

## **Boston Chinese Immersion Charter School Executive Summary**

*This was prepared by the founding group of the  
Boston Chinese Immersion Charter School.*

### **Mission**

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 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Vision**

Boston Chinese Immersion Charter School will be a respectful community of learners, with students in kindergarten through 8th grade, faculty, and families who will engage in learning and participate in school activities with BCICS as their center. Students will learn and demonstrate academic success in all core subjects: math, language arts, social studies, arts and sciences—as measured in both English and in Mandarin Chinese. Staff will participate in professional development weekly and during the summer. Families will be offered classes in Mandarin, ESL and technology. BCICS will build on the demonstrated success of language immersion programs for Boston area children eager to develop multilingual and multicultural skills that will serve them throughout their lifetimes.

### **Need**

There is a compelling mandate for a Mandarin immersion school in Boston at the elementary level evidenced by the large number of Chinese and non-Chinese parents who place their children in the more than 45 privately supported Chinese Schools in Massachusetts (12 in the Greater Boston region) on weekends and after school. Boston area business firms, major museums and universities have written strong letters of support for the charter application, recognizing the growing need to develop future employees who are fluent and literate in Mandarin and who have a deep understanding of and appreciation for Chinese culture. Boston's premier colleges and universities are already capitalizing on the benefits of global experiential learning through a variety of exchange programs with China. As we consider what knowledge and skills will be most important to the success of our students as workers and citizens of the 21st Century, we

can predict with some certainty that knowing Chinese will become of paramount importance.

### **Educational Philosophy**

The Boston Chinese Immersion Charter School believes that all children benefit from learning in more than one language and that to truly learn a language one must also learn the culture that underlies the language. Since children acquire language best in their youth when their affective filter is lowest and their pronunciation skills are still developing, BCICS believes that they should begin their Chinese language study in kindergarten and is thus committed to a foreign language immersion elementary model as the optimal means for students to reach their full academic and intellectual potential in all subject areas. BCICS also believes that learning happens best within a respectful community of learners led by teachers who are also learners; that global and cultural diversity contributes to the learning of all community members; that a range of assessments are the best means for measuring the full academic performance and potential within a child; and that subject matter mastery is necessary for academic success.

BCICS believes that families are active participants in a child's successful educational development and seeks to develop a strong partnership with families who enroll their children in the school. BCICS also believes that the path to life-long academic success begins with conversations about post-secondary education in childhood.

### **School Organization and Culture**

BCICS proposes to open in August 2011 with (3) kindergarten classes and (2) first grade classes with 20 students in each class for a total of 100 students. The school's operational structure of a longer school day, 8 hours, and a longer school year, 190 days, with before school and after school programs, is aligned to meet the school's vision of academic success for every student. BCICS will strive for a diverse student body in terms of language, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical and mental abilities, English fluency, immigrant status, family composition, religion, race and learning abilities, believing that students learn and thrive best in diverse environments that are academically and socially enriching. The school curriculum will weave language immersion, character development, personal discipline, technology and social integration into all subjects and all instruction with an emphasis on global and cultural diversity. BCICS will develop a strong relationship between the school and families with adult classes and extended day learning for working parents. Families will have a non-voting advisory member on the Governing Board and will be closely linked to the school through interactive technology.

### **Community of Learners**

From the hiring of native Mandarin-speaking teachers, to placing the school in or near Chinatown, to the representation of ethnic Chinese among the Founders, BCICS will

teach, learn and breathe the Chinese language and culture in an academically rigorous environment within the larger community of learners.

It will be an active community of respectful learners comprised of students, teachers and staff, family members, and community members. BCICS will include organizations that seek to bridge China and the greater Boston communities through education, business and cultural exchanges. BCICS will work with local charities serving the Asian community; students will participate in community service projects at all grade levels. The proposed school has received enthusiastic and generous responses from the Boston cultural, academic and business communities with substantive offers of partnerships for curriculum and professional development enrichment from The Confucius Institute; The Boston Children's Museum; Museum of Science; The Museum of Fine Arts; The University of Massachusetts Boston; Emerson College and Suffolk University. BCICS also seeks to develop a partnership with the Boston public school system.

### **The Founding Group**

The founding group consists of dedicated members who are certified educators with many years of teaching experience in K-8, high school and colleges, including those who have implemented charter school legislation in Massachusetts and served as directors of bilingual, ESL and two-way immersion programs. The Founders are supported by an Advisory Board whose members include a current head of a charter school and another who headed a charter school. Other members are experts in pre-school, bilingual education, curriculum and instruction, technology as well as teachers, skilled administrators and professionals in real estate, finance and law. Both groups are racially and ethnically diverse and include parents dedicated to the success of the proposed school in the hope that their children might one day attend.