

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2011-2012

Proposed School Name: Springfield Preparatory Charter School

Grades Served At Full Capacity: 5-12

Number of Students At Full Capacity: 1070

Proposed School Location: Springfield

Proposed Opening Year: 2012-2013

Public Statement:

“Springfield Preparatory will be a rigorous college-preparatory charter public school with plans to open fall 2012 serving 392 students in grades 5-7. The school will add a grade level each year until enrolling approximately 1,070 students in grades 5-12 when at full capacity. A relationship with Springfield Technical Community College will be established enabling Springfield Prep students to earn college credit for courses and to participate in various college programs and activities. The school’s mission is to prepare graduates for success in college, equip them with the ability and desire for lifelong learning, and strengthen their civic, ethical, and moral values. Minnesota-based SABIS Educational Systems, a private international education company founded in 1886, will manage and operate the school. SABIS currently manages two Massachusetts charter schools. The comprehensive SABIS educational system has an outstanding record of success in preparing students for college, not only in Massachusetts, but also in other states and countries where it is being implemented. The SABIS college preparatory program is being implemented in schools in 15 countries enrolling 60,000 students, including in eleven charters in six states.”

Mission Statement:

“The mission of Springfield Preparatory is to provide an academically rigorous and successful world-class college preparatory public educational program that enables all students, regardless of their background, to achieve their full potential, prepares them for success in college, equips them with the ability and desire for lifelong learning, and strengthens their civic, ethical, and moral values.”

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	5-7	392
Second Year	5-8	530
Third Year	5-9	664
Fourth Year	5-10	800
Fifth Year	5-11	936

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

Primary Strengths

- The mission statement is succinct and it identifies the purpose and values of the school. Though components of the mission are underdeveloped in the application, the mission identifies four overarching meaningful themes at the proposed school including academic rigor, college preparedness, engagement in learning, as well as civic, ethical, and moral values. (Section I.A.)
- The vision serves as an organizing principle for the application. (Section I.B.)
- The application and the applicant group describe why they selected the city of Springfield and how the proposed school would enhance or expand the educational options in Springfield by specifically proposing a school that fosters a college going culture and offering an academic system that focused on identifying learning gaps quickly in order to tailor the curriculum to address these gaps. (Section I.C.)
- This charter application has received letters and/or written testimony in support, including but not limited to material from Kirk Smith, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Springfield, and Jeffrey S. Ciuffreda, Executive Director of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. See public comment. (Section I.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- Portions of the mission statement "ability and desire for lifelong learning" or "achieve their full potential", are never clearly defined, cultivated, measured, or monitored, and are not reflected throughout the application. (Section I.A.)
- Throughout the application, limited information is provided about the programs of the SABIS Educational Systems organization (SABIS) which prevents a compelling image of the school's future from emerging. (Section I.B.)
- Although the vision aligns and builds on the mission of the school, the early college aspect of the vision is not included in the mission. (Section I.A.)
- The vision regarding Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) is not fully realized in the rest of the application. In the interview, the applicant group indicated that time is built into the growth plan to work out the details of the proposed school's relationship with STCC prior to implementation during the high school years. SABIS indicated that the type of relationship proposed with STCC is new to their program. (Section I.B.)
- The Description of Communities to be Served section provides a synopsis of the demography of the city in terms of race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, student performance, graduation rates, and college completion rates, but it was unclear from the application and the interview what strategies the school would implement to support students to enter, persist, and complete college. (Section I.B.)
- The Springfield Superintendent, Dr. A. J. Ingram, does not support granting a charter to this application. See public comment. (Section I.C.)

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- The educational philosophy clearly describes the core beliefs and values of SABIS, the education management organization (EMO) selected by the founders to provide substantially all educational services under contract. It succinctly outlines the educational philosophy that aligns with the mission and vision, though it is not clear where the dual enrollment commitment is or how it implemented as part of the educational program. (Section II.A.)
- The curriculum and instruction are consistent with the mission and educational philosophy of the proposed school and reflect the commitment made to implement the full educational and management model from SABIS. (Section II.B.)
- The application contained an outline of the curriculum, a sample scope and sequence, sample content and skill standards, and pacing charts. The information provided reviewers a clear understanding of the essential concepts of the SABIS curriculum and the various materials teachers will use to guide and plan daily instruction. (Section II.B.)
- It is clear that the development, refinement, and improvement of the curriculum will be performed by SABIS personnel in Minnesota as part of the educational management contract. (Section II.B.)
- In the application and the interview, it was clear that the Academic Quality Controller (AQC) plays an essential role. As the instructional leader, the AQC works with SABIS and the proposed school's teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction based on the student data collected through the SABIS assessment system and initiate changes when necessary. (Section II.B.)
- The application describes the primary approach to teaching as direct instruction coupled with the use of peer teaching on class assignments through the prefect system. Research is provided to support the

Primary Weaknesses

- The brevity of discussion within the application of the structures to be adopted from SABIS provides a limited understanding as to how it will be integrated into a comprehensive education program. During the interview, the applicant group and SABIS representatives provided additional information about certain practices, including the prefect system and Intensives, but it remains unclear. (Section II.B.)
- The application provides little independent research to demonstrate that the SABIS approach may improve the academic performance of all students within the anticipated student population. While SABIS provides in its own publication, "Closing the Achievement Gap: The SABIS Story," data to support the academic results for African-American, Latino, and low income student populations, it provides no supporting data for students with disabilities and students identified as English language learners. (Section II.A. and II.B.)
- The application describes the resources, both in educational materials and corporate support, which SABIS will provide as part of the draft management contract. It is unclear how SABIS resources will operate within a clear system to support school leadership and staff in providing effective instruction. (Section II.B.)
- While during the interview, the applicant group and representatives from SABIS stated that the SABIS program addresses the needs of all students, the application did not explain how the chosen instructional strategies are appropriate for all students at all levels other than to re-teach points by assigning students having difficulties to Intensive classes, resource rooms, and/or tutoring sessions. (Section II.B.)

use of the chosen instructional practices and the applicant group strongly believes that these strategies accelerate learning and character development. (Section II.B.)

- While the applicant group explained in the interview that they have a few years to develop the programming at the proposed school and that Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) already has systems in place for high school students to participate in dual enrollment, it was not clear how the college preparatory and the dual enrollment portions of the program will be developed and implemented into a comprehensive educational program. (Section II.A. and B.)
- Though it is clear that the proposed school will provide professional development during the summer (two weeks) and school year (typically one day per term) as well as scheduled weekly grade level and content area meetings, the explanation of the type of formal professional development that will be available and how it will be responsive to the teachers' and students' needs is generalized and vague. (Section II.B.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- The application and the applicant group describe a comprehensive set of SABIS assessments that will be used to monitor students and teachers in a systematic way, including diagnostic, standardized, and norm-referenced tests. The system includes the weekly Academic Monitoring System (AMS) that is used to assess student knowledge of every concept taught the previous week, periodic exams, end-of term exams, final exams, as well as norm referenced tests from outside of the SABIS system, such as Standardized Tests for Assessment in Reading and Math. (Section II.D.)
- The SABIS assessment system is clearly explained and the application describes how the data will be used. The proposed school has a computer-based, SABIS developed academic monitoring system that will be used for teachers, administrators, parents /guardians and the

Primary Weaknesses

- Though it is clear that student promotion is based on the minimum mastery of 60% of the academic benchmarks, the subject areas used to determine promotion are indicated differently in various areas of the application. In addition to this inconsistency, a potential promotion policy of minimum mastery in only mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) may not fully reflect the vision of college preparedness. (Section II.C.)
- Though the application provided information regarding the broad non-academic goals for students, the systems to measure student progress towards these goals was not clearly explained. The ten criteria related to the SABIS code of conduct was found only as a footnote to the draft accountability plan. (Section II.D.)
- While this is a "college preparatory"

board to monitor student performance. The application explicitly states that SABIS assessments are directly linked to the SABIS curriculum with all materials developed by SABIS. (Section II.D.)

- While the PSATs or SATs are not indicated as part of its assessment plan, in the application and interview, the applicant group indicated providing Accuplacer testing with the proposed school's high school juniors to develop academic interventions for college preparedness. (Section II.D.)

school with a dual enrollment program, the proposed school does not indicate a commitment that all students will be provided access to enrollment at STCC and indicates that eligibility requirements have yet to be determined by the proposed board and SABIS. (Section II.D.)

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The application clearly describes a school which provides additional learning time through a longer day, before and after school programming (potential fees associated), Saturday Academy, and summer programming. The educational programming also includes an emphasis on ELA and mathematics in alignment with the proposed school's mission. (Section II.E.)
- The application and the applicant group describe the culture of the proposed school as being a "rigorous, challenging, safe, and caring school that will stress entry into college at every possible moment." (Section II.E.)
- The application provides a general description of how the school will establish the school culture, including a brief description of the SABIS Student Life Program and the SABIS Student Life Organization™, which are the programs that deal with culture, classroom management, character education, and student empowerment and leadership. (Section II.E.)
- The application describes the 'academic and cultural benefits' of the proposed relationship with STCC in terms of access to college courses, Saturday Academies focused on acclimating students to a college culture, financial aid counseling,

Primary Weaknesses

- While the application described a school day that operated from 8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., it was unclear how the day would be organized for students and teachers. The application provides the most basic information about the day-to-day experience of students and teachers making it difficult to envision the school in operation. (Section II.E.)
- While in the application and interview, the applicant group explained a clear culture of high expectations, opportunities to participate in college activities, and proximity to the STCC campus as underlying the college culture of the proposed charter school, it is not clear how the proposed school will address the challenges of preparing students who perform below grade level to successfully participate in the early college component of the school's vision. (Section II.E.)
- The relationship with STCC, as described in the application and interview, is painted in broad strokes that do not indicate a comprehensive plan that would be integral to the proposed school's operations. Activities, such as Saturday Academy and a Middle College option, require additional discussion. (Section II.E.)
- The application provided a brief description and explanation of the SABIS

<p>and the use of STCC facilities. (Section II.E.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application provided a clear philosophy regarding student behavior and discipline that was consistent with the proposed school’s mission and educational philosophy. (Section II.E.) 	<p>Student Life Organization™ which though clearly aligned with the proposed school’s mission and educational philosophy does not communicate the necessary information regarding a plan to establish and maintain the envisioned culture. During the interview the applicant group and representatives of SABIS, provided additional information to better envision the systems that will be put in place. (Section II.E.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though the discipline philosophy was clear, it was unclear how the philosophy would be understood and implemented in a planned systematic way for teachers, students, and parents. (Section II.E.) • Although 3 of the proposed board members present at the interview have children who attend or attended SABIS International in Springfield and were positive about their own personal experiences, plans in the application to engage parents and families in the education of their children were underdeveloped. It was unclear how family-school partnerships would be built and maintained. (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 provided general knowledge regarding program requirements for special education and English language development (ELD) program. In addition, during the interview, the applicant group described the use of modifications to meet individual students’ needs. (Section II.F.) 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though in the application and during the interview, the applicant group states that the SABIS model, including curriculum and assessment, is adapted to provide access to students with disabilities and students learning English, it is still unclear how the model is responsive to the needs of special student populations and diverse learners. (Section II.F.) • Special education and English language learner (ELL) student-teacher ratios are high (45:1 FTE teacher/1 aide in special education and 55:1 FTE teacher in ELL) based on projected enrollment during the first year. (Section II.F.) • While the application provided a general overview of the ELD program and special education program, the narrative lacked
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details about the processes and procedures that the proposed school would use to identify, assess, and provide specialized instruction to each student in need of services. (Section II.F.)

Enrollment and Recruitment

Primary Strengths

- The application indicates that the applicant group is intending to allocate substantial resources to reach out to potential students and their families. In their informal interactions with their neighbors, co-workers, and community members, they stated they have encountered support for the proposed school. (Section III.A.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While the application included a petition supporting the establishment of a new charter school in Springfield with close to 600 signatures, including a limited number who indicated an interest in enrollment for their children, it was not otherwise evident in the application, the interview, nor in submitted public comment if potential enrollment will support the founding of a 1070 student SABIS managed 5-12 school. (Section III.A.)

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- The proposed founding board describes itself as ‘a concerned group of citizens’ and includes three current and/or former parents of students at SABIS International Charter School in Springfield as well as an individual who taught at the school for five years. Members also possess a range of skills and experiences including but not limited to: finance, law and law enforcement, human resources management, non-profit governance and management, and higher education. (Section III.B.)
- Though two of the nine proposed board members were not in attendance at the interview, it was clear that those present were united in their vision to provide Springfield children a strong choice for education and spoke strongly about their commitment to the proposed school and its mission. (Section III.B.)
- The application and the applicant group described how SABIS was selected as the Education Management Organization

Primary Weaknesses

- During the interview, the applicant group stated that the nexus of the proposed school developed from the new STCC president’s vision, yet the relationship with STCC is underdeveloped and does not play a central role within the application and proposed school’s operations. (Section III.B.)
- The applicant group acknowledged that the group needs to add additional board members but envisioned those new members as ‘neighbors who want to be active’ without indicating the potential skill sets that are presently lacking on the proposed board, i.e. experienced K-12 educators. (Section III.B.)
- While the applicant group indicates it will seek input from SABIS and school staff in determining policies, it does not indicate a clear process for decision making. (Section III.B.)
- While the draft contract requires refinement, review, and approval by the Department, the draft contract, as it is

(EMO) to manage the charter school. Based on their knowledge of SABIS's track record and the performance of the SABIS International Charter School, a K-12 school serving over 1500 students in Springfield, the applicant group believes that another large charter school managed by SABIS in Springfield is the strongest option. (Section III.B.)

- The application provided a clear description of the distinction between the role and responsibilities of the school leadership and the board of trustees of the school. (Section III.C)

written, does not clearly define the performance-based relationship between the EMO and the proposed school's board of trustees. While the contract provides general information regarding targets for student performance, an annual academic progress report and quarterly budget reports provided by the EMO to the proposed board, there is no discussion of the formal evaluation of SABIS by the proposed board. In the interview, the proposed board indicated that it would review specific data and materials to monitor academic performance and fiscal management, such as MCAS results, annual report, accountability plan, and annual audit but did not indicate a formal organized process to hold the EMO accountable for the proposed school's academic performance, organizational viability and faithfulness to the charter. (Section III.C.)

- When asked about the payment structure in the draft contract and the proposed budget, the applicant group was not able to identify additional expenditures, beyond the 6% management and 8% licensing fees, in the proposed budget that are part of the negotiated contract with SABIS, such as instructional supplies and materials, and board training. The applicant group stated that the budget was developed with guidance from SABIS. See additional comments in finance section below. (Section III.C.)
- The draft contract did not clearly delineate the specific services that the proposed school would receive from SABIS for the management and licensing fees paid nor all of the potential services or materials not covered by the 14% fee. See additional comments in finance section below. (Section III.C.)
- In addition, there is limited discussion within the draft contract of the conditions and procedures for the contract's renewal and termination. Automatic renewal of the agreement is not an acceptable practice. It would be essential to have safeguards in place that empower the

board of trustees of a charter school.
(Section III.C.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- SABIS can enhance the capacity of the school by providing a collection of instructional and operational services to the school leadership and the board of trustees, including but not limited to staff recruitment and training, core academic and character education curriculum, integrated assessment system, staff professional development, access to and development of resources, in addition to start-up process management. (Section III.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The general staffing chart and brief narrative staffing plan provided information that was inadequate to determine if staffing projections were aligned with the application and sufficient to meet students' needs. (Section III.D)
- As a school intending to contract with an EMO to provide substantially all of the educational and management services, limited information is provided about the structure and staffing at SABIS that will support school leadership and teachers. Questions remain about the role and authority of the school leader, the influence and responsibility of SABIS, and the potential challenges among school leadership, SABIS corporate staff, and school staff created by management internally by school leadership and externally by SABIS. (Section III.D.)
- Questions remain about the proposed school's plan for making key school-level decisions on student achievement, fiscal planning, and/or operations as well as the board's oversight of decision-making by SABIS. (Section III.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The application and applicant group have identified a space to lease at the Springfield Technology Park. This facility is located in close proximity to STCC and could enhance the partnership that they intend to establish with STCC. During the interview, the applicant group indicated that if the facility is not ready, they have a back-up plan for the first year of operation. (Section III.E.)
- The application contains a well detailed narrative describing the proposed financial operations as well as fiscal controls and reporting policies. (Section III.F.)

Primary Weaknesses

- Though the proposed budget aligns with the overall application, the budget narrative and expenditure justifications lacked sufficient detail to explain and support the projected amounts in the budget. (Section III.F.)
- The various fees provided to the educational management organization are not clearly described in the application, draft management contract, or budget. See comments in the governance section. (Section III.F.)