MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
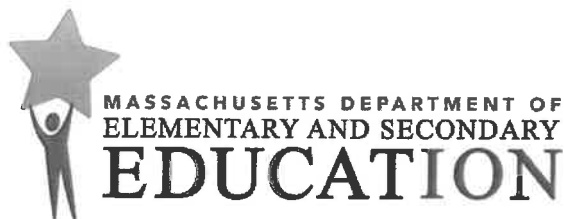ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Innovation Schools Annual Evaluation

The Academy of Science, Technology and Health:
Worcester East Middle School

For School Year 2018-2019

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ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION

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Introduction

The innovation schools initiative is a signature component of *An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap,* signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick back in January 2010. This initiative provides educators and other stakeholders across the state an opportunity to create new in-district and autonomous schools that can implement creative and inventive strategies, increase student achievement, and reduce achievement gaps while keeping school funding within districts.

These unique schools operate with increased autonomy and flexibility in six key areas with the goal of establishing the school conditions that lead to improved teaching and learning. The six key areas are as follows:

1. Curriculum;
2. Budget;
3. School schedule and calendar;
4. Staffing (including waivers from or exemptions to collective bargaining agreements);
5. Professional development; and
6. School district policies

Innovation schools can operate as new schools, conversion schools, or academies (school-within-a-school) models. Innovation schools may be established by: (i) parents; (ii) teachers; (iii) parent-teacher organizations; (iv) principals; (v) superintendents; (vi) school committees; (vii) teacher unions; (viii) colleges and universities; (ix) non-profit community-based organizations; (x) non-profit business or corporate entities; (xi) non-profit charter school operators; (xii) non-profit management organizations; (xiii) educational collaboratives; (xiv) consortia of these groups; or (xv) non-profit entities authorized by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The innovation schools statute M.G.L., c.71, s.92, requires superintendents in districts with innovation schools and/or innovation academies to evaluate these schools at least annually. The purpose of the evaluation is to both determine whether the school or academy has met the annual goals articulated in its approved Innovation Plan and to assess the implementation of the Innovation Plan. The Superintendent shall provide the evaluation to the school committee and to the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education.

In addition to a review of data relevant to the Measurable Annual Goals (MAGs), annual evaluations may also include, but are not limited to: information collected through site visits to the school or academy; feedback collected from focus groups of staff, students and families as well as community partners; and review of student work and exhibitions.

Annual Evaluation Submission Instructions

Evaluations for the 2018-2019 school year should be submitted by August 1, 2019. Questions and completed evaluations should be submitted to Brenton Stewart at bstewart@doe.mass.edu. Please note in the subject line of the email message "Innovation School Annual Evaluation 2018-2019_*[insert School name_District name]*."

Innovation School/Academy Information

School/Academy Name: Click or tap here to enter text.	
School Type (New/Conversion/Academy): Academy	**District Name:** Worcester Public Schools
Year Innovation Status Granted: 2012	**School Year Implementation Commenced:** 2012
Grades Served: 7-8	**Total Enrollment:** 198

Mission: The Academy of Science, Technology, and Health will prepare students who seek a rigorous academic program for college and career success grounded in the sciences. Twenty-first century skills will be embedded in the context of core subjects and interdisciplinary themes that will challenge students. Applied learning opportunities will encourage engagement in real-world problems and solutions. Inquiry and problem-based approaches to instruction will enable students to recognize interests and opportunities beyond the walls of the classroom.

Vision: The Academy of Science, Technology, and Health will integrate independent research, experimental methodology, mathematic analysis, and engineering design projects into the core of the middle school curriculum. By providing students with the tools to develop and apply content knowledge and literacy skills to exhibition of their work, students will enter high school with the academic foundation and expressive skills necessary for higher level coursework, advanced placement readiness, and preparation for college.

Educational Model: The Academy frames student learning around the exploration of relevant projects and problems. It provides students with the foundations for advanced literacy through application and practice in the core skills of reading, writing, and communicating complex ideas and concepts to a specific audience. The integration of rigorous academics, relevant content, inquiry-based science instruction, and comprehensive supports for developing and strengthening students' literacy skills creates an environment within which students can master the multi-dimensional abilities required of them for success in college and careers. The goal of uniting student learning of specific skills, content knowledge, expertise, and literacies under a common structure of inquiry, problem solving, and expression of ideas guide the school's focus on 21st century student outcomes.

Part A: Description of Autonomies and Flexibilities Implementation

Please see below the list and descriptions of possible autonomies and flexibilities that may be approved in an innovation plan.

In order to identify the autonomies and flexibilities being implemented by your school or academy, only provide a description to the autonomies and flexibilities approved in your school's or academy's innovation plan. Please delete the autonomy and flexibility sections that do not apply to your school's or academy's approved innovation plan.

Responses should describe:
- any successes or challenges experienced during implementation;
- how the school or academy identifies and responds to any observed disparities (including, but not limited to academic performance, access to curriculum and resources, and non-academic opportunities) by race/ethnicity categories and selected subgroups for both students *and* teachers, as applicable. Responses may be further described or clarified in the next bullet; and
- how implementation of the specific autonomy or flexibility helps reduce any opportunity gaps and/or achievement gaps.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (if applicable)

Innovation schools and academies have the ability to identify and/or develop curriculum and instruction models and assessment practices that support its mission, vision, and educational model.

Describe the innovation school or academy's implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment flexibilities during the 2018-2019 school year.

The innovation school curriculum emphasizes the link between knowledge and critical thinking using authentic literacy-reading, writing, speaking and listening- as a vehicle to interpret text, support arguments with evidence, draw conclusions, and solve complex problems.

Budget (if applicable)

The innovation schools model is intended to be fiscally-neutral. Innovation schools and academies may use autonomy and flexibility in this area to obtain increased flexibility over funds allocated by the district. Innovation schools may request a lump sum per pupil budget to expend funds in a manner that supports its mission, vision, and educational model.

Describe the innovation school or academy's implementation of budgetary flexibilities during the 2018-2019 school year.

NA

School Schedule and Calendar (if applicable)

Innovation schools and academies have the ability to design unique school schedules and calendars that support its mission, vision, and educational model. Re-designed school schedules and calendars may be designed to maximize and extend time on learning for students and provide and/or increase common planning time for teachers.

Describe the innovation school's or academy's implementation of school schedule and calendar flexibilities during the 2018-2019 school year.

The scheduling autonomy includes an applied learning lab block for structured extensions and enrichments to core curricula as well as providing ongoing academic support for students as they apply newly acquired skills and knowledge to their work. This block is essential to support the school's focus on building students' ability to synthesize learning through overt connections between content strands as well as across academic disciplines.

Second, the Academy of Science, Technology, and Health implements the Origins Developmental Designs model of comprehensive practices which integrate social and academic learning. Scheduling autonomy allows for advisory meetings using the Developmental Design approach, which supports student development.
Third, the Innovation School calendar has an additional two evening sessions for formal presentation of student work. Each semester parents, partners, and the community are invited to participate in student presentation, meet with teachers, tour our facilities, and view student work.

Staffing *(if applicable)*

Innovation schools and academies have the ability to develop staffing policies and procedures that support its mission, vision, and educational model through the implementation of waivers or exemptions from district policies, contracts, and collective bargaining agreements.

Describe the innovation school or academy's implementation of staffing flexibilities during the 2018-2019 school year.

The Academy has the autonomy to recruit and retain highly effective teachers who will meet the unique professional expectations of the Innovation School. This autonomy has been helpful in recruiting skilled and knowledgeable teachers who aligned their beliefs with the mission and vision of the Academy and committed to the unique professional expectations of the Innovation School.

Professional Development *(if applicable)*

Innovation schools and academies have the ability to develop and implement professional development activities that support its mission, vision, and educational model.

Describe the innovation school or academy's implementation of professional development flexibilities during the 2018-2019 school year.

The Academy teachers have the autonomy to determine their professional development needs based on the specific aspects of their program including inquiry–based learning, reading, writing and speaking for presentations and curriculum development of the science, health and technology content area.

District Policies and Procedures (if applicable)

Innovation schools and academies have the ability to develop policies and procedures that support its mission, vision, and educational model.

Describe the innovation school or academy's implementation of district policies and procedures flexibilities during the 2018-2019 school year.

NA

Part B: Measurable Annual Goals

Innovation plans are required to include Measurable Annual Goals (MAGs). The annual innovation school evaluation must address progress towards meeting these established goals.

As required by statute, each innovation school's or academy's MAGs are based on student outcomes and include, but are not limited to the following:

- student attendance;
- student safety and discipline;
- student promotion, graduation rates and dropout rates;
- student achievement on the MCAS; and
- reduction of proficiency gaps with progress in areas of academic underperformance (not limited to MCAS), and including as appropriate a focus on the following student subgroups:
  - o Race/ethnicity
  - o Students identified as economically disadvantaged
  - o English Learners (ELs)
  - o Students with disabilities

Innovation plans may also include MAGs that are **specific to each** school or academy's unique mission and vision. Please be sure to add tables for each additional MAG identified and include a description and response, as needed.

When identifying and discussion trends for the following student outcomes, be sure to include data/information for the ***aggregate rate for all students***, as well as data/information for ***student subgroup rates*** (including, but not limited to, race/ethnicity categories, students identified as economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, English Learners, and students whose first language is not English).

You must provide a response to all the MAGs found in the tables below and be sure to include any additional MAGs identified in your approved innovation plan. Responses should:
1. describe the progress made toward meeting these goals during the 2018-2019 school year;
2. describe the process used to evaluate the innovation school's or academy's progress towards meetings its MAGs. Include in the description if site visits, focus groups, or review of student work was collected for use in the evaluation process. Additionally, please describe the data monitoring system and processes being implemented at your innovation school or academy; and
3. describe how the MAGs have been used to inform key organizational decision making processes in areas such as: curriculum and instruction, student achievement, school culture, professional development, staffing, fiscal policies, and operations.

Student attendance rates (including, but not limited to overall attendance rate and chronic absenteeism)

The academy Challengers team (102 students) had 95.1% attendance with a chronically absent rate of 13.7%. The Voyagers team (96 students) had 96.1% attendance with a chronically absent rate of 8.3% in 2018-2019. This was similar to the 2017-2018 overall academy attendance of 95.1% and chronically absent rate of 10.3%.

Student safety and discipline rates (In-school suspensions and Out-of-school suspensions. Including, but not limited to 'All offenses' and 'Non-drug, non-violent, and non-criminal-related offenses')

The Discipline rate in the academy was zero in 2018-2019. This was in contrast to the previous year when there were 49 infractions, 30 out of school and 19 in school. Last year, the Academy discipline was as high or higher than the main school.

Student promotion and retention rates

This data was unavailable for the current year. Credit buy back was in process at the time of this report.

Student graduation rates, if applicable (4-year annual graduation rate, 4-year cohort graduation rate, 5-year annual graduation rate, and 5-year cohort graduation rate)

NA

Student dropout rates, if applicable

NA

Student Next-Generation MCAS achievement and legacy MCAS achievement (as applicable, Next-Generation ELA proficiency and growth, Next-Generation Math proficiency and growth, Legacy ELA proficiency and growth, Legacy Math proficiency and growth, and SCI proficiency)

The 2018 state accountability results indicated Worcester East Middle ranked in the 5th percentile for the state. Principal Kareem Tatum transitioned July 1, 2019 as the new principal and the school submitted a Turnaround Plan as required by the state. Briefly:

Turnaround Practice #1: Leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration

Strategy 1: Use common planning time to impact student learning

Strategy 2: Promote positive professional culture among staff.

Turnaround Practice #2: Intentional practices for improving instruction

Strategy 1: Define expectations for rigorous and consistent standards-based instructional practices that include well-planned differentiation for our targeted sub-groups (EL and IEP students).

Strategy 2: Plan system of frequent observations leading to constructive, teacher-specific feedback, supports, and professional development.

Strategy 3: Use data to adapt and improve instructional strategies

Turnaround Practice #3: Student-specific supports and instruction to all students

Strategy 1: Share common assessment data.

Strategy 2: Evaluate options for more precise assessment options for specific ELA and Math skills.

Strategy 3: Adopt curriculum tailored to the needs of our students.

Turnaround Practice #4: School Culture and Climate

Strategy 1: Implement practices to improve student behavior and response to discipline.

Strategy 2: Implement reciprocal teacher observation practices to create an open, collegial culture of sharing strategies, thereby improving practice.

Strategy 3: Implement active parent contact and recruitment strategies to create a consistent home-school connection for all students.

WEMS's Anticipated Success and Progress Monitoring
Every goal can be monitored and measured by concrete evidence. The Principal and the ILT will be responsible for progress monitoring, in conjunction with grade-level teams. The following are examples of anticipated outcomes and key data used to assess progress.

- Using a strategic schedule and common meeting protocols, we will hold ourselves accountable for efficient use of professional collaboration time.

- Using formal Professional Learning Initiative (PLI) cycles, we will hold ourselves accountable for supporting teachers in the implementation of instructional practices.

- Using frequent and smart data collection, we will hold ourselves accountable for evaluating the effectiveness of instructional practices.

- Using feedback from peers as well as school leadership, we will support teachers in improving practice both with regard to relationships and academic rigor.

- Using a Student Investment Data Dashboard, we will hold ourselves accountable for our students' relationships with teachers and investment in the school.

Key benchmarks and a description of the school's progress monitoring process is provided in Section VI. The school's leadership and ILT will meet regularly to assess progress towards key benchmarks, including a focus on: (a) CPT/PLC minutes; (b) evaluating efficacy of instructional strategies through a district walk-through tool; (c) discipline data; and (d) Formal Assessment measures (e.g., MCAS, STAR, quarterly common assessments). Additionally, WEMS will continue to

be part of the district's Middle School Network, which includes other middle schools (principals, coaches, leaders) and meets monthly, throughout the school year. The Middle School Network is designed so that schools (and the network) set specific goals at the beginning of the school year and work collectively to implement strategies to accomplish goals, jointly measure progress towards goals, and use the network to share best practices. As such, the Middle School Network supplements school-level monitoring and ensures the use of standard data collection tools and measures across schools.

Reduction of proficiency gaps in areas of academic underperformance (not limited to MCAS) and non-academic disparities (such as access to AP/honors-level courses, art, civic engagement, and extra-curricular activities)

See outline of the Turnaround Plan above.

Part C: Innovation Plan Updates *(if applicable)*

Describe any revisions or updates made to the approved innovation plan during the 2018-2019 school year.

*Please note that substantive changes to the innovation plan, including any changes that would **require a new waiver or exemption** from the local teachers' union contract, require approval from the innovation plan committee, teachers in the school, and school committee.*

Provide a description of any revisions or updates made during the 2018-2019 SY. Be sure to include when implementation of these revisions or updates began or will take place.

The Academy of Science Technology and Health made a substantive change to the original plan for the 2018-2019 school year with the removal of grade six. The original plan included grade six, which was added in year three of the Academy's opening. In review of the years that grade six was added, the average number of grade six applicants fell between 90 and 95. The Academy expectation for each grade was 115.

In 2019-2020 the 7th grade program will be discontinued. There were approximately 50 applicants. This was not enough for a cohort.

The expectation is that the Innovation will end with the 8th grades promotion in June 2020.

In fall 2018, Worcester East Middle School's student performance ranked in the 5th percentile statewide and was designated by the state as a school requiring assistance through focus, targeted support. The school leadership team has developed a Turnaround plan for the state with District support that is led by a school based Turnaround Redesign Team. The school has begun this work. It is the intent of the Turnaround effort to: 1. increase student performance across the school and 2. to leverage the North quadrant partnership with the University of Massachusetts Medical School and other community partners in these efforts.

Part D: Renewal *(if applicable)*

Innovation schools or academies seeking renewal

Provide a brief status update. Descriptions should include the timeline for submitting a renewal application to the school committee for a vote. If the innovation school or academy recently completed the renewal process, please submit the new or revised innovation plan via email to ***bstewart@doe.mass.edu***.

The authorization and renewal of innovation schools and academies occurs at the local level. The renewal process as outlined by the innovation schools statute https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section92 identifies a four step renewal process outlined for you below.

Step 1: Convene Stakeholders
School leadership convenes the stakeholder group. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to, administrators, teachers, school staff, parents & external partners, as applicable. Stakeholders discuss whether the innovation plan requires revisions and solicits recommendations as to what the revisions should be.

These discussions should include the MAGs.

Step 2: Innovation Plan Revision Process
School leadership and the superintendent consider recommendations made by the stakeholder group and jointly update the innovation plan as necessary.

Step 3: Teacher Vote (if applicable)
New waivers or exemptions from the local teacher's union contract must be approved by the teachers at the school. Two-thirds vote required for approval.

This is the only time that teachers will have to vote.

Step 4: School Committee Vote
Approval of the majority of the school committee as fully constituted shall be required to extend the period of an innovation school for not more than 5 years. If approval is not obtained, the school leadership and superintendent may revise the innovation plan and resubmit for a subsequent vote.

> *Renewal status updates.*
> *Provide a timeline for when you will submit your renewal application to your school committee and when a school committee will be scheduled to occur. –OR–*
> *Provide the recently renewed innovation plan. If a description of any updates or revisions was not provided in Part C of this annual evaluation template, then they must be included here.*

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Innovation schools or academies not seeking renewal

Briefly describe why the school and district have decided not to seek renewal and when the school will cease to operate under innovation status.

The WPS will not seek renewal and will look to end the Academy in June 2020.