

## Vision and Framework for Worcester Public Schools Innovation Schools

The development of Innovation Schools is one of the ways in which Worcester Public Schools intends to become *the school district of choice*. Innovation Schools provide a unique opportunity for creative and focused effort—for the formation of new and powerful communities of learning—in support of Worcester students.

Preference will be given to Innovation School models which show strong promise to develop a culture of learning built on three pillars:

- Every student feels valued, important and inspired;
- Every student will thrive as a reader, writer, thinker, person and member of the community; and
- Every student will develop academically on the path to college and career readiness and civic responsibility.

To this end, we expect that Innovation School models will combine mission/vision, leadership, learning culture, practice and community into a tightly woven student-centered whole.

- The mission/vision will describe a powerful model of learning designed to ensure each student's academic and personal development.
- The leadership model will provide for decision-making based on what will work best for students.
- The learning culture (beliefs, relationships, teaching and learning norms) will value students as thinkers and learners and teachers as continuous, collegial learners and decision-makers.
- The curriculum and teaching practice will be guided by shared ideas about learning that engages all students, a commitment to personalize support for every student, student ownership, and achievement of the goals of the common core standards.
- The Innovation School will form a unified community that includes and values students, teachers, parents and partners working together to achieve its mission.

The local partnership committee has used the “essential conditions for effective schools,” as identified by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, as a basis for organizing specific guidelines to fulfill this vision for Innovation Schools in Worcester, as follows:

## Conditions for School Effectiveness

### *Mission/Vision*

- The mission demonstrates a strong belief in the capability of all students and a commitment to ensure that all develop academically and personally
- The vision describes a model of powerful learning in which all students will thrive

### *Leadership*

(i) **Effective district systems for school support and intervention:** The district has systems and processes for anticipating and addressing school staffing, instructional, and operational needs in timely, efficient, and effective ways, especially for its lowest performing schools.

Unless articulated in the Innovation School Proposal and Plan, established district systems, policies, and practices will be used to anticipate and address school human resource, instructional, and operation needs in timely, efficient, and effective ways for Innovation Schools in Worcester. Other agreements can be reached through negotiation with and approval by the Worcester School Committee.

Human Resource systems address human capital issues such as attracting, hiring / placement, developing, retaining, evaluating staff.

Instructional systems address issues related to teaching and learning such as school management and instructional leadership, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development materials and support.

Operational systems address issues related to budgeting, transportation, nutrition, grants management, and facilities.

The district office of Research and Accountability provides supports regarding data collection, application, and action planning related to continuous improvement toward outstanding results for all students.

(ii) **Effective school leadership:** The district and school take action to attract, develop, and retain an effective school leadership team that obtains staff commitment to improving student learning and implements a clearly defined mission and set of goals.

Innovation Schools will use the Worcester Public Schools Leadership Expectations to define expectations for school leaders.

## Worcester Public Schools Leadership Expectations

### 1. Deepen the Implementation of the school-wide Instructional Focus

There is obvious evidence that the school is “living” a solid school-wide Instructional focus through its words, actions and deeds.

### 2. Develop professional collaboration Teams to Improve Teaching and Learning

Using protocols and strategies, teacher teams meet regularly to talk about student work, teacher assignments, effective teaching practices and data that demonstrate progress towards eliminating the achievement gap. The leadership participates in these meetings. These meetings drive improvements in teaching and learning. The Instructional Leadership Team meets regularly and is providing strong leadership around the school-wide instructional focus.

### 3. Learn and Use Effective Research-based Teaching Practices

A narrow list of (3-5) best practices has been identified. Progress is being made at school-wide implementation of the best teaching practices in each and every classroom for each and every student each and every day.

### 4. Implement A targeted Professional Development Plan That Builds Expertise in Selected Best Practices

The School’s Professional Development supports the instructional focus by building teacher expertise and promoting high expectations for all students. As expertise is developed, teachers are held increasingly accountable for implementation of strategies.

### 5. Realign Resources (People, Time, Energy, and Money) to Support the Instructional Focus

The school can demonstrate clear evidence that it is making decisions that its resources are aligned with the school-wide instructional focus.

### 6. Engage families and the Community in Supporting the Instructional Focus

The school can demonstrate clear evidence that it is involving families and the community with the school-wide instructional focus and district and school-wide expectations.

### 7. Deepen the Internal Accountability System

The school has met at least two school-wide SMARTe goals (S – Specific, M – Measurable, A – Attainable, R – Relevant, T – Timely, and e – for everyone). One is around a state-wide measure and one is around a local, internal measure of student performance. Results are easily available and publicly posted. The data is part of an internal accountability system that is used by the Instructional Leadership team

### 8. Leadership Focuses on Instruction

The leadership is working toward the goal of spending 50% of the instructional day in classrooms – observing, demonstrating, modeling and supporting effective teaching practices.

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The Innovation School Application must address the following:

1. Describe how the school's mission and vision will be shared and aligned with leadership expectations.
2. Define stakeholders.
3. How will stakeholders be involved in decision-making in the areas of autonomy?

(vi) **Principal's staffing authority:** The principal has the authority to make staffing decisions based on the School Improvement Plan and student needs, subject to district personnel policies, budgetary restrictions, and the approval of the superintendent.

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The Innovation School applicant will address the following:

1. Define the school's staffing plan in terms of the school's mission and vision.
2. Define how the school's leadership will make staffing decisions that are aligned to student needs.

(xi) **Strategic use of resources and adequate budget authority:** The principal makes effective and strategic use of district and school resources and has sufficient budget authority to do so.

The Innovation School Plan must be cost neutral to the school district.

The Innovation School Plan includes an explanation of the decision-making process for use of district and school resources and indicates who has the authority to do so.

### ***Learning Culture and Practice***

(iii) **Aligned curriculum:** The school's taught curricula are aligned to state curriculum frameworks and the MCAS performance level descriptions, and are also aligned vertically between grades and horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and across sections of the same course.

The Innovation School's curricula are aligned to state curriculum frameworks, including the Common Core Standards, and the MCAS performance level descriptions, and are also aligned vertically between grades and horizontally across classrooms at the same grade level and across sections of the same course. The Innovation School Plan must explain how the curriculum will address the high priority targets and meet the intended outcomes of Worcester Public Schools.

There are currently four high priority targets for all schools in Worcester: 1) high levels of achievement for English Language Learners, 2) high levels of achievement for students with disabilities, 3) high levels of reading performance for students in grade 3 / 4, and 4) attainment of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.

(iv) **Effective instruction:** Instructional practices are based on evidence from a body of high quality research and on high expectations for all students and include use of appropriate research-based reading and mathematics programs; the school staff has a common understanding of high-quality evidence-based instruction and a system for monitoring instructional practice.

The Innovation School's instructional practices must be based on evidence from a body of high-quality research and on high expectations for all students. Research-based reading, writing, and mathematics supports align to the needs of students, are

incorporated in every discipline, and engage students as active learners. Effective instructional practices develop students as thinkers who question thoughtfully and find and use evidence to support their ideas to solve relevant problems.

Unless otherwise articulated in the Innovation School Proposal and Plan, the established district's Framework for High Quality Teaching and Learning will be implemented. High quality teaching and learning is content rich, student-centered, measurable, and exists in a culture of high expectations for all students across all grades. Teachers must be sensitive to students' needs, interests, strengths, abilities, modes of contribution, social / cultural backgrounds, and address three essential elements, 1) organization of the classroom, 2) instructional design and delivery, and 3) student ownership of learning.

(v) **Student assessment:** The school uses a balanced system of formative and benchmark assessments.

The Innovation School Plan's internal accountability system must explain the types of assessments, the rationale for assessments, and how and according to what timeline the results will be analyzed, communicated, used to drive instruction and used to improve student outcomes.

(vii) **Professional development and structures for collaboration:** Professional development for school staff includes both individually pursued activities and school-based, job-embedded approaches, such as instructional coaching. It also includes content-oriented learning. The school has structures for regular, frequent collaboration to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. Professional development and structures for collaboration are evaluated for their effect on raising student achievement.

The Innovation School Plan will articulate a culture of life-long learning for students and adults in the school community. The Innovation School Plan will explain how student data are used to develop a targeted professional development plan based on the school mission and vision.

The Innovation School Plan must articulate a structure that will support professional development and collaboration.

The Innovation School Plan must contain a system of evaluation for professional development that is connected to student progress and outcomes.

(ix) **Tiered instruction and adequate learning time:** The school schedule is designed to provide adequate learning time for all students in core subjects. For students not yet on track to proficiency in English language arts or mathematics, the school provides additional time and support for individualized instruction through tiered instruction, a data-driven approach to prevention, early detection, and support for students who experience learning or behavioral challenges, including but not limited to students with disabilities and English language learners.

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The Innovation School Plan must demonstrate systematic instruction and continuous improvement through Planning, Instructing, Assessing, and Adjusting to meet the needs of every student.

Tier 1 is supported by practices aligned to the growth of all students toward established standards.

Tier 2 is supported by practices aligned to moving every student to the next step in his / her learning toward established standards.

Tier 3 is supported by practices aligned to interventions tailored to individual students whose needs are beyond the scope of Tier 1 and Tier 2, including students who are identified as gifted / talented.

### ***Community***

(ix) **Students' social, emotional, and health needs:** The school creates a safe school environment and makes effective use of a system for addressing the social, emotional, and health needs of its students that reflects the behavioral health and public schools framework.

The Innovation School Plan must explain the way(s) a safe school environment will be created and makes effective use of a system(s) that includes family and community supports for addressing the social, emotional, and health needs of its students.

(x) **Family-school engagement:** The school develops strong working relationships with families and appropriate community partners and providers in order to support students' academic progress and social and emotional well-being.

The Innovation School Plan must explain how it will foster high levels of family and community communication, engagement, commitment, and partnership.

Further, the plan must explain how community engagement and partnership are based upon the needs of the students and mission and vision of the school and draws upon the strengths and resources of the community.