

PROPOSED FENIX CHARTER SCHOOL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This was prepared by the Fenix Charter School applicant group.

MISSION STATEMENT

Fenix Charter School partners with families and communities to provide powerful learning experiences that transform students' understanding of themselves and the world. Through integrated and project-based curricula grounded in the core values of social entrepreneurship, students develop the competencies that will prepare them to complete higher education, thrive in a global economy, and be change agents in their communities.

This public school will serve students in grades 5 to 12 and their families in the community of Lynn, Massachusetts.

VISION STATEMENT

Fenix Charter School will expand educational opportunities in diverse communities and serve as a catalyst for systemic changes in public education. The increasing complexity of our global economy and the chronic social challenges that students and their families face daily, demand that schools advance the core values of social entrepreneurship: *a relentless focus on creativity, innovation, collaboration, and social responsibility.* Students are then empowered to complete higher education, thrive in new economies, and seize opportunities to be change agents in their communities.

COMMUNITY TO BE SERVED: LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS

The city of Lynn, located in the North Shore of Massachusetts, is a complex linguistic, social, and cultural mosaic. A historically immigrant community, Lynn is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse communities in the commonwealth. The community has a fascinating and compelling history where it has blazed trails in economic, social, and technological innovations. Unfortunately, the city also has a history of chronic racial and educational barriers that have kept segments of the population from unleashing their true potential. Only 21.5% of Lynn residents have a bachelor's degree and only 14.2% have a graduate or professional degree. 16.2% have some college training but no degree. Only 35% have a high school diploma or GED. Lynn students have performed consistently in the bottom 10% of the state in MCAS over the last four years, and this trend demonstrates a chronic pattern of underperformance.

Lynn has always found a way to reinvent itself at various points in its history and the present educational conditions demand reinvention. To reverse the declining economic and educational trends, a stronger educational system that offers diverse educational models and programs is needed. Our plan is to collaborate with Lynn Public Schools, other charter schools in area like KIPP Academy, and private/religious schools like Saint Mary's to create a network of schools that offers Lynn families viable educational options that best match the diverse needs of their children.

EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Fenix Charter School is an attempt to honor the pioneering history of Lynn by providing a school to Lynn families that will prepare their children for the 21st century and beyond. Our educational focus will be on *social entrepreneurship* in anticipation that the 21st

century will mark the rise of the social entrepreneur. Social entrepreneurship is becoming the foundation of the new economy: Solving problems at the local and global levels has generated an explosion of jobs and opportunities in the for-profit and non-profit sectors. The *Green Economy* is one example of this new economy.

As a primary vehicle to help students to experience first-hand what it means to be a social entrepreneurs, students will be engaged in *project-based learning*. Students will work in teams to research real issues that are affecting the Lynn community and develop viable solutions. This process involves researching and analyzing the problem, designing and testing possible solutions, choosing the best design based upon the best outcome, and sharing their results with civic authorities and professional experts in the fields related to their projects. Through project-based learning students will discover how the disciplines interact and their real-world applications as they practice the core values of creativity, innovation, collaboration, and social responsibility on a daily basis. A growing body of research has demonstrated the effectiveness of project-based learning in significantly improving the performance of diverse students in standardized assessments, attendance, retention, and college enrollment/completion rates.

We are excited about our school support partnership with Big Picture Learning (BPL). BPL is a non-profit organization that has a rich history of developing and sustaining innovative, rigorous, and high performing schools. For 17 years BPL has remained a leading pioneer in project-based (real world) learning, and their school support model has an impressive track record of raising the achievement levels of diverse students in under-resourced communities.

Fenix Charter School will serve students in grades 5 to 12. The school will open in the fall of 2014 with 75 fifth graders and expand by one grade level each year until the school reaches maximum capacity of 600 students by grade 12. Fenix Charter School's believes that an innovative educational program that targets the middle and high school grades ensures higher student performance and builds the foundation for college and career readiness.

DIVERSE TEAM AND CONNECTIONS TO THE LYNN COMMUNITY

Our school design (founding) team is a diverse and innovative group of professionals, parents, and students who strongly believe that an infusion of imagination and creativity into our educational systems can serve as a catalyst for the transformation so needed in many of our urban schools. We have extensive expertise and professional experiences that span education, art, technology, science, health/human services, media/communications, and business/finance. Our team composition also mirrors Lynn's student demographics: Design team members understand the cultural, linguistic, and social challenges that Lynn students and their families face daily.

Design team members have personal and professional roots in the Lynn community. We have reached out to Lynn community leaders and families through personal meetings and focus groups to learn more about the unique needs of Lynn students and their families. Cultivating partnerships with families and community stakeholders will continue to be a hallmark of the school's mission.

We are exploring being the first Commonwealth Charter School to be unionized in Massachusetts in order to pioneer a model that integrates worker protection rights with educational innovation.

OUR HOPE

The name of our charter school, *Fenix*, is the Spanish translation of Phoenix, the mythical bird of healing and transformation. The school's motto is *transforming communities*. Our hope is that this school contributes to a renaissance within Lynn that can serve as a model for other urban communities. The school itself will serve as a prime example of social entrepreneurship: We are developing an educational model that has far-reaching implications in how we educate our youth.