



Family Journal

February 13, 2008

Note: This week's journal is being sent to both middle and high school families.

Dear Innovation Academy Community,

As we head into the February break, I wanted to provide you with an update on our recent request to become a regional charter school and some updates and clarifications regarding our facility search.

Regionalization

Last month, the Innovation Academy Board of Trustees authorized me to request that the school's charter be amended as a regional charter school including the following towns: Chelmsford, Billerica, Lowell, Tyngsboro, Tewksbury, Westford, Dracut, Littleton and Groton-Dunstable. The board held a special meeting for families on January 24th to discuss this with the community.

At its core, becoming a regional school would mean that all of these communities would reserve the same preference that Chelmsford students currently have in the lottery process. Families from outside of these towns would still be entitled to attend the school, but would be drawn in a separate lottery after we've assigned applicants from the towns in the school's region.

The idea of becoming a regional school has been a discussion item at the board level for quite a while now and was spurred on by some of the discussion that came out of our strategic planning efforts which took place beginning in the spring of 2007. In particular, it was noted that with the school's popularity and increasing success that we might lose our diversity in terms of the towns we serve if we were to stay as a Chelmsford preference charter school. A change to regional status ensures that we will maintain the town diversity that we currently have. The state board of education will consider our request at one of their upcoming board meetings.

Facility Search

At this time we are exploring all of our options for a facility for the future of Innovation Academy. Our goal, as we search for a location, is to find one that will serve the high school for the years to come without needing to move again and, if possible, to find a location that could house both the middle and high school. We aim to secure a facility that will serve our current students well and offer options for the school's future. We will weigh carefully any decision to move the middle school and/or locate outside of town and carefully consider how this might impact our current students.

As you may have heard, we are pursuing an option for a facility located in Tyngsboro. At this time, I am not at liberty to give specific information on this location and I must emphasize that we are a good stretch away from being able to confirm this as a reality, and thus, from sharing any specifics. We have submitted a request to the Department of Education that, along with the regionalization amendment, would need to be approved for us to consider this move. The board of education will likely review this amendment at one of their upcoming meetings.

If we were to re-locate to another town, among other things, we would look carefully at the issue of transportation of students – particularly Chelmsford students who are currently bussed to school by



virtue of the state law that requires the hosting town's school district to provide bussing to students within the town in which the charter school is located. If we did make a move to another town, one potential solution would be to work with families to come up with a bussing option for each town that would be a fee service, which the school would supplement with state funds. As a regional school, we would be subject to some funding for transportation – the exact amount is determined year to year as it is subject to state budget appropriation. The best case scenario would have all students receiving some form of transportation assistance – while I cannot guarantee it, a designation as a regional school may provide some assistance in this regard.

Should the situation in Tyngsboro not work out, for whatever reason, we continue to pursue other potential options for our future location. I will keep you posted as things develop. In the meantime, should you have questions, comments or ideas to share, please feel free to contact me by phone or email to discuss.

Sincerely,

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