New School Application Process

Technical Assistance
January 27, 2021
February 4, 2021
February 17, 2021
The Baltimore City School Board of Commissioners:

• Actively supports the development of public charter schools that provide high quality learning opportunities to the students of Baltimore

• Expects higher levels of individual school accountability in exchange for this autonomy and flexibility

• Expects public charter schools to use the autonomy and flexibility afforded to them as a means of developing instructional and operational strategies that accelerate improvement in student achievement and school excellence
Baltimore City has 31 charter schools in school year 2020-21. This represents the majority of charters, more than 2/3, in the state of Maryland.

In the last 10 years, 11 charter schools have opened in Baltimore City.

City Schools is proud to add two additional charters which will open in fall 2021-22.

- Clay Hill Public Charter School (replication)
- Pimlico Elementary/Middle School (conversion)
The Process
## Who Participates In The Review Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Who</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide initial advice to the CEO</td>
<td>The <strong>Charter and Operator-led Schools Advisory Board</strong> (Advisory Board), an internal/external stakeholder group which advises the CEO on issues related to charters and operator-led schools, provides advice on the applications to the CEO.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determine official Recommendation to the Board</td>
<td>Based on this, <strong>the CEO</strong> through her staff may ask for supplemental information, and this supplemental information is also considered in the development of the CEO’s initial recommendation. The CEO finalizes her recommendation to the Board of School Commissioners based on her review of the application, advice from the Advisory Board, applicant's testimony at the Work Session, and supplemental information provided by the applicant within the process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decide whether to approve the application or not</td>
<td>The <strong>Board of School Commissioners</strong> has ultimate deciding authority and makes its decision based on a review of the application, extent to which application meets the Board’s priorities, applicant's testimony at the Work Session, supplemental information provided by the applicant, and the CEO’s recommendation.</td>
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# Overview of Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior applications available for review</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Assistance sessions hosted by City Schools</td>
<td>January 27, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Recommended that applicants attend a year prior to applying and again during year they plan to submit)</td>
<td>February 4, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letters of Intent due</td>
<td>February 5, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application deadline</td>
<td>March 25, 2021 between the hours of 9 a.m. and noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Applications submitted on that date will be considered for opening in school year 2022-23.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The local LEA must review and render a decision on each applicant within 120 days of receipt of the application in accordance with application procedures adopted by the LEA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical review of application</td>
<td>March 25 - 30, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charter and Operator-led Advisory Board review of applications and applicant interviews</td>
<td>March - April 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff presents summary of applications to the Board of School Commissioners</td>
<td>May 11, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO’s preliminary recommendation communicated in writing to applicant</td>
<td>May 18, 2021 (on or before)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant presents to Board of School Commissioners at a public work session (the opportunity to take questions from the Board and address areas of weakness in a public meeting)</td>
<td>May 26, 2021*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant may submit additional information to Board of School Commissioners to address concerns raised at Work Session</td>
<td>By noon, May 28, 2021 (on or before)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO’s final recommendation communicated in writing to applicant</td>
<td>June 7, 2021 (on or before)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CEO makes recommendations to the Board of School Commissioners and the Board votes on whether to approve or deny applications at a public meeting.</td>
<td>June 8, 2021</td>
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*Updated March 15, 2021 to correct error in original presentation. Previous version showed May 25 for Work Session and May 27 for submission of additional information.
Board Priorities
School districts may set priorities to consider in their evaluation of charter applications. The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners' Priorities are as follows:

- **Conversion Schools**
  - Proposals by operators with a track record of strong governance and financial practices and;
  - Have a record of improving student performance for student populations that are similar to the school they are seeking to convert and;
  - Have a record of strong leadership and staff retention.
  - Additional consideration for proposals to convert traditional high school programs that take in students below grade level and provide access to rigorous programming to prepare them for high school, college, and career.
City Schools’ Priorities for Charter Schools

• Replication of high-performing charter programs in areas of the city where the model doesn’t exist

• Advanced high school programming which prepares students for success after graduation, such as early college high schools, International Baccalaureate, or robust career preparation programs

• Dual-language or late language immersion programs
The Application

The Application contains the following sections:

Introductory Sections:
- Cover Sheet (form provided)
- Table of Contents
- Application Checklist
- Executive Summary (no more than 2 pages)

Main Sections:
1. Academic Plan
2. School Culture and Climate
3. Governance and Finance
4. Operations
   *(Sections 1-4 may not exceed 75 pages.)*
5. Statements of Agreement
6. Attachments/Appendices
The Application

Academic Plan

• Details the chosen curriculum/instructional approach and provides strong evidence that supports this approach will deliver strong outcomes for the school’s target population.

• Evidence that the proposed instructional approach supports strong achievement and ensures that all student groups’ needs will be met.
  
  o students who are above and below grade level, students with disabilities, English language learners, and gifted and talented students
  o ensures access to rigorous, grade-level-appropriate programming for all student groups

• The school’s approach to student assessment, including how assessments will be used to improve student performance and instruction, how the approach will ensure use of assessments that minimize or are free of racial/ethnic or other biases, and how assessments will be used to identify barriers and biases that lead to low achievement between student racial/ethnic groups.

• Outlines the school’s five-year academic performance and growth goals and accountability plan to track progress.

• Particularly for schools that serve middle or high school grades, a description of how the school ensures a trajectory of college and career readiness upon high school graduation.
School Culture and Climate

- Describes target student population in proposed neighborhood where school plans to locate, demonstrating an understanding of the characteristics and needs of students in the community, as well as evidence of wide-ranging outreach to the community and an ongoing family engagement plan.

- Mission and vision explicitly articulate the school’s aims for its target population and a plan to meet this goal, making a strong case of how the school will benefit the target population, Baltimore City students and meets an unfilled need and/or Board priority in the district.

- Articulates clear plan for developing a positive, student-centered culture that promotes academic achievement, meets the social and emotional learning needs of students, shows how the school environment honors the experience, culture and humanity of the target population and Baltimore in general, and allows for the development of practices and procedures amongst staff and families to facilitate and support this culture; plan clearly engages a diverse community including families of students with disabilities, ELL families, etc.

- Process for policy development and stakeholder engagement in school decisions is inclusive of all stakeholders including students and families.
The Application

Governance and Finance

• Description of founders and board of directors that includes detailed information that demonstrates the capacity of the members for implementing the plan and running a school; includes people who have experience in: academic/schools, expertise in supporting diverse student population business management, legal, and financial

• The application outlines the processes and structures the Board members will use to work together to ensure that all components of the school are working together effectively and efficiently. These include, but are not limited to, Board meetings.

• The operating organization is structured to endure a smooth and ordered transition from planning to operating the school. Application outlines substantial continuity and overlap between the founding group and board and school leadership in the months leading up to the opening of the school; includes clear plan with specific steps for transitioning day-to-day management over the spring and summer before the school opens, including who will transition specific pieces of work to whom; includes clear path for continued operations of the school

• Roles and responsibilities included for the school’s board of directors are clear, detailed, and demonstrate a strong understanding that the board is ultimately responsible for the successful operation of the school
Governance and Finance

- Illustrates how the **Board of Directors will develop policies and make decisions** about the operation of the school, **inclusive of stakeholder engagement**
  - Are parents represented on the Board? Teachers? Students? Other partners?
  - How do these groups play a role in decision-making?

- A transparent explanation of a school budget that clearly balances. Major revenues and expenditures are outlined clearly. **The application explicitly and persuasively addresses how the budget aligns with and supports the educational program.** All components of the educational program are covered in this budget and aligned to the school’s instructional approach, professional development plan and other expenses needed to implement the school program; the budget is realistic and demonstrates clear understanding of school finance. If applicable, the budget includes a clear repayment plan and schedule for any debt incurred.

- **Identifies a comprehensive and realistic financing plan for acquisition of a facility within the appropriate time frame;** details any renovation work that may need to be completed in order for the facility to serve students in the way that the school proposes, and the financing plan includes sufficient funding to undertake and complete any needed renovations well before faculty and students would use the building.
The Application

Operations

• Provides detailed and ambitious, yet realistic, work plan outlined for the period from approval of the charter to the opening of school that includes staffing and orientation; facilities acquisition and renovation; and curriculum, assessment, culture, and systems development; milestones that need to be hit are clearly stated.

• Staffing plan for the school includes the number of staff members being hired, their positions, appropriate strategies for building a strong diverse applicant pool for each position aligned to the instructional approach, and an aggressive timeline; recruitment strategy demonstrates understanding of how to identify and find staff that meet the requirements of the position and is tailored to the unique challenges of various positions; interview process is multifaceted and includes such things as panel interviews, model lessons, classroom observations, etc.

• There is a clear plan in place for developing and implementing high-quality professional development programming at the school. The plan includes specific content, frequency and timing of the professional development aligned to school’s approach and curriculum that demonstrates deep understanding of the approach and what it takes to develop staff to implement the approved approach with fidelity; PD plan is specific and adaptable as the school grows and needs of the staff and students change.
The Application

Operations

• Outlines in some detail a calendar for the **school year and schedule for the school day** that **maximizes instructional time** and details how those approaches are aligned to the proposed educational model; includes **ample time** built into the schedule for **faculty collaboration**.

• If a facility has been identified, the application provides a clear and specific description of the facility and outlines how it will serve the target student population. If no facility has been identified, school details realistic plan for acquiring a facility and the finances to obtain and ready a facility that meets district and state requirements for public schools.
Charter Funding and Reporting Requirements

• City Schools disburses to public charter schools an amount of city, state, and federal money that is **commensurate with the amount disbursed to other public schools** in the district.

• **Public charter schools are funded on a per pupil basis.** The per pupil amount is based on a formula based on revenues of the district, total number of students, and other required district-wide costs. **In FY 2021 the charter base per pupil is $9,304.** The FY 2022 per pupil amount is not yet available.

• In addition, **charter schools receive a mix of funding and services for students with disabilities and services for English Learners based on needs of its population of students.**

• **Charter schools also receive allocations or certain federal and state grants awarded to public schools determined based on eligibility.** Examples include: Title I, Title II, Title IV, Concentrations of Poverty, Struggling Learners, etc. Many of these are not available or only available on limited basis in first year of operation as past enrollment is often among the criteria set by state and federal government.
With these funds, charter schools are responsible for paying for many of the operational costs of their schools:

- actual salaries
- transportation,
- facilities expenses,
- furniture,
- instructional supplies and textbooks,
- technology and infrastructure
- professional development for staff,
- summer programming,
- janitorial costs,
- copiers, etc.

School may select certain optional services through the district for a fee.

If a charter school is located in a district building the school is responsible for rent (includes utilities) and other associated costs. In FY 2021 the cost per square foot is $4.13, and it is projected to be $4.30 for FY 2022 and $4.47 for FY 2023.
Waivers

• By law, charter and contract schools may seek waivers of Board policies. Waivers are **considered in the planning** year if a school is approved and should be included in the application; **approval of the application does not mean that the waiver is approved** and does not guarantee approval.

• Charters can apply for additional waivers during the contract term.
  o Schools interested in a waiver(s) must submit a formal request(s) in the form of a letter signed by the executive director or board chair. Each waiver request must include a rationale and alternative plan.
  o Waiver requests are vetted with each relevant City Schools department and the Charter and Operator-Led Schools Advisory Board.
  o Dependent on the policy, some requests require Board approval and some require CEO/CEO designee approval. If a school is requesting a waiver of state law or policy, that request requires district review and the state’s approval.

• Commonly requested waivers include: calendar; alternative principal selection process; grading policy; teacher observation tool, enrollment cap increases.
Waiver Requests

Schools requesting waivers must present, at minimum, the following information:

- Name of policy the school is seeking a waiver from; if only seeking a waiver of part of a policy – specific relevant section(s);
- Evidence of demand/capacity to meet the increase or change;
- School’s rationale about how increase or change meets a school need;
- Evidence about how stakeholders (staff, parents, and the community) were involved in vetting and approving the request including the impact of the request on district and surrounding schools, if applicable;
- Capacity of the school to meet the needs of these additional students or requested programmatic change in terms of staff, programming and space in the facility; and
- The complete alternative policy the school is proposing to implement in lieu of the Board’s policy as well as related documentation (i.e. enrollment plan, maps, etc.).
Automatically Granted Waivers

In recognition of autonomy granted to public charter schools and that certain flexibilities are necessary for public charter schools to be able to carry out their charter, public charter schools receive automatic waivers from:

- **Procurement (Policy DJA)** for purchases made with funds controlled by the operating organization apart from school’s budget. Schools’ policy must also address how the school will separately account for and manage school activity funds consistent with Applicable Requirements.

- **Family and Community Engagement (Policy KCA sections IV.E, G and relevant sections of the accompanying Administrative Regulations)** but must meet spirit of policy and regulations in charter practices; including ensuring parent voice and sign off on budget and major school policy decisions.

- **Delayed Openings and Emergency Closings of Schools (EBCD)** – (if the public charter school is located in a non-City Schools facility).

In each case, **schools must develop and follow their own policies in these areas consistent with Applicable Requirements. Such policies are subject to district review and Board or CEO/CEO designee approval to ensure that they meet Applicable Requirements.**
Conversion Charters

Maryland Charter law establishes that conversion charter schools must meet certain requirements including that:

- The school is a low performing school;
- The school is above the district average for the percentage of students who are eligible for free and reduced priced meals; and
- The proposed program meets a strategic need of the district including at least one of the following elements:
  - Serving a high-need population;
  - Increasing student performance;
  - Increasing enrollment; or
  - Increasing diversity.
Q: Who is eligible to submit an application for a public charter school?
A: Public charter school applications may be submitted to the local board of education by the staff of a public school, a parent or guardian of a student who attends a public school in the county/city, a nonsectarian nonprofit entity, a nonsectarian institution of higher education in the state, or any combination of the above.
Q: **Who is responsible for completing the application?**
A: The applicant is responsible for the completion of the application. Consultants involved in developing the application may not participate in the charter interview and the role they play in writing the application must be clearly identified in the application.

Q: **To whom will the public charter school operators report?**
A: Public charter school operators report to the public chartering authority from which its Charter Agreement is granted. In this case, it is City Schools.
Q: May ‘start-up’ funds be provided for public charter schools?
A: In September 2017, Maryland was awarded funding under the federal Charter School Program grant. These funds will be disbursed through MSDE to provide technical assistance to charters, and to fund replication and expansion of charter schools in the state. Check the MSDE website for information on the grant application process:
http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/Charter-Schools/CSPGrant.aspx
Q: What is the admissions process for public charter schools?
A: Public charter schools are open to all students on a space-available basis, and on a lottery basis if more students apply than can be accommodated. Charters must run their own lotteries for admission to most grades. Schools can opt to use City Schools’ Middle and High School Choice process for grades 6 and 9.

Additionally, schools can apply to the LEA to give greater weight in the lottery to particular populations of students as defined by state law and approved by the LEA. Examples include:

1. students who meet particular designations such as a student eligible for free or reduced price meals; a student with disabilities; a student with limited English proficiency; a Homeless student as defined under the federal McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act; or a sibling of a student currently enrolled in the public charter school for which the sibling is applying;
2. to provide preference to up to 35% of students living in a particular geographic attendance area provided the area has a median income that is equal to or less than the median income of the district; or
3. to provide guaranteed placement through a lottery to up to 35% of the available space of the public charter school to students who attended a public charter school during the previous school year that is operated by the same operator.
Q: May public charter schools determine their own admissions criteria?
A: No, charter schools must be open to all students on a space available basis with the only exceptions for preferences allowable by law (sibling, children of staff, children of founders) or for preferences approved by the Board for geographic attendance areas and prioritized groups (see prior slide).

Groups applying to have specific admissions criteria not allowable by charter law can still be considered through this process for consideration as a contract school; contract schools are treated virtually the same as charters in terms of operations, funding, accountability and autonomies granted by the Board. Such applications would need to meet a compelling district interest.

Q: May public charter schools charge tuition?
A: No. Public charter schools are public schools and may not charge tuition to residents of the jurisdiction where the school is located. As authorized by Maryland statutes and regulations, a local school system may charge tuition to out-of-district students.
Q: What requirements are imposed on Maryland public charter schools?

A: Public charter schools are subject to any federal, state, and local policies, regulations and statutes that affect traditional elementary and secondary public schools unless local education authorities or the State Board of Education, as appropriate, waives certain policies, procedures or regulations.

This includes Board policies, guidance, union agreements and other requirements.

Schools can request waivers of length of school day and or school year, alternative professional development days, alternative grading policies, etc.

Schools receiving waivers assume any additional costs acquired as result of these changes.
Q: What kinds of flexibility do public charter schools receive?
A: Public charter schools will receive flexibility in a number of areas, principally in the areas of management and administrative structure, staffing, educational programming, curriculum/instructional focus, program emphasis and budgeting. Additional areas of flexibility may be negotiated between the public charter school and the local board of education.

This flexibility is given in exchange for high academic performance, positive school culture, and quality management and governance. These are the categories by which a charter contract will be reviewed during contract renewal which starts in the penultimate year of the contract.
Q: Do students with disabilities attend public charter schools?
A: Yes. Public charter schools are open to all students on a non-discriminatory basis. Public charter school operators must fulfill the responsibilities related to children with disabilities.

Q: Are public charter school personnel employees of the school system?
A: Yes, in Maryland, employees of a public charter school are public school employees of the county/city in which the public charter school is located and members of the collective bargaining unit.
Q: What number goes into the budget for students who require transportation? How can I include this information if I do not know how many students will need transportation? What amount do I assume for bus tickets?

A: City Schools’ transportation policy applies to charter schools for all middle and high school grades students who live 1.5 miles or more from their school; they receive MTA bus tickets. Students who are experiencing homelessness and those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) may also receive transportation assistance as a related service. Charter schools are required to pay for transportation for students who qualify for transportation under City Schools’ policy. However, since FY 2018 all schools have received in-kind MTA service due to legislation to help the district. Without this legislation, the cost of MTA’s One Card would have been $1.30/trip in FY 2019. This legislation expires in FY 2021. Schools should budget for this for that year and moving forward.

Additionally, charter schools are responsible for any increased costs that result from specialized Board approved calendars that differ from the district calendar and school day.
Q: Are City School’s buildings available for use by new charter schools?
A: Charter operators are responsible for obtaining their own facilities. Roughly half of Baltimore City's charter schools are located in district facilities.

Applicants should be familiar with the 21st Century Buildings Plan to understand the direction the district the various communities served by the district and details on the facilities, to understand where vacated buildings may be located, and what areas of the city need additional seats.

With this major work and the district’s need for swing space, there are fewer district facilities available. Additionally, the district is obligated to surplus 26 buildings to the City of Baltimore. Schools can work with the city of Baltimore to try to obtain those buildings. We have charter schools who rent directly from the city or who have purchases surplus facilities from the city.
Q: What assistance is offered by City Schools to charter applicants?
A: City Schools provides many resources for organizations applying to open a charter school:

• Applicants may make an appointment to review applications.

• Staff is available to answer specific questions regarding the application, the process, district policy and procedures as well as how to find specific information regarding the district.

• Information about district operations, such as academic data, staffing procedures, and facilities, is available on the City Schools website.
Resources

City Schools’ Charter Application can be found on the City Schools’ website at: www.baltimorecityschools.org/charter-schools
Information about Baltimore City Schools’ Buildings, 21st Century Plan and Comprehensive Educational Facilities Master Plan: www.baltimorecityschools.org/buildings
City Schools’ District Data: https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/data
City Schools’ Profile on Maryland Report Card: http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/AtaGlance/Index/3/17/6/30/XXXX
Maryland Non Profits (MANO): http://www.marylandnonprofits.org/
Questions?

For additional information or questions, please contact:

Angela Alvarez
adalvarez@bcps.k12.md.us

Kim Coleman
kcoleman@bcps.k12.md.us

Trevor Roberts
tlroberts@bcps.k12.md.us
Baltimore City Public Schools

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Reconciliation and Reporting

- Since charter schools pay actual expenses, these schools go through a quarterly reconciliation process to reconcile expenses vs. revenues.

- At the end of the planning year in the summer prior to opening, schools receive their first quarterly payment based on the difference between their revenue (based on their projected enrollment) and their expenses (salaries, OTPS).

- Revenue and expenses are then reconciled based on the official Sept. 30th enrollment count and quarterly thereafter.

- Approved schools will receive training on this process as part of the onboarding that happens in the planning year.
Title I

• Title I, Part A is a federal program that provides financial assistance to local school systems and schools with high percentages of low-income families to support the academic achievement of disadvantaged students.
  o provide additional academic support and learning opportunities to help low-achieving students master and meet state standards in subjects assessed by the State.
  o Title I funds support extra instruction in reading, mathematics and science, professional development, additional teachers and instructional materials to supplement and enrich the regular school curriculum.

• There are two types of programs—Targeted Assistance (TA) and School-Wide (SW). For the Targeted Assistance program the resources must be used only for students and families who meet specific criteria; in the school-wide program, the resources can be used for the benefit of all students and families in the school. All schools new to Title I must initially implement a Targeted Assistance Program.

• All Title I Charter schools must complete an annual Title I plan. Once approved, this plan governs all Title I allowable spending.
Purpose of Title II is to provide sub-grants to local education agencies to:

• Increase *student achievement* consistent with the challenging State academic standards;
• Improve the quality & effectiveness of teachers, principals and other school leaders;
• Increase the number of teachers, principals, and other school leaders who are effective in improving *student achievement* in schools; and,
• Provide low-income and minority *students* greater access to effective teachers, principals and other school leaders
Supports activities in three broad areas:

1. **Providing students with a well-rounded education** including programs such as college and career counseling, STEM, arts, civics and IB/AP.  
   *this includes AP expansion*

2. **Supporting safe and healthy students** with comprehensive school mental health, drug and violence prevention, training on trauma-informed practices, and health and physical education

2. **Supporting the effective use of technology** that is backed by professional development, blended learning and ed. Tech devices
The state defines a struggling learner as “a student who is performing below grade level in English language arts or reading in kindergarten through grade 3.

“Transitional supplemental instruction” means additional academic support for struggling learners using evidence-based programs and strategies that meet the expectations of strong or moderate evidence as defined in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA evidence level 1 or 2)
Concentrations of Poverty

- Created through SB1030 provides allocations to public schools in which at least 70% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals (FRPM) as identified by MSDE.

- Each school receiving funds through this grant program must employ one community school coordinator and provide full-time coverage by at least one health care practitioner.

- If funding exceeds costs and/or the school already employs individuals in such positions, resulting excess funds must only be used for specified wrap around services.