

# PROPOSED PAULO FREIRE SOCIAL JUSTICE CHARTER SCHOOL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*This was prepared by the founding group of the Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School.*

## **Mission Statement**

The Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School (PFSJCS) is a public high school preparing students for college success while inspiring them to be active and effective citizens. We achieve educational excellence and social responsibility for all our students through high expectations and a rigorous academic and social justice curriculum. Our students graduate with strong intellectual and ethical foundations necessary for future leaders of a global society.

## **Vision Statement**

### **At Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School we believe in:**

**Equal Opportunity:** There is no greater need in public education than to give every student the opportunity and resources to succeed. This was the vision of Paulo Freire, our namesake. He identified quality education for all individuals as the primary way to create a more socially just society.

**Achievement:** Paulo Freire espoused the importance of literacy and academic achievement. We join in the belief that personal literacy becomes a path to realizing full human potential. PFSJCS graduates will be: literate, active, self-aware, prepared to succeed in higher education, able to determine and attain their personal goals, and capable in serving as inspirational leaders and positive role models.

**Diversity:** By enrolling students from communities that represent different racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds, as well as encompassing urban and rural settings, we will be able to provide an enriched educational environment for sharing a wide range of personal experiences and perspectives while modeling social justice. PFSJCS will honor and celebrate the diversity of our students, teachers, parents, and surrounding communities, and equally value their contributions to the educational process.

**Social Justice:** At PFSJCS we model social justice values and norms, and provide information, encouragement and educational programs to build a collective awareness that fosters excellence, equity, and respect for all individuals. At PFSJCS social justice means that all students, regardless of race, culture, income, abilities, or sexual preference, have equal access to a quality education, necessary resources, and the opportunity to live productive and successful lives.

**Full Service:** The Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School founders understand that education doesn't just occur Monday to Friday, 8 hours a day, for 180 days a year. Learning is a continuous program of growth and development for students, family members, and the entire school community. PFSJCS's full-service programming will include a preparatory summer academy; programs throughout the school year; an extended day; evening and

Saturday classes for skill building and enrichment opportunities; virtual learning programs; evening adult literacy classes; and community building activities on evenings and weekends.

### **Communities to be served**

Our proposed region is comprised of six communities located in the Pioneer Valley along the Connecticut River, surrounded by the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains, and includes factories, farms and many colleges. The six cities and towns are truly diverse and include both urban highly concentrated populations and rural isolated areas. The region includes large numbers of low-income, Title I eligible families; many middle income, blue-collar families; and some more affluent individuals. There are high concentrations of Hispanic families as well. Out of the six communities two perform in the bottom ten percent on State-wide standardized tests of academic achievement; one has the highest teen pregnancy rate as well as the highest dropout rate in the state; and bullying has been a major focus for another. To combat these concerns these communities would greatly benefit from a high school that sets high expectations, achieves excellent academic performance, offers successful community engagement, and a strong social justice mission and vision.

### **Educational Philosophy**

We believe that every student is capable of excellence in education if given the right educational environment and support systems. The following values successfully served our students and community at PVPA and are documented as key components in creating successful schools: High Expectations, Active Community Membership, Excellent Teaching, Clear Goals and Expectations, Specific Data and Feedback Systems, and Individualized Support. The focus of our educational program, incorporating all the above values, will be centered on the following three areas: Personal Excellence, Supportive Communities, and Social Responsibility.

### **School Characteristics**

PFSJCS is committed to high academic and social expectations for all of our students and we are willing to do whatever it takes to challenge, motivate, and support each student in attaining his/her highest levels of achievement. We challenge students to be engaged, persistent, thoughtful, and successful at setting and reaching personal goals.

PFSJCPS will be a true participatory community, where each member is valued as an individual, and supported in his or her growth. Students, parents, teachers, administrators and board members will all be expected to engage fully in the process of actively constructing the school as a learning community and a vehicle for positive social change.

### **Organizational Viability**

The challenge for a school based on the concepts of social justice and Freirean pedagogy is to create a governance model which supports and mirrors these concepts and allows for strong, clear leadership for those duties required by Massachusetts regulations and dictated by common business sense. Consequently, we are proposing a “true” representative form of governance where faculty and staff, parents, and students each have designated seats on the board of trustees. Such a form requires time and support to be effective. The school will provide time during all school meeting for faculty to discuss school governance. Faculty advisors will work with students to insure that students get the educational support they need to be knowledgeable and effective leaders and to play a positive, integral part in governance. One evening per month the school will provide a meeting for parents, at which the Executive Director will present topics from the upcoming Board agenda and support parents in formulating additional items they want brought before the Board. It will be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to insure that these three constituent groups (faculty, students, and parents) are meeting effectively and receiving necessary support.

### **Academic Success Research**

In order to insure that the outcome of our school’s approach is academic excellence for all students we have affiliated with the University of Massachusetts, Boston, Department of Applied Linguistics, whose chairperson is Donaldo Macedo. For decades, Dr. Macedo collaborated with Paulo Freire, by: publishing with him, translating and editing his work, and coordinating lectures internationally. The Department has agreed to conduct a long-term research project. As a graduate program with a master’s thesis component and future developments of a doctoral program, they will coordinate a multi-methods research relationship to document the conceptualization and implementation of the *Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School* and its academic outcomes.