

PROPOSED ARGOSY COLLEGIATE CHARTER SCHOOL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This was prepared by the Argosy Collegiate Charter School applicant group.

Mission. Providing all scholars in grades 6 through 12 with a seamless middle to high school education that educates them for a rigorous and relevant four-year college degree and ensures they are able to compete in a 21st century global economy, Argosy Collegiate Charter School prepares Fall River’s diverse community of learners with the academic foundation and character values necessary to be successful in college, career, and life.

Vision. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* highlighted the growing crisis in American public schools when it argued that America’s low-skill labor force was no longer able to compete in the global marketplace, and that our economic security lay vulnerable as a result. Thirty years later, this warning is playing out in the city of Fall River which has an unemployment rate among the highest in the state of Massachusetts (12.5%) and academic achievement results in the bottom 10% as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

Serving a community with tremendous need, Argosy Collegiate Charter School (“Argosy Collegiate”) will educate all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and students with high needs, in grades 6-12 to remediate academic gaps experienced in elementary school and accelerate learning in middle and high school, thus preparing every scholar to succeed in college, career, and life.

We fiercely believe that all students are capable of achieving at high levels.

Our primary goal is to ensure that 100% of our scholars graduate from a four-year college with valuable knowledge, employable skills, and strong character values. A four-year degree better prepares our young people with the rigorous skills and experiences that leaders seek in a competitive 21st Century global economy, and are, therefore, most relevant to the current and trending economic climate within the Massachusetts knowledge-based economy. Life success – which we define as the ability to pursue one’s interests, support one’s family, gain meaningful opportunities, and participate positively within the larger community – is an inextricable part of our mission.

Argosy Collegiate will open with 100 sixth grade students in 2014, use a slow growth model by growing one grade of 100 students per year, and reach full growth span in 2020. To provide entry directly into our high school, we will backfill through ninth grade. Our key design features, as outlined in our educational philosophy and education program and as informed by our mission and core beliefs, are structured to support the success of all students:

- 1. More Time.** A strong academic foundation is first informed through the extended and prioritized use of time. The National Center on Time and Learning (2011) highlights the impact of extended, prioritized learning time focused on students’ needs on all students, and particularly those with special needs.

2. More Literacy, More Math, More Supports. At the core of our academic program, we focus on reading, writing, and math and meeting the needs of all students. Academic Supports are based on student data and guided by the Massachusetts Tiered System of Support.

3. Data-Driven Instruction. We assess often and are relentless about analyzing data to determine gaps, progress and instruction. Leadership has the dedicated time to support teachers on instructional and cultural priorities and teachers have the dedicated time to evaluate and action plan from weekly and cyclical data.

4. School Culture. With a positive and strong school culture based on our DREAM values (Determination, Respect, Excellence, Ambition, Mastery), middle school scholars can seamlessly transition to high school with little risk of dropping out, and have college-bound goals informed by the skills and knowledge to get them there.

5. College Skills Program. This four-year program supports our scholars' transition from middle to high school, and prepares them academically, socially, and programmatically for successful college and professional careers. The program includes a four-year advisory relationship component in addition to a yearly support course to build skills and tools for high school graduation and college success.

Need. Our mission, vision, and educational design are in direct response to the chronic economic and academic need in our city. Fall River is one of 24 Massachusetts Gateway Cities¹, and is a community rich with First Language Not English (FLNE) residents. In May 2013, the unemployment rate was 12.5%, nearly double the state unemployment rate (6.8%) and the third highest of the Gateway Cities.²

We will focus our student recruitment and facility location on two areas of chronic need – the South End (high school graduation rate of 30.32%, with 5.88% attaining a bachelor's degree, and 22.1% of residents living below poverty levels.³) and Flint Village (a high school graduation rate of 29.29%, a bachelor's degree rate of 6.54%⁴, and 29.9% of residents living below the poverty level⁵).

Fall River is rated among the lowest 10% of districts across the Commonwealth as measured on the MCAS. On the 2013 MCAS, 36% of fourth graders (from which we would enroll our inaugural sixth graders in August of 2014) were proficient or advanced in ELA, and less than a third (30%) were proficient or advanced in Math. Less than half (42%) of sixth graders were proficient or advanced in ELA, and a third (34%) were proficient in Math. In eighth grade, 54% were proficient or advanced in ELA, and 32% in Math.

Three public high schools serve Fall River students - none with a college preparatory mission for all students. B.M.C. Durfee serves the majority of Fall River high school students, yet only one in four graduates plan to attend a four-year college or university.⁶

¹ <http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/gateway-cities/20120904-gateway-cities-fact-sheet.pdf>.

² http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/town_comparison.asp.

³ www.city-data.com/zip/02724.html.

⁴ www.clrsearch.com/Fall_River_Demographics/MA/02723/Education-Level-and-Enrollment-Statistics.

⁵ www.city-data.com/zip/02723.html.

⁶ http://www.fallriverschools.org/Durfee/PDFs/school_profile_2013.pdf.

Greater Fall River Regional Vocational Technical High School (Diman) graduated its senior class of 2012 with 18% planning to attend a four-year college or university.⁷

The low academic performance of Fall River's Public Schools combined with our high unemployment rate evidence the inability of local residents to access a new and competitive global economy based upon 21st Century skills and evidence the need to change this reality for our current and upcoming generation of students. This reality compels the Founding Group to propose Argosy Collegiate in Fall River.

Support. Throughout the planning stages, we have solicited input and support from the Fall River community. We have connected with multiple organizations, communities, and groups, meeting with and talking to families and community stakeholders in the Flint and the South End. Community demand is evidenced by the support of over 1,000 families who have signed a petition of support for Argosy Collegiate. We have developed relationships and partnerships with numerous local organizations to support students, families, and staff. In support of our college preparatory mission, we have garnered the support of many local stakeholders including an institutional partnership with the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

Capacity. Lead Founder, Fellow with Building Excellent Schools, and proposed Executive Director Kristen Pavao is a proven urban educator and native of Fall River. The Founding Group of Argosy Collegiate Charter School is a team of dedicated and experienced professionals, committed to the revitalization of Fall River and the academic success of its students. Collectively, the Founding Group brings expertise in regular and special education, instructional and senior educational leadership, public board governance and governance leadership, financial planning and management, legal expertise, strategic planning, public relations, and associated regulatory requirements, real estate development, marketing, curriculum development, and fundraising. We have benefitted from the generous collaboration and dissemination of best practices from high quality schools across our state, region, and nation, and have the continuing support and expertise of Proven Provider Building Excellent Schools. The Founding Group, along with the support of families, elected officials, and many business and community leaders, stand ready to do what it takes to develop, found and sustain a highly structured, college preparatory 6-12 charter school in Fall River, and to work with others to ensure that all students have access to the opportunity of a bright and promising future. We embrace the community of practice across all sectors, and we believe deeply in being part of the larger educational framework in and outside of Fall River.

⁷ <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=08210000&orgtypecode=5&leftNavId=307&>.