

# PROPOSED NEW HEIGHTS CHARTER SCHOOL OF BROCKTON

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*This document was prepared by the New Heights Charter School of Brockton applicant group.*

This proposal calls for the creation of the New Heights Charter School of Brockton (NHCS), an innovative, early college school designed to address the needs of the Brockton student population. NHCS will provide a public school option for 840 (at full enrollment) of the city's students to minimize the achievement gap in educational attainment and college success. Our mission is to provide urban students in grades 6-13 an early college experience coupled with academic rigor, meaningful relationships, relevant experiences, and a school-wide culture of success that leads students TO and THROUGH college. Our model focuses on community engagement, social and emotional preparation, and motivation for success. It is our belief that through gradual exposure to college expectations, with built-in support, students will build confidence, academic college and career ready skills, and the social/cultural capital they need to succeed in college and beyond.

**Program Description:** In order to realize our mission, NHCS will enroll students in grades 6-13, for a total school enrollment of 840 students, 105 students per grade. We will fill vacated seats throughout the year in grades 6-12 and we will recruit heavily in the poorest neighborhoods, ensuring that the poorest students in Brockton are aware of this opportunity. NHCS will address the troublesome transitions between middle school, high school, and postsecondary education that prevent some students from successfully completing their education pathways. Our students will enter NHCS in the 6th grade, spending their first four years in our "Lower School", part academic literacy bootcamp, and part culture laboratory. Students will acquire the academic acumen, the "College Knowledge," and the resiliency skills they need to be successful in schooling and in life. As our mission states, our goal is to get students to college and, armed with the tools provided by an NHCS education, through college. We delineate between a "Lower School" student and an "Upper School" student to explicate the strengths of our program and the innovative approach we take to teaching the whole student. Lower School students, in grades 6-9, participate in our literacy and numeracy bootcamp, preparing for the rigors of college, and our Upper School students, grades 10-13, begin taking college courses towards a degree and a career of their choosing. A student's instructional day at NHCS begins at 7:45 am, with our Morning Advisory and breakfast, and ends at 3:30 pm (extracurricular/enrichment activities will be held from 3:30-4:30pm). In addition, we will offer after school tutoring and "Saturday and Summer Academy" sessions to keep students academically on track and socially engaged in the learning experience. Students will be encouraged to participate in community service and extracurricular activities, which will be built into their daily schedule during our "Enrichment Period." Our students will meet our three primary goals for student success (examples from our programming are provided below each goal).

1. ***College and Career Ready Students:*** Our goal is to ensure that our students acquire the literacy and numeracy skills necessary to understand questions and problems, organize information so that salient issues are unveiled, and empower themselves with the ability to figure things out and get their needs met in any venue. At NHCS, literacy and numeracy skills do not disappear in the 9th grade, because it is our belief that these are “life skills” central to ones’ personal power. Every one of our students will graduate with a clear career path and up to 70 college credits towards the degree they need to pursue their career of choice.
  - a. Early College Model – Students take college courses starting in the 10th grade, earning up to 70 college credits (for free) at the end of the 13th grade.
  - b. The NHCS founding group will implement a Newcomer Academy, a model currently in development, to serve all newly arrived English language learners, particularly those students who have limited or interrupted education, addressing a need identified by the Brockton community.
  - c. Saturday/Summer Academy – Remediation services will be available on Saturdays and during the summer to improve students’ academic readiness.
  - d. Enrichment Period – Extracurricular activities will be offered from 3:30-4:30pm in addition to academic support for those students who need it.
  
2. ***Resilient Graduates:*** The founding group of NHCS shares the belief that all children have the promise for greatness, they only need to be given the tool and resources to cultivate their potential.
  - a. Parent and Family Engagement: The NHCS’ Parent/family Outreach Coordinator will hold monthly meetings for families, include family feedback in program evaluations and improvement plans, and monitor family contact, ensuring that teachers and administrators have regular contact with students’ families which will be conducted in English as well as the major languages of the school population.
  - b. Support from the Social Workers and Community Agency Partners: Students, parents, and caregivers will have access to emotional and social support on campus.
  
3. ***A Culture of Motivation:*** NHCS will develop a strong culture of belonging and motivation through our student support experience and our Resiliency Model. These models are designed to reach all students, wherever they are in their education journey, and maximize their potential. Our students are never alone in this quest for greatness; our entire school community supports them along the way. Students will attend quarterly, theme-driven retreats, including college visits, daylong community service projects, and cultural visits including museums, theater, music and dance performances. In addition, each retreat will contribute to

the development of a “Culture of Motivation”, a key component of the Resiliency Model.

***Lower School (Grades 6-9):*** NHCS will open with 315 students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. In grades 6-9, the main focus will be to address academic skill deficiencies and ensure that students are performing to grade-level standards by the time they enter the Upper School. Students will take an accelerated course sequence in order to prepare them for college-level courses in the Upper School. Additionally, students will develop as “citizen scholars” through explicit instruction in study skills, effective study habits, and the pillars of NHCS’ school culture, including community service and respect. Starting in the 6th grade, students will be assessed and provided with an individualized learning plan (ILP) that will outline the courses and steps needed to become college and career-ready as measured by the state comprehensive exam, in addition to a college placement test. Students will be registered for 7 courses per day: two periods of math, two periods of English, a history, a science, and an elective period (which may consist of physical education/health, information technology, art, music, community service and/or academic support depending on the needs of the individual students). The Lower School students will attend advisory several times throughout their day – for “morning meeting and for an “end of day meeting.”

***Upper School (Grades 10-13):*** The primary focus of the Upper School will be to prepare students for college and career opportunities through rigorous coursework and engaging, real-world learning experiences.

Students will transition from the highly structured environment of the Lower School to an environment of more independence in preparation for college and career success. Using the community as their lab, students will augment their learning experience by engaging in coursework on a college campus, taking online courses, receiving practical work experience through internships and employment, and participating in intensive seminars at NHCS. Students will be held accountable for their performance in these varied learning environments through projects, presentations, and written reflections.

During 10th grade, students will have the opportunity to enroll in two, college-level courses, one per semester, on the high school campus, taught by college staff. At the end of 10th grade, a decision will be made with regard to additional college course taking based on the results of the college placement exam.

- During the 11th and 12th grade, students will be encouraged to complete six college courses each year and additional NHCS’ seminars.
- In the “13th grade,” students will be fully enrolled in college courses on the college campus. They will continue to receive wrap-around support from NHCS in addition to weekly community service, academic support, and meetings with their college guides.
- In the event students are not able to pass the college placement test, students will enroll in the remedial course/ESL identified by the college to prepare the student for college coursework.
- In addition to rigorous academic responsibilities, students in the Upper

School must provide a minimum of two hours of peer tutoring per week to Lower School students.

- Students must also complete a “College Portfolio,” which they will begin to gather in the 10th grade, including letters of recommendation, multiple college essays, a statement of intent, a resume, at minimum three completed college applications, and examples of academic work or accolades earned in the Upper School through community service or employment.

***Student Impact:*** NHCS will serve a student population that may not see its own potential for college, and perhaps the greater issue, understand why an investment in education today may mean a happier, more fulfilled tomorrow. We expect our students to take ownership of their education through our Resiliency Culture (Rigor, Relationships, and Relevancy). They will understand their role in society, and above all, they will discover the wide array of options available to them in college and beyond. Students who do not meet our academic expectations will be required to attend an intensive, academic remediation program on Saturdays and/or during the summer. Saturday and Summer Academies will provide tutoring in the student’s areas in need of improvement.

***Capacity:*** NHCS founding members and the proposed board of trustees draw from decades of experience in alternative education programming, working with high needs populations (including free and reduced lunch, ELL, and Special Education) and school development as well as in higher education access programming and policy. In addition, our applicant group is comprised of individuals with experience in high school administration, middle and high school teaching, college access and success programming, curriculum design, community outreach, special education, legal affairs, education finance, community members and Brockton parents, and English language instruction from district and charter schools. We are currently meeting with residents of Brockton, including faith and community-based groups, school administration, members of the legal community, business leaders, and parents and caregivers.

***Why we chose Brockton for the site of our charter school:*** Brockton is an ideal community for the founding group of NHCS to put into practice a strong model, honed during our work in Fall River during the 2013-14 cycle. Brockton is a similar city to Fall River, both communities serve a higher population of low-income families and both cities share enormous pride for their public education system. The commitment from all layers of social, cultural, education, and political communities in Brockton to improve the lives of students plays a large role in the founding group’s interest in opening a new charter school in the district that embodies our mission and our model. Our mission to see students TO and THROUGH college, particularly those students impacted by poverty, addresses a need in a city where 80.7% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Our commitment to urban students, particularly those who are from low-income or first generation college families is clearly addressed by the youth population in Brockton. Finally, we are committed to operating a school that is embedded in the community we serve. There is currently no charter school choice in the city of Brockton,

an alternative choice that would permit city residents to remain in Brockton. During the 2013-14 school year, approximately 300 students left Brockton Public Schools to attend charter schools in surrounding districts and an additional segment of the population chose to attend nearby private and vocational schools. The founding group of NHCS will address the lack of opportunities available for students living in poverty, responding to a need we have heard over and over in our outreach work in the community – the families in Brockton are in need of a high quality public school choice. While Brockton Public Schools may be a good fit for some students, it is not the right fit for all students.

***Choice of a Commonwealth Charter:*** A Commonwealth charter will give NHCS the autonomy to reimagine the traditional school model to include a 13th year, amend the schedule and calendar to meet the needs of students, and put policies and practices in place on behalf of all students and their families. The Commonwealth charter will provide NHCS’ founding group with the resources to address the educational achievement gaps in higher education enrollment and completion and continue to chip away at the pervasive cycle of poverty in urban cities.