MA Personalized Learning Network
Required Areas of Autonomy and Flexibility

The MA Personalized Learning Network (MA PLN) believes that if educators are going to be held accountable for student outcomes, schools need maximum control over decisions and resources. Thus, following are the areas of autonomy and flexibility that the MA PLN would like every member school to have. These autonomies can be gained through a number of means: (1) Innovation School, (2) Horace Mann charter school, or (3) adoption of a "thin contract" between the local teachers union and school committee. For purposes of sustainability, CCE believes that Innovation or Horace Mann charter statuses are the two strongest options.

1. *Staffing:* The freedom to manage staff members as needed in order to create a unified school community. This includes:
   - Hire staff who best fit the needs of the school, inside or outside the district without regard to seniority
   - Decide on the staffing pattern, job descriptions, and assignments which best meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of students
   - Exclusion from involuntary assignment to the school

2. *School Calendar:* The freedom to set longer school days and calendar years for both students and faculty in accordance with the school's vision. In particular, research supports a correlation between increased faculty planning time spent on teaching and learning and increased student achievement. This includes:
   - Increase planning and professional development time for faculty
   - Maximize learning time for students

3. *Curriculum and Assessment:* Freedom to structure curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices to best meet students' learning needs. While all MA PLN schools are expected to administer any state-required assessments, these schools should have the flexibility to best determine which school-based curricula and assessment practices will best prepare students for state assessments. This includes:
   - Freedom from local district curriculum requirements – MA PLN schools should be able to choose what content to cover, how to cover it, and when to cover it
   - Freedom from local assessment requirements, as long as there are formative assessments in place that are comparable or greater in rigor to the district requirements
   - Set their own promotion and graduation requirements, although they must be comparable or greater in rigor to the district requirements

4. *Professional Development:* Freedom to structure professional development and learning according to the needs of the students, staff, and faculty of the school. This includes:
   - Decide on professional development in which faculty engage, with participation in the district's professional development activities optional
   - Restructure the daily schedule in order to fully integrate professional development into the daily collaboration of school staff

5. *Budget:* A lump sum per pupil budget in which the school has complete discretion to spend funding in the manner that provides the best programs and services to students and their families. This includes:
   - A lump sum per pupil budget, preferably student weighted, which is equitable to other similar grade span schools in the district
   - Choose either to purchase identified discretionary district services or to not purchase them and include the per pupil cost in the school's lump sum per pupil budget
   - Have the option to spend by actual rather than average salaries (with guidelines set identifying the consecutive number of years a school must spend with the option they select)

6. *Governance:* Pilot schools have the freedom to create their own governing bodies that have increased decision making powers, while being mindful of state requirements including state testing and school councils, and always with final approval by the superintendent. This includes:
   - Set and maintain the school vision
   - Principal selection, supervision, and evaluation
   - Budget approval
   - Approval of annual work conditions within the school
   - Set policies that the school community feels will help promote student success