



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

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
March 2025

This document was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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March 2025

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit a combined 2023 and 2024 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 2022 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.

Revere Public Schools authorized the conversion of one of its high schools to an innovation school starting in the 2022-2023 school year (FY2023). Two innovation schools closed or were not reauthorized and ceased to operate with innovation school status at the conclusion of the 2022-2023 school year (FY2023). An additional four innovation schools closed or were not reauthorized and ceased to operate with innovation school status at the conclusion of the 2023-2024 school year (FY2024). Twenty-five innovation schools and academies continue to operate in sixteen 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, and a current list of innovation schools and academies throughout the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell Johnston".

Russell D. Johnston
Acting 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 any other school 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; two-thirds approval from the screening committee is required for the applicant to move forward.
2. An innovation plan committee that includes up to eleven 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. See the reauthorization process below. 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 solicits 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 teacher's 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 5 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 2023-2024

Twenty-five innovation schools and academies continue to operate in sixteen 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 conversions 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/ Conversion)	Grade Span
Amesbury	Amesbury Innovation High School	2015	New	9-12
Barnstable	Barnstable Community Innovation School	2019	Conversion	K-3
Boston	Eliot K-8 Innovation School	2012	Conversion	PK-8
Boston	Jeremiah E. Burke High School	2017	Conversion	9-12
Boston	Winthrop Elementary School	2017	Conversion	PK-6
Boston	Margarita Muniz Academy	2013	New	9-12
Boston	Holmes Innovation School	2017	Conversion	PK-6
Fall River	Edmond P. Talbot Innovation School	2012	Conversion	6-8
Gloucester	O'Maley Innovation School	2012	Conversion	6-8
Greenfield	Discovery School at Four Corners	2012	New	K-4
New Bedford	Renaissance Community Innovation School	2013	Conversion	PK-5
Quaboag	Quaboag Regional Middle Innovation School	2012	Conversion	7-8
Quaboag	Warren Elementary	2013	Conversion	K-6
Quaboag	West Brookfield Elementary	2013	Conversion	K-6
Revere	Paul Revere Innovation School	2012	Conversion	K-5
Revere	CityLab Innovation High School	2022	Conversion	9-12
Salem	Bentley Academy Innovation School	2020	Conversion	K-5
Salem	Carlton Innovation School	2013	Conversion	K-5
Salem	New Liberty Innovation School	2016	New	9-12
Somerville	Winter Hill Community Innovation School	2013	Conversion	PK-8
Springfield	The Springfield Renaissance School, an Expeditionary Learning School	2012	Conversion	6-12
Worcester	Claremont Academy	2014	Conversion	7-12
Worcester	Goddard Scholars Academy at Sullivan Middle School	2012	Conversion	6-8
Worcester	University Park Campus School	2012	Conversion	7-12
Worcester	Worcester Technical High School	2013	Conversion	9-12