

Accountability—In the field of education, accountability is the policy of holding schools and educators responsible for students' academic progress, including by linking such progress with funding.

BESE—Board of Elementary and Secondary Education: The secretary of BESE serves as the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education and oversees the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE, q.v.).

Chapter 70—The section of the state law that details how state funds will be distributed to school districts. The formula for calculating the amount allotted to each municipality takes into account the amount the municipality can contribute from its tax base. These funds are frequently referred to as Chapter 70 aid, Chapter 70 funds or simply state aid.

Commonwealth charter school—A school overseen by a board of trustees that receives a five-year charter from the state to and operates independently of local or regional school districts. In this study, references to “charter school” with no other identification are referring to Commonwealth charter schools.

DESE—Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Oversees public schools in state, frequently referred to as “dess-ee.”

District school—Traditional public school. In this study, the term “district school” is used instead of “public school” since both district and charter schools are public schools.

Education Management Organization (see EMO)

ELL—Abbreviation for English language learners, applied to students whose first language is not English and to educational programs for those students.

EMO—Education management organization. A for-profit company hired by a charter school's board of trustees to run the school on a day-to-day basis. The contract must be part of the charter application. The not-for-profit version is commonly called a CMO, charter management organization.

Equity—In the context of education reform, equity is composed of equal opportunity through adequate resources, equal access to quality education for all students, and equality in expected learning outcomes with a process to determine, achieve and measure those outcomes. Educational equity means personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background are not obstacles to achieving educational potential, and all individuals should reach at least a minimum level of skills.

Feeder school—A district school that sends students to a charter school.

Foundation Budget—The amount, adjusted annually, that the state calculates each municipality must spend to provide an adequate education to its students. That amount is achieved by a combination of Chapter 70 state aid and locally generated revenue.

Horace Mann charter school—Charter schools authorized by the state that are accountable to a school district but have greater autonomy from school district requirements and labor agreements. Horace Mann I schools must have their charter applications approved by the local school committee and teachers' union. Horace Mann II schools are conversion schools and require approval of a majority of the faculty. Horace Mann III schools can be chartered without the approval of the local collective bargaining unit.

Innovation school—School created by the local school committee. The concept provides educators and other stakeholders with the opportunity to create new in-district and autonomous schools that can implement creative and inventive strategies while keeping school funding under local district control.

Net School Spending—The total amount a school district spends, including state aid (Chapter 70), local tax contribution to school budget, and any additional amount a locality allocates to schools.

Net School Spending Cap—The state-set limit on the percentage of a district's net spending that can go for charter school tuition. That cap is 9% of net school spending except for schools performing in the lowest 10% of all schools in the state; for those schools, the cap is 18% of net school spending. The cap effectively limits the number of charter students from any district.

Tuition—In referring to charter schools, tuition is the amount a school district pays to a charter school for each student attending the charter school from the district. Unlike the usual definition of tuition, this is not a payment from the student or parents to the charter school.