



# CONFERENCE EDUCATION REFORM: Innovations, Interventions, and Improvements to Close the Educational Achievement Gap in Massachusetts

*Senate and House leaders today agreed on landmark education reform legislation aimed at establishing new innovative in-district public schools, allowing greater intervention into underperforming schools and districts, and improving out-dated charter school laws. This agreement will provide greater educational opportunities for all Massachusetts children, while also strengthening our ability to compete for one-time federal 'Race to the Top' funding worth hundreds of millions of dollars.*

## **Innovations**

- Establishes new “Innovation Schools”, which are in-district public schools with increased autonomy and flexibility to operate. These unique schools, through collaboration with teachers and parents, will promote high levels of student achievement through an innovation plan and represent an in-district alternative to other types of charter schools.
- Allows up to 14 new Horace Mann schools to be established under a new process that removes current barriers to growth. This type of in-district public school, approved by the local school committee, provides additional local control over innovative educational programs and the ability to retain educational dollars within the community.

## **Interventions**

- Authorizes the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education to designate up to 72 schools as either “underperforming” or “chronically underperforming” based on student achievement and improvement measures . The Commissioner may also designate up to 6 districts as “chronically underperforming districts.”
- These schools and districts are targeted for aggressive intervention through a turnaround plan developed in collaboration with the superintendent, the school committee, the local teacher’s union, administrators, teachers, community representatives, and most importantly, parents. The plan is expeditiously implemented by the district superintendents and the Commissioner.
- Intervention powers include the ability to more expeditiously dismiss or replace poor teachers and administrators, as well as the authorization to reopen and amend collective bargaining agreements in order to drive rapid improvement. In the worst performing schools, the Commissioner may amend collective bargaining agreements without negotiation, as necessary.

## **Improvements**

- Raises the state’s spending cap for charter schools from 9 to 18 percent of new school spending in the lowest 10 percent performing districts. Also streamlines current charter school caps by eliminating the cap that limits the state’s total charter school population to 4 percent.
- Establishes new requirements on charter schools to develop recruitment and retention plans, backfill some open seats, and to provide greater transparency and accountability in the approval process.
- Increases and extends reimbursement to school districts affected by charter school growth. This funding reform will allow for a greater recognition of the fixed educational costs districts face.