

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2010-2011

Proposed Regional School Name: Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School

Grades Served At Full Capacity: 5-12

Number of Students At Full Capacity: 600

Proposed Location: Holyoke

Proposed Opening Year: FY2012

Proposed Sending Districts: Agawam, Amherst, Amherst-Pelham, Belchertown, Brimfield, Chesterfield-Goshen, Chicopee, East Longmeadow, Easthampton, Gateway Regional, Granby, Granville, Hadley, Hampden-Wilbraham, Hampshire Regional, Hatfield, Holland, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Monson, Northampton, Palmer, Pelham, South Hadley, Southampton, Southwick-Tolland, Springfield, Wales, Ware, West Springfield, Westfield, Westhampton and Williamsburg

Public Statement:

The Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School (PFSJCS), located in Holyoke and serving the towns and cities of the Pioneer Valley, offers a secondary school alternative dedicated to: academic excellence, social justice awareness and practice as espoused by Paulo Freire, leadership development, and community and global connections. PFSJCS will promote powerful, transformative teaching and learning for the development of the whole student, who will graduate: intellectually adept, socially responsible, actively involved, and dedicated to a just and sustainable society. Paulo Freire SJCS will serve the public school sending districts of Hampden and Hampshire Counties. At full enrollment the school will offer grades 5-12 and have a maximum enrollment of 600.

Mission Statement:

The Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School (PFSJCS), located in Holyoke and serving the towns and cities of the Pioneer Valley, offers a secondary school alternative dedicated to: academic excellence, social justice awareness and practice as espoused by Paulo Freire, leadership development, and community and global connections. PFSJCS will promote powerful, transformative teaching and learning for the development of the whole student, who will graduate: intellectually adept, socially responsible, actively involved, and dedicated to a just and sustainable society.

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	9	110
Second Year	9-10	200
Third Year	9-11	300
Fourth Year	9-12	400
Fifth Year	9-12	400

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

Primary Strengths

- The mission statement contains clear and meaningful descriptions of the purpose and values of the proposed school’s philosophy of student-centered academic and character development. (Section I.A.)
- The application and the applicant group discuss a vision that is compelling and rich in meaningful student outcomes. The applicant group demonstrated a passionate understanding and connection to the proposed mission and vision during the interview. (Section I.B.)
- The social justice educational model proposed by the application and applicant group would expand upon educational options in Western Massachusetts. (Section I.C.)
- Congressman J. Olver voiced support for this charter application. See public comment. (Section I.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The “continuous program of growth and development” for students, families and staff is meaningful yet programming mentioned in the vision, specifically virtual learning and evening adult classes, is not elaborated upon elsewhere in the application. (Section I.B.)
- The mission, vision, and community description does not address the diversity of student populations the proposed school intends to serve. The emphasis on Holyoke students does not address the limited seats available to charter schools within the Holyoke district nor the applicant group’s ability to serve a low income, Limited English Proficient (LEP), or Hispanic student population. (Section I.A., I.B. and I.C.)
- The application and applicant group emphasized that the communities of Hampden and Hampshire Counties will comprise an estimated 40% of the student population but do not describe the needs of those student populations. (Section I.A., I.B. and I.C.)

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- The educational philosophy describes three clear and robust core beliefs, individual excellence, community membership, and global intention, which are connected to the proposed school’s mission. (Section II.A.)
- The application connects the core beliefs to a number of strategies within the educational program and utilizes research to support these choices. (Section II.A.)
- The application provides specific examples of how the applicant group intends to weave social justice themes throughout the curriculum in alignment with the proposed school’s mission and educational philosophy. (Section II.B.)

Primary Weaknesses

- Though the philosophy and strategies discussed are consistent with their mission, the application lacked explicit discussion of how these proposed strategies will specifically impact the academic performance of the anticipated population of LEP, low income, and Hispanic students. (Section II.A.)
- The application does not clearly address how the proposed strategies connected to the core beliefs will be integrated into a comprehensive educational program. (Section II.A.)
- The application provides very little information regarding the curriculum and instruction choices for the 5-8 grades and does not demonstrate how these grades

will integrate the social justice curriculum into the educational programming. The applicant group intends to serve these grades after the fifth year of operation. (Section II.B.)

- The application and applicant group did not describe a clear plan or the curricula components to develop, implement, improve, and refine curriculum. (Section II.B.)
- The application and applicant group described multiple opportunities available prior to the school year (summer academy) and during the school day to create professional learning communities but there was very little information about how teacher's professional development needs will be identified and addressed effectively within this system. (Section II.B.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- The performance standards require a high standard of 75% proficiency in order to meet competency requirements for course credit. (Section II.C.)
- The application indicates the proposed school will perform diagnostic assessments during the summer academy to develop information about the student's proficiencies and learning needs. This information will help to create an Individualized Student Success Plan (ISSP) that will evolve over time to record and monitor the student's progress for all stakeholders to access. (Section II.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The sample performance standards described within the application contain generalities that are difficult to distinguish and provide limited descriptors of the specific skill or knowledge being evaluated. (Section II.C.)
- The application does not address potential differences in promotion policies between the 5-8 grades and high school programming. (Section II.C.)
- The application describes graduation requirements that are not necessarily connected to preparing students to enroll in college as proposed. English language arts requires four years of coursework while mathematics, science and social studies subjects require three years with the third year being an elective of the student's choice and requiring two years of foreign language coursework. (Section II.C.)
- It was unclear from the application and the interview, how ISSPs would be linked to curriculum, be used to facilitate decision-making about adjustments to the

educational programming and be used to support the goal of improved student learning. (Section II.D.)

- The assessment system proposes to implement multiple diagnostic tests, school-developed tests, student self-assessments, writing portfolios, and MCAS preparation to support student growth and development. It is unclear what systems will be in place to effectively monitor student progress across these varied assessments and to implement programming changes as a result of achievement data. (Section II.D.)

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The application and applicant group describe specific plans to establish a school culture consistent with the proposed school's mission and educational philosophy which includes a summer academy, relationship building practices, multilingual staff members, in addition to student, staff and parent representatives on the board of trustees. (Section II.E.)
- The application describes a clear plan to build family-school partnerships through communication and varied opportunities to participate in school decision-making. (Section II.E.)
- The applicant group describes the school as a 'full-service' provider which proposes to partner with Holyoke social service support agencies and surrounding colleges to provide after-school programming specific to their students' needs. The proposed school also intends to implement a dinner program to encourage families to view the school as a community center and utilize the after-school programming. (Section II.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The application and the applicant group described providing students with academic supports during study periods or through apprentice teachers in the classroom. There is limited information about how the proposed school is prepared to support students with a wide range of needs. (Section II.E.)
- The application does not discuss the potential modifications of the school's programming for grades 5-8 and grades 9-12. The application lacks explicit description of how the school day will be organized from either the student's or teacher's perspective. (Section II.E.)

Special Student Populations and Student Services

Primary Strengths

- The application indicates that it will

Primary Weaknesses

- It is unclear the purpose of employing

<p>employ a full time English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, a full time special needs teacher and a part time (.20) special education administrator during the first year of operation and will be flexible in future staffing additions in order to meet potential student needs. (Section II.F.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application describes a commitment to Sheltered English Immersion and English Language Development instruction for ELLs. (Section II.F.) • The application describes a myriad of instructional strategies to support the learning of students with special needs. (Section II.F.) 	<p>translators in content area classrooms for ELLs. Reviewers were concerned the use of such staffing would interfere with the utility of Sheltered English Immersion. (Section II.F.)</p>
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Enrollment and Recruitment

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application and applicant group propose a slow growth plan of adding a grade each year for the first four years of operation starting with 9th grade in direct response to community feedback. They propose to use the fifth year to decide if they will expand to include a middle school program. (Section III.A.) • The application provides recruitment and retention plans specifically targeted to the families of Holyoke who may be less informed about options. (Section III.A.) 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant group is committed to locating the school in Holyoke and focusing efforts on reaching Holyoke students, however, in the application they anticipate about 40% of students coming from other communities. There is very little information about enrollment and the needs of the different communities in the very large proposed region. (Section III.A.)
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Capacity and School Governance

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most members of the applicant group were either staff or board members for Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School (PVPA) and as a result are well acquainted with the operations of a Massachusetts charter public school. (Section III.B.) • The proposed founding board possesses skills and experience in education, law, community development, and finance. (Section III.B.) 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though the applicant group indicated the need to focus on board development and bringing in new members, there does not seem to be a plan in place to do so. The board appears to be comprised of the founding group and school constituencies. The proposed bylaws stipulate that founding board members will serve between five and eight years on the board. (Section III.B. and III.C.)
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- The governance model of including students, parents and community members on the board of trustees is consistent with the proposed school’s mission and program. (Section III.C.)
- The applicant group proposes an ambitious policy development strategy that is driven by individual stakeholders represented on the board in alignment with their social justice philosophy. (Section III.C.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- The application provides a clear reporting structure and delineation of responsibilities for the school’s leader and other administrative staff. (Section III.D.)
- The application provides a teacher observation and evaluation process that outlines specific components, clear goals and descriptive criteria to be reviewed both informally and formally by the principal during the school year. (Section III.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The application does not fully address the creation or implementation of professional development activities for faculty and administrators. (Section III.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group has identified a potential site in Holyoke that aligns with the proposed school’s vision. (Section III.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The application and the applicant group stated that they intend to provide limited transportation options for students that include a fee-based bus service with a sliding scale cost, coordinating ride sharing amongst families or public transportation. (Section III.E.)