

Alma del Mar Charter School Executive Summary

This was prepared by the founding group of the Alma del Mar Charter School.

Mission: Alma del Mar is an inclusive, K-8 Expeditionary Learning school that puts New Bedford students on a college trajectory and challenges them to be service-oriented leaders. By engaging in a rigorous academic program with an emphasis on meaningful work, our students will master essential skills and content, take ownership of their learning and think boldly while addressing complex academic and community issues.

Educational Program: Alma del Mar’s (AdM) educational program is designed to cultivate the knowledge and skills in students that will put them on the path to college and enable them to be service-oriented leaders. Our curriculum will consist of learning expeditions—long-term investigations into key topics that teach essential ELA, social studies and science content—in addition to supporting research-based literacy and math curricula. Our students will do rigorous work as members of a school community that emphasizes service, quality, accountability, persistence and integrity. By engaging in meaningful work that frequently draws on the rich resources of the Greater New Bedford area, our students will

- Master essential skills and content as outlined by the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks
- Take increasing responsibility for their own learning
- Approach complex problems thoughtfully
- Learn to appreciate the perspectives of others, and
- Recognize and pursue opportunities for service

Enhancing Options for Students: At Alma del Mar, New Bedford students will have the opportunity to attend a school that provides more individualized student support, an emphasis on service leadership and a curriculum that builds core background knowledge starting in the early grades. Our K - 8 structure allows for students to receive uninterrupted support for their individual learning needs through middle school, preparing them to succeed in the variety of secondary school options that exist in this region, while our extended school day and year creates more time for in-depth learning, as well as for co-curricular subjects like music, art and PE. Students for whom English is a second language, students with disabilities and students from low-income backgrounds will benefit especially from our integrated curriculum, college-bound culture and use of active pedagogy.

Community’s Demonstration of Support for School: Over 150 families have signed a list indicating their interest in enrolling their children in AdM, pending the granting of our charter. At events throughout the city and in individual conversations with AdM’s founding group, community members have expressed support for our proposed school. Parents and community members are excited about an educational option that would provide a strong, college-bound culture, a curriculum emphasizing service and a structure that allows for continuous, individualized student support through middle school. In

addition, the support of our community partners, GiftstoGive, Working Waterfront Festival, Coalition for Buzzards Bay, ArtWorks!, The Ocean Explorium and SMILES Mentoring, will allow us to leverage the rich resources of the New Bedford community to the benefit of our students.

Founding Group Capacity: Our proposed Founding Board consists of professionals with expertise in law, finance, development, management, and school administration, has strong ties to the city of New Bedford and a shared passion for improving educational opportunities for New Bedford students. Our lead founder has worked successfully to improve educational outcomes for students in grades pK-8 in low-income communities. In his recent role as Campus Director for a Citizen Schools site in New Bedford, he ran a highly successful program serving an at-risk population within a New Bedford middle school which showed significant academic gains for its students and was recognized within the national network for its innovative and effective hands-on apprenticeships. He has an extensive network within the city of New Bedford and broad support from students, parents, educators and community members.

Our proposed school support partner, Expeditionary Learning (EL), is a national network of over 160 schools that has demonstrated strong results working with students from all backgrounds, especially students from low-income households, English language learners and students with special learning needs. As our school support organization, Expeditionary Learning will provide valuable professional development for teachers and administrators, curriculum support and a designated School Designer who will spend a significant amount of time at our school providing targeted coaching and connecting our school to resources from the wider network.