educators to fundamentally transform classroom instruction.

Readiness Advantage and Alliance Schools

Readiness Advantage Schools and Readiness Alliance Schools can be established as new schools or as conversions of existing schools.

These schools will operate under the terms of a performance contract and an innovation plan which will be approved by the local school committee.

- In Readiness Advantage Schools, faculty and school administrators will be primarily responsible for developing and meeting the terms of the school's performance contract and innovation plan.
- Readiness Alliance Schools will feature comprehensive partnerships with external partners such as universities, museums, or charter school operators, and these external partners will play a central role in managing the school. The external partner will be primarily responsible for developing and meeting the terms of the school's performance contract and innovation plan.

Process for Establishing Readiness Alliance and Advantage Schools

Applicant submits initial prospectus

Screening committee consisting of the superintendent, the school committee chair, and a teacher vote on the initial prospectus; two-thirds approval required

Innovation plan committee develops and submits an innovation plan and performance contract

For conversion of existing schools, current teachers vote on innovation plan and performance contract; simple majority approval required

Innovation plan and performance contract submitted to the school committee; simple majority approval required

Readiness School status authorized for up to 5 years

The Readiness
School is evaluated annually and at the end of the authorization period

Conclusion

- The Executive Office of Education (EOE) filed the Readiness Schools bill and the Charter School "Smart Cap" bill on Friday, July 17th.
- The bills will be a key part of Massachusetts' December 2009 application for federal "Race to the Top" funding, which provides \$4.35 billion nationwide to support education reform.
- By passing the bills this fall, we will maximize our ability to receive millions of federal dollars to support our public schools.