



# Report to the Legislature: Implementation and Fiscal Impact of Innovation Schools

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Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2010, Section 8 authorizes the creation of innovation schools. The statute requires an annual report to the legislature on the implementation and fiscal impact of innovation schools  
February 2026

This document was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Pedro Martinez, Commissioner

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February 2026

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit a 2025 report to the Legislature: Implementation and Fiscal Impact of Innovation Schools pursuant to Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2010, Section 8. The innovation school initiative is a component of An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap, which allows in-district schools to operate with increased autonomy and flexibility and create custom-made solutions to meet the needs of their students. Through a collaborative, local approval process, schools may use any or all of the autonomies and flexibilities in the following areas: curriculum, budget, school schedule, staffing, school district policies, and professional development. As reported in the combined 2023 and 2024 legislative report, the grant funding for innovation schools was removed from the state budget in fiscal year (FY) 2020. Accordingly, there is no direct impact on state funds related to innovation schools.

The number of innovation schools and academies in operation continues to decline. Three innovation schools closed or were not reauthorized and ceased to operate with innovation school status at the conclusion of the 2024-2025 school year (FY2025). As of the 2024-2025 school year, twenty-one innovation schools and academies operated in ten school districts across the Commonwealth.

Within this report, you will find an overview of the innovation school model, technical assistance support provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and a list of innovation schools and academies that operated with innovation school status throughout the Commonwealth during the 2025-2026 school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pedro Martinez".

Pedro Martinez  
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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# Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) respectfully submits this report to the Legislature: Implementation and Fiscal Impact of Innovation Schools pursuant to Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2010, Section 8, which established M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 92(p), which states, in part:

*(p) Annually, the commissioner shall report to the joint committee on education, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the speaker of the house of representatives and the senate president on the implementation and fiscal impact of this section.*

This report includes an overview of the innovation school model, a description of the authorization and reauthorization process, and a current list of innovation schools and academies throughout the Commonwealth.

# Overview of the Innovation School Model

The innovation schools initiative, a signature component of An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap that was signed into law in January 2010, provides educators and other stakeholders across the state with the opportunity to create new in-district and autonomous schools that can implement creative and inventive strategies, increase student achievement, and reduce achievement gaps. These unique schools operate with increased autonomy and flexibility in six key areas: curriculum, budget, school schedule and calendar, staffing (including waivers from or exemptions to collective bargaining agreements), professional development, and school district policies.

Innovation schools can be established by teachers, school and district administrators, superintendents, union leaders, school committees, parents, parent-teacher organizations, colleges and universities, non-profit community-based organizations, non-profit businesses or corporations, non-profit charter school operators, non-profit education management organizations, educational collaboratives, consortia of these groups, or other non-profit groups authorized by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

## Operation of Innovation Schools

Innovation schools operate according to an innovation plan that describes the areas of autonomy and flexibility and specific strategies that will be implemented in the school. At least one of the six areas of autonomy and flexibility must be addressed in the plan, and the applicant can determine which additional areas will be utilized in the short and long term. An innovation plan must include detailed information about the following:

- Specific instructional, curricular, and assessment strategies that will be implemented to improve student achievement and school performance;
- Allocation of fiscal and other resources;
- School schedule and calendar;
- Specific recruitment, employment, evaluation, and compensation strategies for staff members and, if applicable, a description of proposed waivers from or modifications to collective bargaining agreements;
- Professional development opportunities for all administrators, teachers, and staff members; and
- If applicable, proposed waivers from district policies.

The innovation plan must also include annual measurable goals that assess factors such as student achievement and school performance. In exchange for the authority to operate the school with increased autonomy, innovation school operators are held responsible for advancing student learning and meeting these annual benchmarks. Innovation schools receive the same per-pupil allocation as other schools in the district, and their operators can also secure grants or other types of supplemental funding to implement the innovation plan.

Eligible applicants can create an innovation zone that may include a set of schools within a district or geographic region, schools that will operate in accordance with particular instructional or curricular themes, or schools that are defined by other factors as determined by the applicants.

In addition, multiple districts can work together to establish an innovation school that would serve students from different communities.

## Authorization Process

Innovation schools and academies are established in accordance with a local authorization process.

1. An eligible applicant submits an initial prospectus to the district superintendent. Within 30 days of receiving the prospectus, the superintendent must convene a screening committee that includes the superintendent or a designee, a school committee member or a designee, and a representative from the local teachers' union. A two-thirds approval from the screening committee is required for the applicant to move forward.
2. An innovation plan committee that includes up to 11 school, district, and community representatives develops the innovation plan.
3. Upon completion of the innovation plan, specific steps are required:
  - A conversion school requires a two-thirds majority vote of educators in the school.
  - A new school requires negotiations among the applicant, teachers' union, and superintendent if the innovation plan includes proposed waivers from or modifications to the collective bargaining agreement.
4. The innovation plan is submitted to the school committee, which must hold at least one public hearing. A majority vote of the full school committee is required for approval.
5. Upon approval, the innovation school is authorized for a period of up to five years and can be reauthorized by the school committee at the end of each term. The superintendent will work with the school committee to evaluate the school in accordance with the annual measurable goals included in the innovation plan. In addition, the superintendent can work with the operator of the innovation school and the school committee to revise the plan as necessary. Any revisions that propose changes to the collective bargaining agreement require a two-thirds vote of approval from the teachers in the innovation school.

# Reauthorization Process

Innovation schools and academies are renewed through a local reauthorization process.

1. School leadership convenes a selection of school stakeholders. School stakeholders include, but are not limited to, administrators, teachers, other school staff, parents, and external partners, as applicable. School stakeholders discuss whether the innovation plan requires revisions and solicit recommendations as to what the revisions should be.
2. School leadership and the superintendent consider recommendations made by the school stakeholders and jointly update the innovation plan, as necessary.
3. New waivers or exemptions from the local teachers' union contract must be approved by the teachers at the school. A two-thirds vote is required for approval.
4. Approval of the majority of the school committee shall be required to extend the authorization of an innovation school for no more than five additional years. If approval is not obtained, the school leadership and superintendent may revise the innovation plan and resubmit for a subsequent vote.

If the school committee does not extend the authorization of the school, the leadership of the school may seek authorization from the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board). The Board shall vote on the requested extension within 60 days of its receipt for approval of such extension.

## Appendix A: Innovation Schools List as of School Year 2024-2025

As of 2024-2025 school year, twenty-one innovation schools and academies operated in ten school districts across the Commonwealth. These include schools of varying grade levels (e.g., elementary, middle, and high school) and school types (e.g., new or conversion schools or academy models), and are established in urban, suburban, and rural communities. Many of these schools are organized around specific themes like the arts, STEM, dual language instruction, alternative education opportunities (dropout prevention and dual enrollment at community colleges), and wraparound services.

District	School Name	Year Opened (Fall)	Type (New or Conversion)	Grade Span
<b>Amesbury</b>	Amesbury Innovation High School	2015	New	9-12
<b>Barnstable</b>	Barnstable Community Innovation School	2019	Conversion	K-3
<b>Boston</b>	Eliot K-8 Innovation School	2012	Conversion	PK-8
<b>Boston</b>	Albert Holland School of Technology (formerly the Burke High School)	2017	Conversion	7-12
<b>Boston</b>	Winthrop Elementary School	2017	Conversion	PK-6
<b>Boston</b>	Margarita Muniz Academy	2013	New	7-12
<b>Boston</b>	Holmes Innovation School	2017	Conversion	PK-6
<b>Gloucester</b>	O'Maley Innovation School	2012	Conversion	6-8
<b>Quaboag</b>	Warren Elementary	2013	Conversion	K-6
<b>Quaboag</b>	West Brookfield Elementary	2013	Conversion	K-6
<b>Quaboag</b>	Quaboag Regional Middle Innovation School*	2012	Conversion	7-8
<b>Revere</b>	Paul Revere Innovation School	2012	Conversion	K-5
<b>Revere</b>	CityLab Innovation High School	2022	Conversion	9-12
<b>Salem</b>	Bentley Academy Innovation School	2020	Conversion	K-5
<b>Salem</b>	Carlton Innovation School	2013	Conversion	K-5
<b>Salem</b>	New Liberty Innovation School	2016	New	9-12
<b>Somerville</b>	Winter Hill Community Innovation School	2013	Conversion	PK-8
<b>Springfield</b>	The Springfield Renaissance School, an Expeditionary Learning School	2012	Conversion	6-12
<b>Worcester</b>	Goddard Scholars Academy at Sullivan Middle School	2012	Conversion	6-8
<b>Worcester</b>	University Park Campus School	2012	Conversion	7-12
<b>Worcester</b>	Worcester Technical High School	2013	Conversion	9-12

\*Please note that the 2023 & 2024 combined version of this legislative report failed to identify Quaboag Regional Middle Innovation School as operating with innovation school status.