

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2010-2011

Proposed School Name: Salem Community Charter School (**Horace Mann**)

Grades Served At Full Capacity: 9-12

Number of Students At Full Capacity: 125

Proposed School Location: Salem

Proposed Opening Year: FY2012

Public Statement:

The Salem Community Charter School will collaborate with a broad coalition of community partners to meet its mission of reducing Salem’s high dropout rate of 25%.

Working with social services, health care providers, and youth and recreation specialists, the school will serve 125 students ages 15 - 21 who have dropped out or are at-risk of dropping out as a result of challenges that interfere with their success.

In addition to an academically rigorous, competency- and project-based program of study, students will receive supportive and therapeutic services to assist them in achieving a high school diploma and continuing with higher education and/or work and career opportunities.

The school will open in downtown Salem in September 2011. Students will follow individualized programs of study and flexible schedules that take into account their personal, work and childcare needs.

Mission Statement:

The Salem Community Charter School is an innovative alternative public high school that collaborates with a broad coalition of community partners to serve 125 students ages 15 - 21 who have either dropped out of school or are at-risk of dropping out as a result of personal challenges and obstacles that interfere with their school success. These challenges include, but are not limited to, social and emotional problems, family violence, substance abuse, court involvement, a history of foster placements, significant family distress, English language difficulties, learning disabilities and special needs. In addition to an academically rigorous program of study, students receive supportive and therapeutic services to assist them in achieving a high school diploma and continuing on with higher education and/or work and career opportunities.

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	9 - 12	50
Second Year	9 - 12	75
Third Year	9 - 12	100
Fourth Year	9 - 12	125
Fifth Year	9 - 12	125

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

Primary Strengths

- The mission statement provides a clear and meaningful description of the purpose and values of the proposed school for the students it intends to serve. (Section I.A.)
- The vision statement provides a compelling image of the school’s future which aligns with the proposed mission and describes the ways in which the school will positively impact students. (Section I.B.)
- The application provides a description of the need in Salem for an alternative high school program to address the needs of the students who do not graduate (20%). It also discusses the proposed strategies that differ from the existing alternative program at Salem High School (Bridge). (Section I.C.)
- While reviewers were concerned that the application did not provide evidence that students or parents were interested in this type of programming, the applicant group emphasized that they have listened to these students and the school design is the result of those conversations. (Section I.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- No primary weaknesses.

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- The application describes the founding group’s core beliefs and values about education and are aligned with the mission statement. The core beliefs are succinct and meaningful in targeting this student population. (Section II.A.)
- The educational philosophy is integrated into the educational program through the use of competency-based curriculum and assessment, targeted activities for relationship building, and the integration of student’s needs, interests and abilities into curriculum and instruction design. (Section II.A.)
- The proposed curriculum and instruction

Primary Weaknesses

- The application provided limited research to support the choice of competency-based curriculum as the vehicle to support the achievement of diverse learners. (Section II.A.)
- While the application provided a sample of the content and skills for the proposed five competencies and aligned each with corresponding core beliefs, it did not provide a complete picture of what students will know or be able to do. (Section II.B. and II.C.)
- While the applicant intends to hire a part-time curriculum coordinator to work with staff throughout the year to develop

<p>is consistent with the mission and educational philosophy of the proposed school. In addition, the application cites relevant research to support their use of project-based learning. (Section II.B.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application described interactive instructional methods and implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) training for faculty to support learning for all students. (Section II.B.) 	<p>curriculum, there was a limited discussion within the application of the process to develop, improve, and refine the proposed individualized curriculum to maximize effectiveness. (Section II.B.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application provides limited information regarding the process for teacher evaluations. (Section II.B.)
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Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application described a graduation standard of 75-100% proficiency in all competencies, a final capstone project, and MCAS proficiency. The graduation requirements are based on high expectations, aligned with the school’s educational philosophy and targeted to meet the needs of the proposed student population. (Section II.B. and II.C.) • The application proposes an extensive assessment system to measure student outcomes that includes standardized tests and internally developed performance assessments. (Section II.D.) 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the application provided multiple rubrics for sample competencies and/or sample state standards, the rubrics provided minimal distinctions between levels of student performance. (Section II.C.) • While the application proposes to address students’ social and emotional skills, there is no plan developed to measure student progress toward attaining non-academic goals. (Section II.D.) • The application provides limited information regarding the systematic use of data to inform curriculum and instruction. (Section II.D.) • Reviewers were unclear on the integration of career readiness and workplace skills within the educational programming and during the interview the applicant group provided limited detail around their strategies to help students to identify potential career paths through curriculum, testing, and advisory groups. (Section II.C. and II.D.)
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School Characteristics

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application provides a clear plan to establish a supportive school culture that is consistent with the school’s mission and educational philosophy. The programming includes weekly advisory 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the nature of the competency based curriculum, it is unclear how classes will be organized to address students’ varied needs within the school day with only four faculty members
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<p>meetings, ‘specials,’ and daily community meetings. (Section II.E.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application provided an extensive list of potential community partners and during the interview, the applicant group described team meetings among partners to share information about students’ needs and provide referral services. (Section II.E.) 	<p>providing instructional support and a part time guidance counselor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the interview, the applicant group provided limited clarification regarding how the school day and schedule would operate for faculty and students within the differing morning and evening schedules. (Section II.E.) • While the applicant group discussed a distinct behavior philosophy, neither the application nor the applicant group provided a specific plan to implement at the proposed school. The applicant group did indicate that because of their involvement with social agencies and law enforcement, they would be able to come up with innovative solutions for their students. (Section II.E.)
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Special Student Populations and Student Services

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application and the applicant group indicated that they intend to implement the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to provide all learners access to the curriculum. (Section II.F.) • The applicant group plans to hire content area teachers who are dually certified in special education or English as a second language, or if needed, promote staff professional development to obtain dual certification. (Section II.F.) • While it is unclear the type and magnitude of services that will be provided by the Salem Public Schools District to serve English language Learners and students with special needs at the proposed school, the application describes the Salem Public Schools’ Pupil Personnel Services as a resource for the proposed school. (Section II.F.) 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the application states that sheltered content instruction, Sheltered English Immersion and English language instruction targeted to a Limited English Proficient (LEP) student’s proficiency will be performed, it provides an incomplete description of the processes and procedures used to identify, assess and serve English language learners. (Section II.F.) • While the application discusses a three-tiered system to support the needs of all students, there is limited information describing the processes and procedures of the special education program. (Section II.F.) • The application did not address the nutrition program within the application. (Section II.F.)
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Enrollment and Recruitment

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p>	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p>
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- The proposed recruitment strategies involve broad outreach to families and students within the Salem community that specifically targets recent Salem High School dropouts. (Section III.A.)
- While reviewers expressed concern that the proposed school will experience sizable turnover and low student retention, the application provided multiple strategies to integrate students into the school and meet their needs quickly to avoid these outcomes. (Section III.A.)
- While the draft enrollment policy still needs to be refined, reviewed, and approved by the Department, the policy does provide information about the enrollment process, application, and lottery guidelines. (Section III.A.)
- No primary weaknesses.

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- The board and founding group have a range of skills and experiences including educational leadership, pediatric medicine, charter school development, parents of at-risk students, and non-profit management. The proposed board and founding group would benefit from additional legal and financial management expertise. (Section III.B.)
- While reviewers had questions about why the applicant group calls itself a Horace Mann III school as opposed to a Horace Mann I. The application includes a brief description of key agreements and signed Memorandums of Understanding between the board of trustees and the school committee and the board of trustees and the Salem Teachers Union and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. (Section III.B.)
- While questions remain about how the governance, management, and financial structures of the proposed school will interact with the district, the applicant group collectively recognizes that the

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 application proposed that the board of trustees “working with the principal and superintendent, will set the school’s budget based on the appropriation from the Salem School Committee and any additional revenue that the school can raise.” This raises concerns about the autonomy of the school’s board of trustees over the budget as it relates to the educational program. While Horace Mann charter schools are expected to collaborate with other public schools in the district and work cooperatively with a superintendent and other district personnel, there still need to be structures in place to support the school’s autonomy and accountability. (Section III.C.)
- While the interview with the applicant

traditional school is not working for this type of at-risk students, and they are eager to work together to develop another more flexible model. (Section III.B., III.C. and III.D.)

group provided some clarifying information, limited information was provided about the governance model and the structure and relationship between the board of trustees, school leader, teachers, and Salem Public Schools. It does not describe the recruitment, selection, development, or self-evaluation plans for board members, or the policy development process used by the board. (Section III.C.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- The description of the roles and responsibilities of the principal are articulated in the management section of the application with specific information provided about the principal's role in drafting the school's annual budget. (Section III.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The application and the applicant group provide very little information about teacher evaluations and professional development activities of teachers and administrators. (Section III.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group intends to have a downtown location that is easily accessible to transportation, as well as located within the central business district which could ease connections with job training and internships. (Section III.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The application states that the school is seeking suitable space in downtown Salem, but limited information on the search is provided. (Section III.E.)
- While the application outlines the structures and processes for managing the school's finances, questions about autonomy arise, with the Salem public school's business manager being co-equal with the school's board of trustees. (Section III.F.)