

Guidelines for
Charter School Annual Reports
2005-2006 School Year

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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Charter School Annual Report Guidelines
2005-2006 School Year

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Introduction

By August 1 of each year, a charter school must submit an Annual Report to the Department of Education and the public, which provides a comprehensive picture of the recently completed academic year, as it relates to its Accountability Plan goals and evidence regarding the three areas guiding charter school accountability:

- the success of the academic program,
- the viability of the organization, and
- the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter.

A charter school's Annual Report must be submitted to the Charter School Office at the Department of Education on or before August 1, as set forth in the charter school statute. The Annual Report will be used by the Department of Education to review the school's performance and progress for the past academic year, be corroborated and augmented by site visits, and will serve as one of the primary pieces of evidence that the Board of Education will review when it considers a school's application for charter renewal.

The Annual Report is a critical document in charter school accountability; it is intended to be a clear, concise report regarding school performance and its success in meeting Accountability Plan goals. While the school may use its report (or versions of it) for public relations, this is not its main purpose. The formatting for each school's report may be unique; however, there are required elements set forth in this document that must be included in each report.

General Instructions

The Annual Report must be a clear and accessible document for parents, the Department, and the general public. In reporting on the school's Accountability Plan, the goals and measures should be understandable to the reader and prioritized in the document. The other elements do not need to follow in the order listed below, or under the category headers, but must all be included. Please follow the checklist to help ensure that all required elements are included.

- **The Annual Report must be received by the Charter School Office on or before Tuesday, August 1, 2006.**
- Submit two (2) printed copies and one (1) Microsoft Word electronic copy that meets the required accessibility criteria described below. We are exploring the possibility of accepting electronic versions of Annual Reports through a web-drop function on the Department's Security Portal. School's will be updated on how to submit electronic versions prior to the submission deadline. Submit printed copies to:

Massachusetts Department of Education
Charter School Office
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148

- **Accessibility Criteria Required:** The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is committed to providing information to the public that is accessible to all, including those utilizing assistive technology to access information. This year, all Microsoft Word electronic versions of Annual Reports must follow the Commonwealth's criteria for accessible documents. This means that you must prepare an accessible electronic version of your school's Annual Report for submission to the Charter School Office. Please review the accessibility guidelines, *Preparing Office Documents*, points 2 through 6, at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/nmg/> and submit a Microsoft Word document that satisfies these requirements. Contact Lee DeLorenzo at 781-338-3227 if you have questions or need assistance.

Charter school Annual Reports are posted to the Charter School Office website. By posting the reports electronically, we ensure that schools are complying with the requirement that Annual Reports are disseminated to the general public.

Format

The Department of Education does not require a uniform reporting style or format for Annual Reports. Each school's Annual Report "look," or presentation style, is up to the school. Nevertheless, below are some general rules regarding the Report.

- Pages should be numbered and a table of contents provided.
- Schools must include a letter from the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees. This letter should be placed at the beginning of the report and can be used to highlight changes, challenges, or successes.
- Schools may include an Executive Summary of no more than two pages.
- School address and contact information must be clearly visible in the report.
- The school mission statement (as articulated in the charter application unless officially amended) must be included and visible in the report.
- Any attachment should be explicitly referred to in the text of the report and directly relevant to that part of the text.
- Tables, graphs, and other data in the report should be clearly presented, explained, and directly relevant to the text.
- The electronic version of the report must include everything that the print version of the application contains, including attachments.
- By law, a hard copy of the Annual Report must be sent to the Department of Education, the superintendent(s) and school committee chair(s) of the district(s) from which the school draws students, and the legislative representatives who represent those districts. A school's Annual Report, according to state law, must be provided to families of current students as well as families contemplating enrollment. While the full report does not need to be sent to each family, the school should inform families of enrolled and prospective students that an Annual Report is available upon request. The school may make the Annual Report available to members of the wider community by displaying it in the local library, the school's front office, or on the school's web site.
- Schools that have received Title I funds must report information included in the School Report Card required by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act with the Annual Report. Schools can either add their School Report Card as an attachment to the Annual Report or integrate required information into the content of the Annual Report.

Checklist

- Introductory description of the school**
- Letter from Board of Trustee's Chair**
- Executive Summary (optional)**
- Summary of performance relative to Accountability Plan goals**
- School Address/Contact Information**
- School Mission Statement**
- Summary of educational philosophy**
- Summary of external standardized test results**
- Summary of internal assessment results**
- Number of instructional days**
- NCLB Report Card**
- List of Members of the Board of Trustees with details as defined**
- Summary of major policy decisions made by the Board of Trustees**
- Charter amendments approved by the Commissioner or Board of Education**
- Summary of official complaints**
- Student Demographics**
- Total number of student applications received**
- Student attrition data**
- Number of students who have been expelled and who have served in-school or out-of-school suspensions**
- Name of school leader(s), including instructional leader(s)**
- Summary of classroom teacher qualifications**
- Teacher attrition**
- Financial statement for the fiscal year 2006**
- Balance sheet setting forth the charter school's assets, liabilities, and fund balances or equities.**
- Approved school budget for fiscal year 2007**
- Plans for dissemination of best practices, or current dissemination project(s)**

Content Requirements

The following elements must appear in the school's Annual Report:

Introduction

Required component

□ **Letter from Board of Trustee's Chair**

This letter is to inform the public, as well as future site visitors, of any significant changes that have taken place over the past year. This could include the departure or arrival of certain key staff/trustees, a change in the organizational model, changes in curriculum, or modification of programmatic elements.

Required component

□ **Introductory description of the school**

This opening paragraph provides the reader with an overview of the school location and population. Include the location of the school. If the school is regional, list the regions from which students are drawn. Include the maximum number of students the school can enroll (enrollment cap). List the current grade span and number of students enrolled, as of October 1, 2005, SIMS reporting. Schools that have not yet reached full capacity should also include the anticipated grades and number of students served when the school reaches its full capacity.

Accountability Plan Goals and Objectives

Required component

□ **Summary of performance relative to Accountability Plan objectives**

This is the most important component, as it is one of the main stated purposes of the Annual Report in the laws and regulations governing Massachusetts charter schools. In this section, schools should report on all of the educational and organizational goals set forth in the school's Accountability Plan. Schools should use the Accountability Plan that has been approved by the Charter School Office. If the school's Accountability Plan has not been approved by the Charter School Office, the school should use their draft Accountability Plan and be clear that they are reporting on draft goals and objectives. There should be a clear presentation of what the goals and objectives are and the extent to which the school has met them. This information should be comprehensive and transparent.

Schools should document what strategies were used to achieve each of the goals as well as plans for the future. Schools that did not make progress toward reaching their goals should include an explanation of why it is believed this is the case and what the school is doing to increase attainment of goals in the coming year.

For schools completing their first year of operation: Accountability Plans are due to the Charter School Office for approval by August 1 after the school's first year of operation. Schools completing their first year should report on draft Accountability Plan goals and objectives, which should provide a summary of academic and organizational performance in a manner that is

consistent with the goals of the school's charter and that meets, as closely as possible, the expectations stated in the above paragraphs.

The report on progress toward or success in meeting Accountability Plan goals is the most important section of a school's Annual Report, and this information should make up the bulk of the report. The additional information required below is supplemental, helping make the school more accountable and transparent to the general public, as well as providing important information to the Department. The following elements should be included to the extent that they are not already answered in the above information.

School Profile

Required component

Summary of educational philosophy

Briefly describe the school's educational philosophy, curriculum design and teaching methods, highlighting any changes from past years.

Required component

Summary of external standardized test results

Additional information regarding student performance on the MCAS test and or other standardized tests (e.g. Stanford-9, CAT) must be included to the extent it is not sufficiently covered in the section regarding the goals of the Accountability Plan. Data should be presented using a format that allows for easy comprehension (e.g. tables, charts, graphs), and should be interpreted for the reader in narrative form. Readers should get a clear picture of the academic performance and growth of the school's students. Schools should also include whether they have achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a requirement for all schools under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

Required component

Summary of internal assessment results

Schools should report the extent to which internal assessment results demonstrate improvement or persistent strength in students' academic performance to the extent it is not sufficiently covered in the section regarding the goals of the Accountability Plan. This section should include a brief description of the school's internal assessment system and evidence of its viability as an assessment tool. If the school does not have an internal assessment system that provides data for external purposes, no information need be provided.

Required component

Number of instructional days for the 2005-2006 school year

Report the number of instructional days for the 2005-2006 school year, including starting and ending dates and hours of operation.

Required component

NCLB Report Card

For those schools that have received Title I funds, include the NCLB Report Card in your Annual Report. NCLB requires all districts and schools, including charter schools, that

receive Title I funds to annually prepare and disseminate NCLB report cards. Schools can either add their School Report Card as an attachment to the Annual Report, or integrate required information into the content of the Annual Report. For more information regarding what is required for the Report Card, see www.doe.mass.edu/nclb/reportcard.

Governance Profile

Required component

□ List of Members of the Board of Trustees

For each trustee, include the name, outside employer or expertise, position held on the Board, term of appointment (clearly representing date of election as well as expiration of term), as well as any Board committees on which they serve.

Required component

□ Summary of major policy decisions made by the Board of Trustees

Required component

□ Charter amendments approved by the Commissioner or the Board of Education

Required component

□ Summary of official complaints received by the Board of Trustees

Official complaints are those received by the Board of Trustees in writing pursuant to the state's charter school regulations, 601 CMR 1.08. This summary should describe each complaint in general terms, without mentioning specific names or information that may be deemed confidential, and should describe how each complaint has been resolved. Complaints received by telephone or in person are not considered official complaints.

Student Profile

Required component

□ Student Demographics

Include the total number of students enrolled by grade. Also include, in the aggregate, the number and percentage of students by race, ethnicity, gender, low income status, special education status, classified as English Language Learners (ELL), and linguistic minorities. (This is essentially the enrollment indicators page of the Department's district profile.)

Required component

□ Total number of student applications received

Report the total number of student applications received for the past school year, by grade level and residence. This section can be presented in a table format, and should be an aggregate for the year. In addition, report on the number of applications received compared to the number of openings.

Required component

❑ **Student attrition data**

These data should be separated in two categories: (1) the total number of students who left the school during the year (indicating the number of students who were in membership at the school on Oct. 1, 2005, compared to at the end of the school year) and (2) with the best information available to date, those who finished the school year but have chosen not to return for the coming school year. Schools should provide a summary of reasons for withdrawal.

Required component

❑ **Number of students who have been expelled and who have served in-school and out-of-school suspensions**

Provide a brief summary describing the general reasons for the suspensions and expulsions, if applicable.

Staff Profile

Required component

❑ **Name of school leader(s), including instructional leader(s)**

Schools should also report attrition among the administrative team.

Required component

❑ **Summary of classroom teacher qualifications**

Provide information about the school's teaching staff, including how many FTE teachers and aides are employed; the average years of teaching experience of classroom teachers; the average years of service at the school; and the percentage of faculty designated as Highly Qualified. See the *Opening Procedures Handbook*

(<http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/docs/ophandbook.pdf>) for more detailed information.

These data are averages and aggregates; the school does not have to list each individual separately. Include the average class size at the school.

Required component

❑ **Teacher attrition**

Indicate the percentage of teaching faculty employed by the school who have left since the beginning of the school year, as well as a separate listing of the percentage of teachers who finished the year but are not planning to come back next year.

Financial Profile

Required component

Financial statement for FY06 (unaudited, if necessary)

This statement should set forth, by appropriate categories, the revenue and expenditures for the fiscal year 2006 (July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006). **Since most schools' independent audits will not have been completed by the August 1 deadline, please note if the report is an unaudited statement.** *Note: An independent audit for the year ending June 30, 2006, must be filed with the Department of Education and the State Auditor by January 1, 2007.*

Required component

Balance sheet setting forth the charter school's assets, liabilities, and fund balances or equities.

Required component

Approved school budget for FY07

Dissemination

Please describe what the school has done to define best practices and disseminate them to the public.

This description should, according to the statute, give "evidence that the charter school is developing or has provided models for replication and best practices in education."

Additional Information

The primary purpose of the Annual Report is to provide a comprehensive picture of the school's progress toward meeting the goals in its Accountability Plan. In addition to the above mentioned content, the school may include additional information on programmatic elements or results that it believes will aid the Commonwealth in answering how the school is progressing toward having a successful academic program, being a viable organization, and remaining faithful to the terms of its charter. These are particular aspects that are not covered elsewhere but relate to the success and the core elements of the school. Additional elements should be added sparingly.

Applicable Laws and Regulations

MGL Chapter 71 § 89 (gg)

(gg) Each charter school shall submit to the board of education, to the local school committee, to each parent or guardian of its enrolled students, and to each parent or guardian contemplating enrollment in that charter school an annual report. The annual report shall be issued no later than August 1 of each year for the preceding school year. The annual report shall be in such form as may be prescribed by the board and shall include at least the following components: (1) discussion of progress made toward the achievement of the goals set forth in the charter; and (2) a financial statement setting forth by appropriate categories, the revenue and expenditures for the year just ended.

603 CMR 1.09 Ongoing Review of Charter Schools

(1) **Annual Report.** A charter school shall submit to the Board of Education and the local school committee and make available to every parent or guardian of its enrolled students and to every parent or guardian who expresses interest in enrolling in that charter school, an annual report. The annual report shall be issued no later than August 1 of each year for the preceding school year. The annual report shall include the following information:

- (a) a financial statement setting forth by appropriate categories the revenue and expenditures for the year just ended, and a balance sheet setting forth the charter school's assets, liabilities, and fund balances or equities;
- (b) projections of income and expenses for the upcoming school year;
- (c) discussion of progress made toward achievement of the goals of the charter and accountability plan;
- (d) evidence that the charter school is developing or has provided models for replication and best practices in education; and
- (e) such other information as the Board of Education may require in guidelines.