

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2010-2011

Proposed School Name:	Bridge Boston Charter School
Grades Served At Full Capacity:	K1-8
Number of Students At Full Capacity:	335
Proposed School Location:	Boston; Mattapan/Dorchester neighborhood if possible
Proposed Opening Year:	FY2012

Public Statement:

Bridge Boston Charter School students thrive in a challenging, joyful, inclusive K1-8 public school community that values close partnerships with families and a focus on the whole child. Our students will develop the skills necessary to excel academically in rigorous high schools, reach their individual potentials, and view themselves as creators of their own futures. Through full-service programming, Bridge Boston Charter School works to remove the health and social obstacles that hinder student learning. Our 335-student school will be in Boston, preferably Mattapan or Dorchester. Our founding group has strong community ties and proven experience with excellent schools, including Epiphany.

Mission Statement:

Bridge Boston Charter School students thrive in a challenging, joyful, inclusive K1-8 public school community that values close partnerships with families and a focus on the whole child. Our students will develop the skills necessary to excel academically in rigorous high schools, reach their individual potentials, and view themselves as creators of their own futures. Through full-service programming, Bridge Boston Charter School works to remove the health and social obstacles that hinder student learning.

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	K1, K2	72
Second Year	K1, K2, 1	108
Third Year	K1, K2, 1, 2	144
Fourth Year	K1, K2, 1, 2, 3	180
Fifth Year	K1, K2, 1, 2, 3, 4	216

Mission, Vision, and Description of the Community(ies) to Be Served

Primary Strengths

- The mission defines the purpose and values of the school. It communicates a great amount of information about the school in a meaningful way. It is reflected throughout all sections of the application. (Section I.A.)
- The vision proposes a compelling, well

Primary Weaknesses

- No primary weaknesses.

organized, well-rounded image of the school with a comprehensive, individualized, rigorous academic program; a deliberate, thoughtful, nurturing community, and an intentional focus on the elimination of barriers through community partnerships to meet the health and social service needs of students. It is aligned with and expands on the mission statement. It serves as an organizing principle for the application. (Section I.B.)

- The description of the community section describes the value of the proposed school and offers a specific rationale for how the school will expand options with full-service programming, expanded learning time, intensive support, family programming, and social and academic benchmarks. In this section, they articulate that the proposed school hopes to transfer lessons learned at Epiphany School, a successful, full-service, independent tuition-free middle school that admits children by lottery. (Section I.C.)
- This applicant group received letters of support from numerous members of the Boston community, including parents, non-profit leaders, Boston City Councilors (M. Ross, J. Connolly, M. Ciommo and A. Pressley), and state service providers (C. Sweeting at Department of Children and Families). See public comment. (Section I.C.)

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- The educational philosophy describes the founding group's core beliefs and values and builds on the school's mission. It is integrated into a comprehensive educational program that demonstrates that the school intends to serve the diverse needs of individual students. (Section II.A.)
- The application includes an outline of the curriculum including the content and skills to be taught, as well as sample projects. The application also asserts that a

Primary Weaknesses

- While the application described the use of direct instruction, guided work, and independent practice in all classrooms, the limited discussion of differentiated instruction did not address serving the needs of all learners within the general education classrooms. (Section II.B.)

curriculum is “a dynamic document, meant to be continually revised, explored, and updated. They explain the process used and the lenses employed to select the curriculum. (Section II.B.)

- The application also includes a clear process to evaluate the curriculum and a plan to facilitate ongoing development, improvement, and refinement of the curriculum. (Section II.B.)
- The application describes examples of social benchmarks which they expect to see each child demonstrate by the end of a given grade. These non-academic goals are consistent with the mission, vision, and academic program. (Section II. B.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- The performance, promotion, and graduation Standards are cohesive and easy to understand by stakeholders. They are aligned with the school’s mission and educational programming. (Section II.C.)
- The assessment system is thorough and includes multiple measures of student outcomes. The system includes standardized tests and internally developed instruments used to measure and report student progress. The application contained clear information on how this data will be collected and used by a variety of stakeholders. (Section II.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While the assessment system is thorough, and the interview helped clarify the Individual Student Learning Profiles (ISLP), it is not clear how the multiple measures of student performance used, such as portfolios, ISLPs, and behavioral indicators, will interconnect to form a cohesive system. (Section II.D.)

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The application and the applicant group describe a clear plan for the educational program and developing the culture of the school. The interview with the applicant group provided clarification about the I-block, use of interns, implementation of full-service programming, and Advisory. (Section II.E.)
- The application outlined multiple strategies

Primary Weaknesses

- While the interview provided additional clarification about the full-service programming, such as staffing, management, and potential community partners, questions remain about how the program will be operationalized during the school day. (Section II.E.)

to involve families in the education of their children, including initial goal setting meetings, opportunities to participate in school events or celebrations, frequent communication through an advisor, a communication folder and a weekly newsletter, family surveys and focus groups, and a monthly Family Council. The school will also partner with community agencies to provide parent/guardian workshops in the evening or make referrals to job sites. (Section II.E.)

Special Student Populations and Student Services

Primary Strengths

- The application describes a plan for a responsive, general education classroom that includes individualized instruction, such as grouping and regrouping of students to achieve specific educational aims, and varied pedagogy and resources within a single room. It states that all students will have access to the same rich curriculum with appropriate supports provided to students with special needs to help them be successful. Classroom instruction will utilize the principles of Universal Design and the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. (Section II.F.)
- While there are components of this section which appeared inaccurate, the application offers a clear description of the identification and initial assessment requirements for both English language learners and students in need of special education services within the assessment section. (Section II.F.)
- A member of the proposed board is an experienced, licensed elementary and special education teacher with particular expertise in addressing the needs of students with hearing impairments. (Section II.B.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While the application does include Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) and Sheltered Immersion Observation Protocol (SIOP) instructional methodologies in its discussion of service delivery, it did not clearly describe the processes and procedures for serving students who are English language learners. It is unclear if the applicant group understands the distinction between SEI and English language development (ELD) instruction. (Section II.F.)
- The description of the special education program was a generalized overview that limited our ability to evaluate their program and determine their ability to provide services. (Section II.F.)

Enrollment and Recruitment

Primary Strengths

- The application provides a specific rationale for a sustainable size and growth strategy. (Section III.A)
- The application describes an ongoing strategy for broad outreach and recruitment. (Section III.A)
- The enrollment process includes a plan for a public lottery that is open, fair, and in accordance with the charter school statute and regulations. (Section III.A)

Primary Weaknesses

- No primary weaknesses.

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- It is very clear how the founding group came together to form this proposed school and why the group is united. (Section III.B.)
- While the founding group and proposed board of trustees lacks broad public school experience, they do have members who possess a wide range of skills and experience in education, management, finance, social services, development, medicine, and law. Many have, at one time or another, been involved with the Epiphany School as a founder, board member, and/or staff. (Section III.B.)
- The Epiphany School will remain open indicating that this private school is not converting to a charter school. Throughout the application and during the interview, the proposed Bridge Boston is described as a separate school from the Epiphany School. The schools have different characteristics (grade span), governance, and management structures.
- The purpose of the proposed school is to replicate some elements of Epiphany's successful programming within the accountability systems of public schools. In order to pursue this goal, selected members of Epiphany's staff will serve on the proposed school's board. (Section III.B.)

Primary Weaknesses

- Reviewers had concerns about some of the potential conflicts of interest on the proposed board of trustees; during the interview, the applicant group was apprised of these concerns and directed to the State Ethics Commission to obtain a ruling on these matters. (Section III.B.)

- The governance model provides a clear workable reporting structure and encourages an appropriate relationship between the board, school’s leader, and administration regarding the governance and management of the school. (Section III.C.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- While there are questions about the staffing plan during the first years of the proposed school’s operation, the management structure and the staffing chart are clear. Roles and responsibilities are well delineated. (Section III.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The school has a commitment to professional development and collaborative team-based efforts. During the interview, the applicant group discussed how the teacher internship program will function at the proposed school. However, questions remain about how the professional development needs of administrators, teachers, and interns will be determined. (Section II.B. and III.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group and proposed board members have expertise in resource development and finance. The board has the capacity to raise additional funds and manage funds effectively. (Section III.B. and III.F.)
- While reviewers had questions about the limited funds budgeted for the “full-service programming” the applicant group explained during the interview that 50-60% of the cost for the Director of Student Services will take care of full-service programs. They explained that the issue is more about time allocation than actual expenses. Most of the families will have health insurance to pay for services; they just don’t know how to access it. The applicant group describes ‘full-service’ as connecting students and families to needed resources. (Section III.F.)

Primary Weaknesses

- See Capacity.