

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2010-2011

Proposed School Name: Boston Chinese Immersion Charter School

Grades Served At Full Capacity: K-8

Number of Students At Full Capacity: 360

Proposed School Location: Boston (Chinatown or South Boston)

Proposed Opening Year: FY2012

Public Statement:

The Boston Chinese Immersion Charter School will prepare K-8th grade students for academic and personal success using a foreign language (Mandarin) immersion elementary model as the optimal means for reaching their full academic and intellectual potential in all subject areas and for developing cultural and global perspectives within the context of a Community of Learners that will include families and the larger community. The school will be located in or near Boston’s Chinatown, a central location easily accessible through all lines of public transportation. BCICS will enroll a maximum of 360 students.

Mission Statement:

Through an academically rigorous curriculum using Mandarin Chinese as the medium of instruction, the Boston Chinese Immersion Charter School (BCICS) will prepare a diverse body of Boston students in Kindergarten through 8th grade to become fluent and literate in Mandarin Chinese and English who will graduate from the school poised for academic success in high school and beyond. BCICS will leverage the benefits of language immersion and immersion methodology for acquiring subject matter mastery, engaging family involvement, developing oral language skills as a base for literacy, expanding student’s literacy and vocabulary skills across two languages, creating a respectful community of learners, assessing student performance through a broad range of measures and developing culturally and globally diverse perspectives.

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	K, 1	100
Second Year	K, 1, 2	160
Third Year	K, 1, 2, 3	218
Four Year	K, 1, 2, 3, 4	273
Fifth year	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	325

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

Primary Strengths

- The application provides a clearly stated purpose that emphasizes second language acquisition programming. The applicant group discussed the value of learning about both the culture and language of China to foster understanding and community building amongst diverse

Primary Weaknesses

- The application provides a limited discussion of the specific needs of Boston area students and how the educational program will serve those particular needs. (Section I.C.)
- Though during the interview, individuals on the proposed board spoke about the

student populations. (Section I.A. and I.C.)

- The vision statement describes a number of ways that the proposed school will positively impact students, faculty and families. (Section I.B.)
- While there are a few elementary schools in Boston that provide Mandarin instruction, their proposed Mandarin Chinese immersion programming is unique and innovative in Boston. (Section I.C.)
- In the application and the interview, the founding group provided a specific rationale for the importance of learning Mandarin Chinese in today's global community. (Section I.C.)
- The proposed school has received significant public support from organizations and individuals in the Boston community as evidenced during the public hearing and submitted public comment. Boston City Councillor J. Connolly has voiced his support of their application. See public comment. (Section I.C.)

value of being bilingual for all students, the application indicates that the greatest areas of support are from families who already participate in private Chinese language schools or who speak Chinese at home. (Section I.C.)

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- With the planned opening date of August 2011, the applicant identified pre-existing commercial curricula which includes materials available in Mandarin. During the interview, the applicant group discussed their progress and continuing efforts to translate additional curricula into Mandarin. (Section II.B.)
- The application describes a variety of instructional methodologies to deliver the various curricula. (Section II.B.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The large amount of research cited within the application does not yield a cohesive picture of how the immersion methodology will support the needs of diverse learners. (Section II.A.)
- While the core beliefs align with the school's mission, it is not integrated into the implementation of a comprehensive educational program. (Section II.A.)
- The curriculum and instruction section within the application lacks information about curricular components that will facilitate the ongoing development, implementation, improvement, and refinement of curriculum. (Section II.B.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- The application provides very clear examples of performance standards and promotional standards that are based on high expectations and are aligned with the school’s mission and vision. (Section II.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The proposed assessments are multi-faceted, including but not limited to various standardized tests, benchmark tests, portfolios, student presentations, and an Individualized Literacy Plan (ILP), but it is not clear how these multiple assessments will work together to improve the educational program and student outcomes. (Section II.D.)

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group proposes a variety of methods to develop family-school partnerships, such as a part-time family engagement coordinator, adult evening and weekend classes, and a ‘family academic support contract’ in which families agree to monitor homework and provide 10 hours of educational support. (Section II.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The application contains limited information on how the school’s educational program will be implemented and the organization of the school day for students and faculty. The application indicates briefly that instruction will be solely in Mandarin for grades K-2, with the exception of an hour of English language arts. The amount of English instruction will increase beginning in third grade. The application provides no clear blueprint as to how this plan will be actualized. (Section II.E.)
- Reviewers had many questions about the methods and strategies the school will use to support students with a wide range of needs. The interview provided some clarification about how the school would address different levels of language fluency and the targeted support program afterschool. However, more information is needed. (Section II.E.)
- The application does not provide a comprehensive plan for establishing a school culture. (Section II.E.)
- Though the application provides a school code, it does not describe a student behavior philosophy or a specific plan for explicit teaching and learning of the code’s tenets. (Section II.E.)
- Though reviewers were appreciative of the extended day, Friday enrichment and the before school, after school, and

summer school fee-based programming, the information within the application provided a limited understanding of how these programs would be implemented, managed, and evaluated. The application and applicant group indicated that the additional fees for any programming outside of the school day will be on a sliding scale for students receiving free or reduced lunch. (Section II.E.)

Special Student Populations and Student Services

Primary Strengths

- During the interview, the applicant group spoke about using a methodology that would be applicable for different levels of language fluency. They explained that the curriculum will be presented in different ways using different strategies. (Section II.F.)
- The application indicates that the proposed school will employ a response to Intervention (RTI) model to provide all learners access to the general education curriculum. It also states that teachers will receive training in RTI though it is not targeted until year three in the proposed plan. (Section II.F.)
- The application and applicant group described flexibility in proposed staffing levels dependent upon the specific needs of the students enrolled at the proposed school. (Section II.F.)

Primary Weaknesses

- Though the application and applicant group propose to offer additional English Language Learner (ELL) and special education support services before and after school, it is unclear whether specialized instruction during the school day will be in compliance with state requirements. (Section II.F.)
- There is some confusion within the application regarding the initial and annual assessment procedures for ELLs. (Section II.F.)
- The application and applicant group did not adequately describe how the proposed school will provide a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) program or sheltered content instruction which includes English language development instruction and sheltering content instruction in English within the general curriculum. The applicant group provided additional information during the interview that did not adequately address reviewer's concerns. (Section II.F.)
- The application does not adequately describe the process and procedures the proposed school will use to identify, assess, and provide special education services. The description of special education services does not indicate a reliable capacity for service delivery. (Section II.F.)
- The application indicates that the Assistant Head of School (AHOS) will not only oversee the identification of

students requiring special education services but will also provide services during the school day. (Section II.F.)

Enrollment and Recruitment

Primary Strengths

- The recruitment plan describes a thorough strategy for broad outreach to English language learner student populations, including the development of materials in seven languages and information sessions in several languages. (Section III.A.)
- While the draft enrollment policy still needs to be refined, reviewed, and approved by the Department, the policy provides information about the enrollment process, application, and lottery guidelines. (Section III.A.)

Primary Weaknesses

- During the interview, the applicant group was able to explain the high initial enrollment in Kindergarten (60 students) and the high estimated attrition at the upper grades. They anticipate less than half of the students will still be enrolled in the eighth grade as a result of students leaving to enroll at Boston exam schools. Questions remain about the rationale and sustainability for the proposed grade span. (Section III.A.)

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- The proposed board of trustees has a range of experience and qualifications including education, management, business, finance, development, and law. In addition, members of the founding group demonstrate robust professional knowledge and expertise in educational leadership, charter school management, literacy acquisition, and bilingual education, including the development and management of Mandarin Chinese language classes at the elementary school level. (Section III.B.)
- The proposed board members have access to a professional network that will provide additional expertise for school staff professional development and significant fundraising potential. (Section III.B.)
- The application contains a draft of the complete by-laws of the proposed school that is comprehensive and detailed regarding the governance model proposed. (Section III.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- No members of the founding group or proposed board have specific experience with a full Mandarin Chinese immersion program. (Section III.B.)
- It is reported that the proposed school leader has administrative experience within the Boston Public Schools with English language learner student populations but no resume was provided. (Section III.B.)
- While the application states the intention to form staff and family advisory boards and to include non-voting representatives on the board of trustees, it provided limited information regarding the process for policy making, the training for constituency representatives and other board members, and board self-evaluation. (Section III.C.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- The application describes two hour professional development on Fridays and frequent teacher evaluations to foster excellent instruction. (Section III.D.)
- While the delineation of roles and responsibilities as the school ramps up operations is unclear, the staffing plan includes key personnel to help strategically manage operations, fiscal planning and academic programming and performance once the school is fully operational. (Section III.D.)
- The application and the applicant group emphasized the plan for the two school leaders to have expertise in language learning and acquisition (Head of School,) and special education (Assistant Head of School.) (Section III.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The organizational chart provided shows staffing for the first operational year, omits some staff members, and does not clearly describe the proposed school's reporting structure. (Section III.D.)
- While the application describes the intention to use student performance data to determine changes to curriculum, instruction, and professional development and to train all staff in the use of data to make decisions, the process to evaluate educational content and pedagogical approach is not adequately explained within the application. (Section III.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group has identified a potential site in Boston's Chinatown. (Section III.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- No primary weaknesses.