

## **Advanced Academy at Doherty Memorial High School A Pilot Innovation Academy for the Worcester Public Schools**

Timeline Update: January/March 2015

- *WPS staff will work with the Doherty administration on a site survey to identify location for proposed "Pilot Innovation Academy", along with identifying any minor facility improvements that may be needed.*
- *Explore state regulations for establishing new innovation schools/academies for relevance to "Pilot Innovation Academy".*

### **Site Survey**

The Administration has worked with the Doherty Memorial High School administration to examine the allocation of space at the school for the location of the proposed Advanced Academy at Doherty Memorial High School. Doherty High was selected due to its central location in the city for a district-wide program. In summary, both the Administration and school administration concluded that the existing school cannot accommodate the proposed school at full operation and an alternative, temporary location should be considered until appropriate space can be identified as part of any long term renovation or replacement of the school through the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

The current enrollment of Doherty High School is 1,428 and is the largest school in the district as of October 1, 2014. Doherty's enrollment has increased 7.6% since 2010, from 1,327 to the current enrollment. Although Doherty had an enrollment high of 1,592 in 2001, the Academy at full enrollment may exceed the 2001 level.

The school has approximately 64 classroom spaces that can be used during any period of the seven period school day. These 64 classrooms include traditional classroom configurations, music rooms, art rooms, computer labs, and Chapter 74 spaces.

For the first two years of operation, it is expected that the Academy will have an enrollment of 125 students; requiring five dedicated classrooms spaces for each period of the school day. By the fourth year, the Academy will reach an enrollment of 250 students requiring ten dedicated classroom spaces for each period of the school day.

Based on current enrollment, scheduling and course offerings, Doherty High does not have five classroom spaces available for all seven periods of the school day and does not have ten classrooms spaces available at all during the school day. Optimally, the Academy would mostly operate in contiguous classrooms within the school to allow for collaboration, ease of transition, and creation of an academy setting within the larger school enrollment. Based on current school configuration, it would be nearly impossible to achieve this configuration within the existing building without significant disruption of existing classrooms.

In addition, the current school has one fully modern science lab classroom that was updated as part of the 2011 renovation of certain spaces at the school. The science lab is currently fully utilized with existing scheduling of the school. The Academy will require, as fully operational, science lab space of its own.

There isn't adequate space within the school to accommodate the current science lab needs in addition to any new requirements for the Academy.

Based upon space needs of the proposed Academy, the Administration recommends consideration of alternative short or long term space options. This alternative space should be able to accommodate a student enrollment of up to 250 students and be equipped with necessary science laboratory space as well as other educational spaces. An alternative site and construction of science laboratory space will likely increase the projected operating costs of the Academy. These costs will be known once the alternative space can be identified.

### **Process for establishing and approving an Innovation School**

The process for establishing and approving an Innovation School is described in the Innovation Schools statute, G.L. c. 71, s. 92.

- Step 1: An eligible applicant develops and submits an initial prospectus to the Superintendent of the district in which the proposed school would be situated.
  - Eligible applicants are parents, teachers, parent-teacher organizations, principals, superintendents, school committees, teacher unions, colleges and universities, non-profit community-based organizations, non-profit business or corporate entities, non-profit charter school operators, non-profit education management organizations, educational collaboratives, consortia of these groups, and other entities authorized by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- Step 2: The screening committee -- convened by the Superintendent within 30 days of receiving the prospectus, and consisting of the superintendent or his/her designee, a school committee member or a designee selected by the school committee, and a representative of the local teacher's union -- reviews and votes on the initial prospectus; two-thirds approval is required.
- Step 3: An innovation plan committee must be established within 30 days of approval of the prospectus, and this committee develops and internally approves the innovation plan; a majority vote is required.
  - While the size and composition of the innovation plan committee can be determined by the applicant, it must not include more than 11 individuals, and must include the following: the applicant; the superintendent or designee; a school committee member or designee; a parent who has 1 or more children enrolled in the school (or in the case of a new school, in the district); a principal employed by the district; and 2 teachers employed by the district.
  - The parent will be selected by the applicant from among nominees submitted by parent-teacher organizations in the district (if these organizations exist), or among volunteers in the area or community that the proposed school will serve.



- The principal and 1 teacher will be selected by the applicant from volunteers in the district, and the other teacher will be selected among nominees submitted by the local teacher's union.

If an innovation plan includes provisions that conflict with state laws or regulations governing other public schools, approval by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education is required.

- Step 4: For new schools, upon approval of the innovation plan by the innovation plan committee, the applicant, local teacher's union, and superintendent must negotiate proposed waivers or modifications to the collective bargaining agreement (if applicable); if agreement is not reached within 40 days, the statute spells out an arbitration process.
  - Upon completion of the negotiation or arbitration, as applicable, the innovation plan is submitted to the school committee.
- Step 5: The school committee must hold at least one public hearing on the innovation plan, and then must, within 60 days of receiving the plan, conduct its vote on whether or not to approve the plan; a simple majority is required for approval.
- Step 6: If approved by the school committee, the Innovation School is authorized for up to five years. The Superintendent must notify the Commissioner within 30 days of school committee authorization of an Innovation School. The Superintendent shall include a copy of the approved innovation plan in the notification to the Commissioner.

The Innovation School is evaluated annually by the superintendent. At the end of the authorization period, the Innovation School can request that the school committee extend the authorization of the school for an additional period of not more than 5 years; before doing so, the Innovation School leadership must convene a group of stakeholders to discuss potential revisions to the innovation plan. If any changes are made to the plan that affects the collective bargaining agreement, the plan must be approved by two-thirds of the teachers in the school.