



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
From: Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.C. Riley".

Date: January 10, 2019
Subject: Renewal of Charters – Notification of Intended Actions for Argosy Collegiate Charter School; Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School; Hill View Montessori Charter Public School; Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School, Springfield; River Valley Charter School; and Salem Academy Charter School

At its meeting in February 2013, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) authorized the Commissioner to act on its behalf in “(a) granting charter renewals that do not involve probation; (b) approving charter amendments that do not involve changes in grade span, maximum enrollment, or districts served; and (c) removing or continuing conditions imposed on charters of charter schools; provided that the Commissioner shall report to the Board on all charter renewals, charter amendments, and conditions that have been so approved; and provided further, that the Commissioner shall notify the Board in advance of all such intended actions, and a Board member may request that the Commissioner place the charter matter(s) on the agenda of the Board for discussion and action.”

Applications to renew charters are under consideration for the six schools addressed in this memorandum. Under the authority delegated to the Commissioner in February 2013, I intend to renew the charters of three schools unconditionally. These schools are Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School (BART), River Valley Charter School (RVCS), and Salem Academy Charter School (SACS). I also intend to renew with conditions the charters of Argosy Collegiate Charter School (ACCS); Hill View Montessori Charter Public School (HVMCPS); and Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School, Springfield (PAPCHSS).

The superintendents of the districts sending students to these schools were invited to submit written comment regarding the charter renewals. No comment was received for any of these six schools.

Please let me know by **Thursday, January 17, 2019**, if you wish to have any of these proposed actions brought to the full Board for review and vote at the January meeting.

Charter School Performance Criteria and Considerations for Renewing Charters

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) uses the [Charter School Performance Criteria](#) (Criteria) to report evidence in the three areas of charter school accountability. These areas are faithfulness to the terms of a school's charter, academic program success, and organizational viability. Renewal decisions for these charter schools are made in accordance with the charter school statute and the process outlined in the memorandum dated October 7, 2013, regarding [Considerations for Charter School Renewal](#).

The Criteria and the Considerations for Charter School Renewal outline performance expectations for charter schools but do not dictate accountability decisions formulaically, including renewal decisions. A charter school must demonstrate affirmative evidence of success in all three areas of charter school accountability, and renewal decisions are made based upon the totality of evidence as presented in the Summaries of Review. Summaries of Review for each school are attached to this memorandum. Student academic achievement and improvement in student achievement for all student groups are of paramount importance. A rating system is used to communicate how well each school is meeting expectations of the Criteria. Failure to meet individual performance criteria will not necessarily result in a non-renewal; the Criteria set a high standard for performance. Performance relative to the Criteria is considered within the context of the school's performance trends and stage of development. The Commissioner and the Board consider all qualitative and quantitative factors when making these decisions.

Presentation of Evidence for Charter Renewal

This memorandum contains summary evidence related to each school's performance on a sub-set of the Criteria that are directly related to the statutory and regulatory requirements for renewal of charters.¹ The Summaries of Review present evidence related to a sub-set of the Criteria including Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements; Criterion 2: Access and Equity; Criterion 3: Compliance; Criterion 4: Dissemination; Criterion 5: Student Performance; and Criterion 9: Governance. The Department, however, continues to gather evidence regarding all of the Criteria through ongoing monitoring processes.

The chart on page 6 of this memorandum provides a dashboard with a summary of ratings for the eight schools for which I intend to renew charters. Beginning on page 7 of the memorandum, I provide a brief summary of the evidence on which I based my decisions. Attached to this memorandum is the Summary of Review for each of the six schools. Below, I provide further information regarding each Criterion contained in the Summaries of Review that may be of particular interest and provide context for the ratings.

¹ The charter school regulations, at 603 CMR 1.11(2), provide as follows.

The decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the presentation of affirmative evidence regarding the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter, including the extent to which the school has followed its recruitment and retention plan and has disseminated best practices in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 89(dd); the success of the school's academic program; and the viability of the school as an organization. The Department will gather evidence regarding these issues from the renewal application and from other information, including but not limited to, a school's annual reports, financial audits, test results, site visit reports, and the renewal inspection report. All charter schools will be evaluated on the same performance criteria as provided in the guidelines, provided, however, that the criteria will take into account each school's charter and accountability plan. Evidence of academic success for all students is essential for charter renewal.

Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements

The charter school statute states that the Board shall consider whether the school has met its obligations and commitments under the charter. G.L. c. 71, § 89(dd). Further, the charter school regulations state that the decision by the Board to renew a charter shall be based upon the affirmative evidence regarding the faithfulness of the school to the terms of its charter. 603 CMR 1.11(2). The degree to which a charter school is implementing its mission, vision, and key design elements is assessed through charter school accountability site visits and a renewal inspection visit. Additionally, each charter term, schools create accountability plans to articulate their own mission-driven objectives and measures. Charter schools report on the accountability plan annually and aim to meet the objectives by the end of each charter term. Each Summary of Review reflects the school's performance on its accountability plan and includes the accountability plan in Appendix A to each Summary of Review.

Criterion 2: Access and Equity

All charter schools are required to ensure program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school. New statutory provisions related to Criterion 2 were added in 2010. The Summaries of Review contain multiple data sources for Criterion 2 such as comparative enrollment data; comparative attrition data; comparative stability rates; the status of each school's recruitment and retention plan; and, if relevant, any enhancements made to each school's strategies to recruit and retain certain populations of students more effectively. Criterion 2 also provides evidence about the accessibility of the school's programming and contains data pertaining to suspension rates, both for all students and for subgroups.

Appendix B to each Summary of Review provides enrollment data for subgroups and attrition and stability data for all students and the high needs subgroup at the charter school. Each Summary of Review then compares this data to that of other public schools in the municipality or region from which the charter school draws students. The information presented is derived from the Department's School and District Profiles and the [Charter Analysis and Review Tool](#) ("CHART"). Appendix B to the Summaries of Review is intended to provide context for a charter school's recruitment and retention effort, is presented for reference only, and primarily examines trends within the charter school itself.

The subgroup composition of a charter school is not required to be a mirror image of the schools in its sending districts and region. The Department urges caution in drawing any conclusions regarding comparability of subgroup populations between schools and districts based upon aggregate statistics alone. The enrollment process in traditional public schools differs significantly from enrollment of students in charter schools. In particular, charter schools are required by law to use a lottery process when admitting students; traditional public schools must accept all students who live within the municipality or region that they serve. It is important to note that student demographics for a charter school, particularly in the aggregate, will not reflect recruitment and retention efforts immediately; charter schools must give preference in enrollment to siblings of currently attending students and are permitted to limit the grades in which students may enter the school.

The charter school statute requires charter schools to develop and implement recruitment and retention plans. Charter schools must receive Department approval for recruitment and retention plans and must report on and update these plans annually. When deciding on charter renewal, the Commissioner and the Board consider the extent to which the school has followed its recruitment and retention plan by using deliberate, specific strategies to recruit and retain students from targeted subgroups; whether the school has enhanced its plan as necessary; and the annual attrition rate of students.

Criterion 3: Compliance

In order to assess whether the school has met its obligations and commitments under its charter, the Department monitors whether each school is operating in accordance with the provisions of the charter school statute and regulations and all other applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, required trainings and deadlines, and such additional guidance as the Department may from time to time establish. In each summary of review, the Department reflects where schools may have, from time to time, been out of compliance with these requirements.

The Summaries of Review do not provide a rating for Compliance. Due to the number of items required for a public school and charter school to be in compliance with state and federal regulations and guidance, the Department does not rate this category as a composite. The Department, however, does highlight areas of compliance that a school must address and provides oversight if and when schools' charters are renewed. If a school's failure to comply is significant or sustained, additional actions may be warranted including, but not limited to, imposing conditions on a school's charter.

Criterion 4: Dissemination

Dissemination is required for renewal of charters of Commonwealth charter schools. The charter school statute requires charter schools to provide "models for replication and best practices . . . to other public schools in the district where the charter school is located." G.L. c. 71, § 89(dd) ("a commonwealth charter shall not be renewed unless the board of trustees of the charter school has documented in a manner approved by the board that said commonwealth charter school has provided models for replication and best practices to the commissioner and to other public schools in the district where the charter school is located"). The Department takes into consideration the developmental age of the school in this requirement. Schools in their first charter term are still in the process of developing best practices.

Because dissemination requires two willing partners, the Department also considers efforts made by the charter school to disseminate innovative models for replication and best practices to other schools, districts, and organizations beyond the district where the charter school is located. There are multiple forums and activities through which a charter school may disseminate effective practices. These include, but are not limited to:

- partnerships with other schools implementing key successful aspects of the charter school's program,
- assisting with district turnaround efforts,

- sharing resources or programs developed at the charter school,
- hosting other educators at the charter school, and
- presenting at professional conferences about its innovative school practices.

Criterion 5: Student Academic Performance

Charter schools, like all public schools, must administer state assessments to all students. In November 2015, the Board voted to approve the development of Massachusetts's next-generation MCAS assessment. In the spring of 2017 and 2018, Massachusetts public schools administered the first next-generation MCAS assessment to grades 3 through 8. Schools serving grade 10 continued to administer the legacy MCAS assessment to students in grade 10.

In September 2018, the Department introduced the results of its new statewide system of accountability aligned to requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. The Summaries of Review present the data and first determinations made by the new statewide system of accountability.

Charter schools that applied for renewal of their charter by August 1, 2018, will not face non-renewal based solely on the first determinations of the new statewide system of accountability. Academic performance, however, is always considered in determining whether to renew a charter. The data presented for charter school academic performance include each school's historical data from the 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 statewide assessments.

Criterion 9: Governance

The boards of trustees of charter schools are public agents authorized by the Commonwealth to supervise and control the charter school. G.L. c. 71, § 89(c). The regulations require renewal of a charter to be based upon "the viability of the school as an organization." 603 CMR 1.11(2). The membership of boards of charter schools is tracked through the Department's Board Member Management System, and the Department reviews and rates governance during accountability and renewal inspection visits. The Summary of Review reflects whether the board of a charter school has been active and engaged, fulfilled its legal responsibilities and fiduciary duties of care and loyalty, followed the board's approved bylaws, and acted in the best interests of the school. A board's established decision-making and communication processes must demonstrate appropriate oversight and that the board engaged in strategic and continuous improvement planning to ensure the sustainability of the school.

The dashboard summarizing the performance of the six schools that I intend to renew follows.

Charter School Performance Criteria – Ratings and Recommendation Summary

● Exceeds	● Meets	● Partially Meets	● Falls Far Below
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	Criteria	Argosy Collegiate Charter School	Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School	Hill View Montessori Charter Public School	Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School, Springfield	River Valley Charter School	Salem Academy Charter School
Faithfulness to Charter	1. Mission and Key Design Elements	● Meets	● Meets	● Partially Meets	● Partially Meets	● Meets	● Meets
	2. Access and Equity	● Partially Meets	● Partially Meets	● Partially Meets	● Partially Meets	● Partially Meets	● Meets
	4. Dissemination	● Partially Meets	● Meets	● Meets	● Meets	● Meets	● Meets
Academic Program Success	5. Student Performance	Requiring assistance or intervention 5th percentile	Not requiring assistance or intervention 80th percentile	Not requiring assistance or intervention 28th percentile	Insufficient Data	Not requiring assistance or intervention 74th percentile	Not requiring assistance or intervention 83rd percentile
Organizational Viability	9. Governance	● Meets	● Meets	● Meets	● Meets	● Meets	● Meets
Intended Commissioner Action		Renew with Conditions	Unconditional Renewal	Renew with Conditions	Renew with Conditions	Unconditional Renewal	Unconditional Renewal

Argosy Collegiate Charter School

Type of Charter (Commonwealth or Horace Mann)	Commonwealth	Location	Fall River
Regional or Non-Regional	Non-Regional	Districts in Region (if applicable)	N/A
Year Opened	2014	Year(s) Renewed (if applicable)	N/A
Maximum Enrollment	644	Current Enrollment	466 (as of October 2018)
Chartered Grade Span	6-12	Current Grade Span	6-10
Students on Waitlist	216 (as of March 2018)	Current Age of School	5
Mission Statement			
The mission of Argosy Collegiate Charter School is to provide all scholars in grades 6 through 12 with a seamless middle to high school education that educates them for a rigorous and relevant four-year college degree and ensures they are able to compete in a 21st century global economy. Argosy Collegiate Charter School prepares Fall River’s diverse community of learners with the academic foundation and character values necessary to be successful in college, career, and life.			

During its first charter term, Argosy Collegiate Charter School (ACCS) has not demonstrated progress in student academic achievement. Due to its age, ACCS was not classified by the statewide system of accountability until 2018. In 2018, ACCS is classified as requiring assistance or intervention; met 25 percent of its improvement targets; and is performing in the 5th percentile when compared to other middle/high schools statewide. Currently serving grades 6-10, Argosy Collegiate Charter School does not have any post-secondary or graduation data for consideration. I have concerns about the school’s academic performance and intend to place conditions on the school’s charter requiring improvement in academic outcomes. Should the school fail to demonstrate academic improvement on the next MCAS administration, I likely will recommend additional measures including, but not limited to, possibly placing the school on probation.

Over the charter term, ACCS administered PARCC in 2015 and 2016 and Next-Generation MCAS assessments in 2017 and 2018. In 2017 and 2018, ACCS administered the legacy grade 8 science and technology/engineering MCAS. In 2018, 26 percent of ACCS students in grades 6-8 met or exceeded expectations on the English language arts (ELA) Next-Generation MCAS, below the state average of 51 percent. In mathematics, 31 percent of students met or exceeded expectations, below the state average of 48 percent. In science and technology/engineering, 9 percent of grade 8 students earned proficient or advanced, below the state average of 35 percent.

As demonstrated in the attached Summary of Review, the school implements programming aligned to its mission and key design elements, implements an approved Recruitment and

Retention plan, is organizationally viable, and met half of the measures contained in its accountability plan. Throughout the charter term, the school's rates of attrition have been variable, but mostly lower than attrition rates for comparison schools. In its first charter term, the school has engaged in some dissemination of its best practices.

The school, however, is not in compliance with state law requiring a licensed ESL teacher to deliver English as a second language (ESL) instruction. None of the ACCS staff providing ESL instruction is properly qualified.

Massachusetts state law and regulations that took effect in 2014 require the Department to identify schools that suspend or expel a significant percentage of students for more than 10 cumulative days in a school year and to identify schools and districts with significant disparities in suspension and expulsion rates among different racial and ethnic groups or for students with disabilities. In 2016, ACCS was identified as one of the schools with disparate rates of suspension for African-American/Black; Hispanic/Latino; and Multi-race student subgroups. Argosy Collegiate Charter School is a participant in the Department's professional learning network and is taking steps to reduce its use of suspension. The school is working with the Department for approval of its action plan to reduce its suspension rate.

Given this evidence, presented in more detail in the attached Summary of Review, I intend to renew the charter of ACCS with the conditions that follow.

Condition 1: By February 28, 2019, ACCS must submit evidence to the Department that it has provided the school community with notice of the school's renewal with conditions that the school must meet. The school must inform parents/guardians, teachers, staff, board members, and students of the school's current status.

Condition 2: By August 1, 2019, ACCS must demonstrate that it has hired properly qualified staff to deliver English learner instruction.

Condition 3: By December 31, 2020, the school must demonstrate that it is an academic success by providing evidence that the school has exhibited significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science. If ACCS does not demonstrate academic improvement by December 31, 2019, the Commissioner and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will take further action including, but not limited to, placing the school on probation.

Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School

Type of Charter (Commonwealth or Horace Mann)	Commonwealth	Location	Adams
Regional or Non-Regional	Regional	Districts in Region (if applicable)	Adams-Cheshire, Clarksburg, Florida, Hancock, Lanesborough, Mt. Greylock, North Adams, Pittsfield, Savoy, Williamstown
Year Opened	2004	Year(s) Renewed (if applicable)	2009, 2014
Maximum Enrollment	363	Current Enrollment	378 ² (as of October 2018)
Chartered Grade Span	6-12	Current Grade Span	6-12
Students on Waitlist	11 (as of March 2018)	Current Age of School	15
Mission Statement			
BART Charter Public School prepares students for college by promoting mastery of academic skills and content with a strong foundation in arts and technology. The school provides middle and high school students in Berkshire County with an educational community that regards everyone, including teachers and parents, as lifelong learners.			

During its third charter term, Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School (BART) has demonstrated progress in student academic achievement. In 2018, BART is classified as not requiring assistance or intervention, met 75 percent of its improvement targets, and is performing in the 80th percentile when compared to other middle/high schools statewide.

Over the charter term, BART administered PARCC in 2015 and 2016 and Next-Generation MCAS assessments in 2017 and 2018 in grades 6-8, the legacy grade 8 science and technology/engineering MCAS, and the legacy grade 10 MCAS tests. In 2018, 48 percent of BART students in grades 6-8 met or exceeded expectations on the ELA Next-Generation MCAS, below the state average of 51 percent. In mathematics, 48 percent of students met or exceed expectations, equal to the state average of 48 percent. In science and technology/engineering, 40 percent of grade 8 students earned proficient or advanced, above the state average of 35 percent. In 2018, 100 percent of BART grade 10 students earned proficient or advanced in ELA, 94 percent earned proficient or advanced in mathematics, and 96 percent earned proficient or

²The school is currently overenrolled by 15 students and as a result is out of compliance with the terms of its charter. Charter schools do not receive tuition for students enrolled above the school’s maximum enrollment.

advanced on the science and engineering/technology assessment. All grade 10 MCAS results were above state averages.

Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School’s 4-year graduation rate for the 2017 cohort was 87.5 percent, with 6.3 percent of the cohort still in school. BART’s 5-year graduation rate was 100 percent for the 2016 cohort. In 2017, the school’s dropout rate was 0.7 percent, below the statewide average of 1.8 percent.

As demonstrated in the attached Summary of Review, the school implements its mission and key design elements with fidelity, implements an approved Recruitment and Retention plan, is organizationally viable, and met a majority of the measures contained in its accountability plan. Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School has disseminated its best practices to other public schools within its district and across the state. Since the prior charter term, the school’s rates of attrition have improved for all students and for subgroups; attrition rates, however, remain higher than comparison schools.

Given all of the evidence, presented in more detail in the attached Summary of Review, I intend to renew the charter of BART.

Hill View Montessori Charter Public School

Type of Charter (Commonwealth or Horace Mann)	Commonwealth	Location	Haverhill
Regional or Non-Regional	Non-Regional	Districts in Region (if applicable)	N/A
Year Opened	2004	Year(s) Renewed (if applicable)	2009, 2014
Maximum Enrollment	306	Current Enrollment	304 (as of October 2018)
Chartered Grade Span	K-8	Current Grade Span	K-8
Students on Waitlist	294 (as of March 2018)	Current Age of School	15
Mission Statement			
The mission of Hill View Montessori Charter Public School is to provide a grade K-8, public education that promotes academic excellence using the Montessori philosophy. In partnership with teachers and parents, children attain high levels of academic, personal and social achievement and so prepared, become constructive contributors to our community.			

During its third charter term, Hill View Montessori Charter Public School (HVMCPS) has demonstrated partial progress in student academic achievement. In 2018, HVMCPS is classified as not requiring assistance or intervention, met 72 percent of its improvement targets, and is performing in the 28th percentile when compared to other “non-high schools” statewide.

Over the charter term, HVMCPS administered PARCC in 2015 and 2016 and Next-Generation MCAS assessments in 2017 and 2018 in grades 3-8 and the legacy grade 5 and 8 science and technology/engineering MCAS. In 2018, 45 percent of HVMCPS students in grades 3-8 met or exceeded expectations on the ELA Next-Generation MCAS, below the state average of 51 percent. In mathematics, 23 percent of students met or exceed expectations, below the state average of 48 percent. In science and technology/engineering, 22 percent of grade 5 students earned proficient or advanced, below the state average of 47 percent; 27 percent of grade 8 students earned proficient or advanced, below the state average of 35 percent.

As demonstrated in the attached Summary of Review, the school implements an approved Recruitment and Retention plan, disseminated its best practices to other public schools within its district and across the state, is organizationally viable, and met a majority of the measures contained in its accountability plan. The Summary of Review also outlines concerns about the school’s implementation of its mission and key design elements and concerns about its academic program. The attached report outlines moderate concerns about the degree to which the school’s 7 and 8th grade programing aligns with the school’s mission and provides academic excellence for those students. During the charter term, HVMCPS’s grade 7 and 8 statewide assessment results have been below to far below statewide averages. Additional evidence contained in the Summary of Review outlines a lack of curricular materials aligned with state standards, lack of consistent processes for identifying students potentially in need of additional academic support, and limited processes for self-evaluation of the school’s programs for special education and English learners.

Given this evidence, presented in more detail in the attached Summary of Review, I intend to renew the charter of HVMCPS with the conditions that follow.

Condition 1: By February 28, 2019, HVMCPS must submit evidence to the Department that it has provided the school community with notice of the school’s renewal with conditions that the school must meet. The school must inform parents/guardians, teachers, staff, board members, and students of the school’s current status.

Condition 2: By April 30, 2019, the board of trustees must review the school’s program and submit an action plan to the Department that addresses areas in need of improvement. The review and action plan must address at least the following areas: the degree to which the school’s program aligns with the school’s mission and key design elements; the degree to which the program for 7th and 8th grade aligns to the mission and provides academic excellence; the school’s processes to identify students who need supports; and the school’s self-evaluation of its special education and English learner programs.

Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School, Springfield

Type of Charter (Commonwealth or Horace Mann)	Commonwealth	Location	Springfield
Regional or Non-Regional	Regional	Districts in Region (if applicable)	Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee
Year Opened	2014	Year(s) Renewed (if applicable)	N/A
Maximum Enrollment	250	Current Enrollment	198 (as of October 2018)
Chartered Grade Span	9-12	Current Grade Span	9-12
Students on Waitlist	0 (as of March 2018)	Current Age of School	5
Mission Statement			
Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School, Springfield challenges resilient, disconnected students with rigorous academics and relentless supports, so they take ownership of their futures and succeed in high school, college and as self-sufficient adults.			

Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School, Springfield (PAPCHSS) is an alternative high school that serves an at-risk population with the goal of preparing students to succeed in high school, college, and beyond. The school is part of the Phoenix Charter Academy Network, three Commonwealth charter schools all governed by one board of trustees with the same goal to provide “disconnected students with rigorous academics and relentless supports” to become self-sufficient adults.

Throughout its first charter term, PAPCHSS has demonstrated some academic progress for its students. Over the charter term, PAPCHSS administered legacy grade 10 MCAS tests. Due to the small number of grade 10 students who take the statewide assessment each year (fewer than 20), PAPCHSS had insufficient data to render a level determination or classification. Also due to the small testing cohort size, the school’s results each year are variable, with stronger results in ELA than in mathematics or science across the charter term. In 2018, 80 percent of PAPCHSS grade 10 students earned proficient or advanced in ELA, 50 percent earned proficient or advanced in mathematics, and 40 percent earned proficient or advanced on the science and technology/ engineering assessment. All 2018 grade 10 MCAS results were below state averages but are above averages when compared to other Massachusetts alternative high schools. In order to demonstrate academic progress for its students, PAPCHSS administers the STAR assessment for ELA and mathematics in the fall and spring. STAR data from the 2017 and 2018 school years shows that PAPCHSS students are growing academically at a faster rate than their peers in other alternative schools.

Graduation rates from PAPCHSS are below state averages and the averages of other alternative schools statewide. The school’s 4-year graduation rate for the 2017 cohort was 12.7 percent with 26.8 percent of that cohort still in school, compared to 39.9 percent for alternative schools statewide. The school’s 5-year graduation rate for the 2016 cohort was 12.7 percent with 21.8 percent of that cohort still in school, compared to a 46.9 percent 5-year graduation rate for alternative schools statewide. In 2017, the school’s dropout rate was 54.4 percent, compared to the average for alternative schools statewide of 21.8 percent. By the school’s own dropout calculations, which differ from the Department’s³, 33.8 percent of PAPCHSS students dropped out in 2017.

As demonstrated in the attached Summary of Review, PAPCHSS implements an approved Recruitment and Retention plan, is organizationally viable, met a majority of the measures contained in its accountability plan, and disseminated its best practices to other public schools within its district and across the state.

As shown in the attached Summary of Review, PAPCHSS is partially implementing its mission and key design elements; concerns are noted regarding student attrition, compliance, instruction, and supports for diverse learners. For the past two years, all three schools in the Phoenix Charter Academy Network and staff that provide centralized support to the schools examined the Phoenix school program to better align it to the needs of students and to the school’s mission and to improve academic outcomes for students. Even though PAPCHSS has been modifying its program over the past two years, the evidence contained in the Summary of Review still warrants concern and placing conditions on the school’s charter.

Given this evidence, presented in more detail in the attached Summary of Review, I intend to renew the charter of PAPCHSS with the conditions that follow.

Condition 1: By February 28, 2019, PAPCHSS must submit evidence to the Department that it has provided the school community with notice of the school’s renewal with

³ From PAPCHSS’ Application for Renewal, p. 11:

Annually, Phoenix recalculates DESE’s dropout rate in order to include students who enrolled after October 1st in the denominator; this includes students who were enrolled in the summer before the school year or *any time* during the school year. The formula is as follows:

$$\frac{\text{students enrolled anytime during the current school year who dropped out in the summer before or during the current school year}}{\text{students who were enrolled anytime during the current school year}}$$

Here is a comparison between DESE’s dropout rate calculation and Phoenix Springfield’s dropout rate calculation:

Dropout Rate Comparison	2014-2015		2015-2016		2016-2017	
	DESE rate	Phoenix rate	DESE rate	Phoenix rate	DESE rate	Phoenix rate
Phoenix Springfield	41.0%	24.9%	32.4%	20.9%	54.4%	33.8%

conditions that the school must meet. The school must inform parents/guardians, teachers, staff, board members, and students of the school’s current status.

Condition 2: By April 30, 2019, the board of trustees must conduct a comprehensive review PAPCHSS’ program and submit an action plan to the Department that addresses areas in need of improvement as outlined in the Summary of Review.

Condition 3: By August 1, 2019, PAPCHSS must demonstrate that it will provide physical education instruction as required by Massachusetts state law, G.L. c 71, § 3.

River Valley Charter School

Type of Charter (Commonwealth or Horace Mann)	Commonwealth	Location	Newburyport
Regional or Non-Regional	Regional	Districts in Region (if applicable)	Amesbury, Newburyport, Triton (Newbury and Salisbury), Pentucket (West Newbury)
Year Opened	1999	Year(s) Renewed (if applicable)	2004, 2009, 2014
Maximum Enrollment	288	Current Enrollment	288 (as of October 2018)
Chartered Grade Span	K-8	Current Grade Span	K-8
Students on Waitlist	168 (as of March 2018)	Current Age of School	20
Mission Statement			
The mission of River Valley Charter School is to provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. Students will reach their full potential as scholars and become self-reliant and productive members of society. They will be adept at critical thinking and creative problem solving and will be fully prepared to succeed in future schools, careers, and civic life.			

During its fourth charter term, River Valley Charter School (RVCS) has demonstrated progress in student academic achievement. In 2018, RVCS is classified as not requiring assistance or intervention; met 74 percent of its improvement targets; and is performing in the 74th percentile when compared to other “non-high schools” statewide.

Over the charter term, RVCS administered the legacy MCAS in 2015 and 2016 and Next-Generation MCAS assessments in 2017 and 2018 in grades 3-8, and the legacy MCAS for science and technology/engineering in grades 5 and 8. In 2018, 63 percent of RVCS students in grades 3-8 met or exceeded expectations on the ELA Next-Generation MCAS, above the state average of 51 percent. In mathematics, 50 percent of students met or exceeded expectations,

above the state average of 48 percent. In science and technology/engineering, 60 percent of grade 5 students earned proficient or advanced; 43 percent of grade 8 students earned proficient or advanced, above state averages of 47 and 35 percent, respectively.

As demonstrated in the attached Summary of Review, the school implements its mission and key design elements with fidelity, implements an approved Recruitment and Retention plan, is organizationally viable, and met a majority of the measures contained in its accountability plan. RVCS has disseminated its best practices to other public schools within its district and across the state.

During the charter term, however, the school’s rates of attrition have remained higher than comparison schools. Most of the attrition occurs between fifth and sixth grades, when students choose to attend the local district middle schools for grades 6-8.

Given all of the evidence, presented in more detail in the attached Summary of Review, I intend to renew the charter of RVCS.

Salem Academy Charter School

Type of Charter (Commonwealth or Horace Mann)	Commonwealth	Location	Salem
Regional or Non-Regional	Non-Regional	Districts in Region (if applicable)	N/A
Year Opened	2004	Year(s) Renewed (if applicable)	2009, 2014
Maximum Enrollment	480	Current Enrollment	491 ⁴ (as of October 2018)
Chartered Grade Span	6-12	Current Grade Span	6-12
Students on Waitlist	246 (as of March 2018)	Current Age of School	15
Mission Statement Salem Academy Charter School is a small 6th – 12th grade public school designed to educate the City of Salem’s diverse student population. Through a unique integration of college preparatory classes with service to the community, the school graduates informed, articulate and proactive individuals of strong character.			

During its third charter term, Salem Academy Charter School (SACS) has demonstrated progress in student academic achievement. In 2018, SACS is classified as not requiring assistance or

⁴The school is currently overenrolled by 11 students and as a result is out of compliance with the terms of its charter. Charter schools do not receive tuition for students enrolled above the school’s maximum enrollment.

intervention; met 57 percent of its improvement targets; and is performing in the 83rd percentile when compared to other middle/high schools statewide.

Over the charter term, SACS administered PARCC in 2015 and 2016 and Next-Generation MCAS assessments in 2017 and 2018 in grades 6-8, the legacy MCAS for science and technology/engineering in grade 8, and the legacy MCAS tests for grade 10. In 2018, 56 percent of SACS students in grades 6-8 met or exceeded expectations on the ELA Next-Generation MCAS, above the state average of 51 percent. In mathematics, 54 percent of students met or exceed expectations, above the state average of 48 percent. In science and technology/engineering, 51 percent of grade 8 students earned proficient or advanced, above the state average of 35 percent. In 2018, 96 percent of SACS grade 10 students earned proficient or advanced in ELA, 85 percent earned proficient or advanced in mathematics, and 87 percent earned proficient or advanced on the science and engineering/technology assessment. All grade 10 MCAS results were above state averages.

The school's 4-year graduation rate for the 2017 cohort was 92.3 percent, with 7.7 percent of the cohort still in school. The 5-year graduation rate was 93.6 percent for the 2016 cohort, with 4.3 percent of the cohort still in school. In 2017, the school's dropout rate was 5.3 percent, above the statewide average of 1.8 percent.

As demonstrated in the attached Summary of Review, the school implements its mission and key design elements with fidelity, implements an approved Recruitment and Retention plan, is organizationally viable, and met a majority of the measures contained in its accountability plan. SACS has disseminated its best practices to other public schools within its district and across the state.

Given all of the evidence, presented in more detail in the attached Summary of Review, I intend to renew the charter of SACS.

If you have any questions regarding my intended actions or require additional information, please contact Alison Bagg, Director (781-338-3218); Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner (781-338-3222); or me.

Attachments: Summaries of Review for Argosy Collegiate Charter School, Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School, Hill View Montessori Charter Public School, Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School, Springfield, River Valley Charter School, and Salem Academy Charter School.
Responses of Charter Schools to Summaries of Review, if applicable.