

Leaders of Tomorrow Charter School

Questions as derived from panel review

Mission and Vision

1. Describe the mission and vision of this school.

- The mission of the school is to create an environment with a strong rigorous academic program, leadership, and social service. There is an overarching theme of 21st century skills and a strong STEM focus. We really want to help students see how their education has real world applications.
- The vision is to create a school to help students apply the academic skills, leadership abilities, and social services to real life.

2. What are the founding group's goals for this school?

- We were strategic about selecting the middle school age group. We wanted to connect students to academics. We wanted students to see the connection between the academic piece and higher education and the workforce.
- We specifically looked at middle school because students are getting lost in the middle school period. We all have experiences working with this age group. At this time they seem to loose connection. This school would make that intervention.
- The first two levels of the leadership training will help them be empowered and will help them make decisions. The goal of working through these middle school years is to build them up for high school. Goal is to pair the academics with the habits that will empower them.

3. How will the three tier academic/leadership program work for all students?

- The model is to help with social skills, habits of mind, and other strategies students need to become strong learners. There is leadership training for each grade. The first year the plan is to have 6th and 7th graders go through the same training. This is the Seven Habits of Highly Effective Students.
- STEM enrichment includes a service learning program attached to standards.

Statement of Need

1. Please describe how the founding group has assessed parental demand and need within the proposed area of service.

- Many of us already live in the community. That is part of the nucleus about how this school came about. The nucleus is from conversations we have had with parents about their middle school experience. Parents are really unhappy with the Doherty district. The high school is good, but the middle school isn't. We have experience speaking with other moms and dads.
- There are two charter schools in Worcester and Seven Hills has 300 names on the waitlist.
- To follow up on what we were hearing from parents about the need for middle school students, we did research and looked carefully at the MCAS scores and trends. We saw a declining pattern.

2. **Can you describe the needs of the students coming into this school? How will you address these needs?**
 - a. **What is the focus of the school? Why Worcester? Why leadership? Why 21st century skills? Why STEM? Why career and college prep?**
 - b. **How will this school enhance or expand the educational options currently available to this student population?**
 - Worcester is underutilized. It has a lot to offer its residents. We have 10 colleges and a strong biotechnology industry and unfortunately not much of that is taken advantage of by the public schools. Yes, there is University Park and Claremont Academy which are fantastic schools. There is also Mass Academy but they only accept 50 students in junior and senior year. None of them offer this STEM focus on academics.
 - None of the middle schools are working with the biotech and medical industry.
 - Leadership, 21st century skills, and STEM are all interconnected. Leadership is something you can actually teach. There is not one effective leader today that doesn't have some knowledge of STEM. As we expanded our idea we discussed that this is a critical aspect.
 - We have to give children all these components so they can be active learners and be able to compete with peers. STEM is a theme and content which improves critical thinking, technology, and life skills. Life skills (responsibly, integrity, and collaboration) are the core of the school. We want to offer students life skills to take on middle school, college, and forward. We want to put them in a corporate and 21st century environment.

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

1. **What is the educational philosophy of this school?**
 - We want to enable the students to access outside resources in order for them to see what their future may hold in science, technology and with 21st century skills. We want to offer hands-on training with the community partners.
 - The philosophy is to prepare children for their future with 21st century skills, and the ability to move past middle school and secondary education as well. They need to be exposed to many things. We want students to be prepared for high school and tackle any gaps they might have in middle school. They will be able to do that with our longer school day and safety net courses. We will have leadership training to help with interpersonal skills.
 - The community partners are really important regarding how to apply what we are learning in the classroom.
 - This school will build on a spiraling type of curriculum. Things always connect and always come back. None of these components are in isolation.
2. **Please describe the curriculum?**
 - a. **What criteria did the founding group use or will use to identify the curriculum and instruction models?**
 - It's in the attachment. It's not in great detail. It includes some specific topics and the frameworks. Our curriculum is based on the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks (MCF). Want to make sure we are using the same language and talking about the same thing. We have a curriculum map with standards for 6th, 7th, and 8th grades and have broken them down by the trimester. We have identified programs to teach the curriculum but the programs aren't the curriculum. When we talk about all stakeholders being

involved we are talking about faculty who are highly qualified working with the college connections to be able to develop the curriculum but also consider how to ramp up the level of rigor and scaffolding for students.

- We will develop teacher leaders and teacher teams so we can have conversations horizontally and vertically. We expect teachers to work in unison with the director of curriculum and instruction to develop the enrichment curriculum. We will meet weekly.
- We want to develop a program that is seamless between program areas.
- The teacher teams will decide on which novel to use to represent which genre.
- We are looking at some academic programs that will support the frameworks; we are looking at the Impact Program in math and looking at the alignment with MCFs and the necessary supplements. We're not married to the programs.

b. Please explain how the STEM orientation is integrated into the school.

i. What's the STEM enrichment for students and teachers?

- STEM as we all know stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The federal government has spent a lot of money to integrate hands-on activities into the curriculum. We are trying to connect hands-on projects, (build a robot, fix a lawn mower) and try to see how these things are connected to science, (mechanics and physics), and then use equations in math. Students can then begin asking "what if" questions.
- Engineering and science are built upon mathematics. STEM enrichment for students and teachers includes a process so students will get excited. We will look at US history through a technology and industry framework. We will integrate science, math and engineering.
- The enrichment time is for students and teachers to identify a project or problem in Worcester that needs to be solved. They will look at the problem from all angles, the engineering, mathematics, design, and finance side of things. The class will be presenting through expositions. There is a two day rotation for these classes. Partners may come in two or three times a week to help teach these classes. We have identified some programs so we can hit the ground running. We are working with Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Holy Cross. They are willing to work with us regarding these enrichment classes and linking these to college requirements. We are still building relationships. Other colleges are interested, but they are waiting for the charter before they sign on.
- Another STEM partnership is Webster First Federal Credit Union; their employees will come into the school to teach our children about money matters and money health which is part of 21st century skills.
- This enrichment program is tied in to the life skills program, and creates options.

c. Where does the career and college piece fit in?

d. Please define what you meant by service learning projects on page 20 as part of Leadership Enrichment Internships and how these will function. Are there other internships? How many intercessions will students be participating in career and college explorations? How will that function?

- Career, college, and service learning projects comes in with enrichment. For example, the bank will be working with our teachers and students lending their expertise in finance and investment. Our students will learn and then turn around to perform community service learning by training members of Girls, Inc. Girls, Inc., is a community partner who is willing to open up their membership so our students can conduct trainings during the intersession.

- There will be three intercessions for students to participate in community service learning, as well as career and college explorations.
- Another potential example is we hope to work with an architectural firm during an intercession. A class of 20 students with a teacher and a paraprofessional will go to the firm and job shadow for an hour and a half per day.

e. What kinds of supports will be available for students?

- We will utilize the Galileo program; teachers will develop the standards and will formally assess students three times a year. We will identify the kids who will need the safety net courses.
- We will try to meet the needs of every student. We will look to see if it's a financial, academic, or health related need and use the tools that we have to meet those needs.
- The safety net classes happen during the specials. They can also get tutoring from teachers in the morning before school.

f. How will teacher internships operate?

- Our ideal teacher is someone with solid operational management of the classroom a strong pedagogical approach, and mastery of the content. The point of the teacher internships is to get them out to the field and bring knowledge back. We want to secure grants so that we can pay teachers for their time. That will take place during summer break or vacations.

3. What is the schools expectation of teachers? How will teachers be supported?

- Teachers won't be doing it in isolation. We will have teams; they will have support from each other and from the director of curriculum and instruction. They will have support and professional development through Ocean State National School Reform Faculty and National Institute for School Leadership. We also want to find out about how the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education can offer support and technical assistance.

4. How will the professional development of staff be determined and when will professional development take place?

- All depends on the needs of the staff. We do need to infuse technology into education. Most training will take place in the summer. We also have plans for leadership development. We have eight professional development days scheduled. We have a team meeting once a week and vertically as well. Our intention is to get more bang for our buck. We will be doing leadership development and teaching how to teach leadership development. Constantly assessing what the school, students, and faculty need.
- The board will work with the director of schools and director of curriculum and instruction, but we won't micromanage. We are policy people.
- If we have a lot of new teachers we will have to build in more support, like behavior management training or mentoring.
- We will have basic standards and criteria for teachers.
- We will also use the intake process to gather data about students and determine some needs they might have and look at our teaching staff and beef up the necessary professional development.
- We also want to empower people and teachers to give feedback. It's a real team approach. Teachers need to be trusted and empowered to make effective change.

Assessment, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

1. **Please describe the promotion and graduation standards.**
 - a. **Where does the portfolio fit into the grading and graduation policy?**
 - b. **How are the goals of this school tracked through assessments, promotion and graduation standards? (College prep, STEM, career, 21st century skills, leadership, etc.)**
 - c. **Please describe a student professional growth plan for students.**
 - We tried to develop a simple promotion piece so that it would make sense to students and parents. Students need to pass their classes with a 70 percent. Along with that we have a portfolio system and it is connected to graduation.
 - The electronic portfolio is in addition to the grades, it will also document the student's achievements. You can not be in this school and not do the portfolio. This is connected to the individual professional development plans for students that include performance targets through the year. They will include their best work in their portfolios.
 - The goals of the school include college prep, career, STEM, etc. and they are tracked during the intercessions. The days will be divided in half and the students have the opportunity to have reflective time. Their teacher will be monitoring those reflections and progress.
 - The student professional development plans will drive the work they do during intercessions and enrichment time. The interest survey starts that whole piece. It is the advisor who works with the student and helps the student identify if s/he is struggling and what resources the student might need, like safety net courses.
2. **Please describe how the assessment system reports the performance and progress of the charter school and the academic and social development of each student to all relevant stakeholders.**
 - a. **The application states that report cards have quarterly grades, elsewhere you discuss trimester. Which is accurate?**
 - The reports do come out at the end of the trimester.
 - There are two parts of the student professional growth plan 1) the success plan for students and 2) the tracking intercessions. That is what we use to conference with parents, not just with students. The parents, child, and advisor have a voice.

School Characteristics

1. **With the multifaceted aspirations of the school, what are the priorities in terms of implementation? (i.e. enrichment time [how will it be used] student professional growth plan, intercessions, tutoring, leadership development, service learning, college, career, community, and high school mentoring program, 21st century skills, wellness, and STEM)**
 - The core of the program is academic. That's first and foremost. Top priority is academic which is wrapped in the STEM focus and 21st century skills.
 - If kids are in the safety net classes, it can change quickly, it's flexible grouping.
2. **Where are you in the process of developing community partnerships?**
 - Holy Cross and Assumption are going to partner with us.
 - We are looking for a wellness class. Possibly having the fire department come in and do fire safety and fire science. They will be teaching the enrichment program. We are also

looking at a dance studio for physical fitness for dance and exercise, karate, yoga, etc. These programs would be coming in at no cost.

Special Student Populations and Services

- 1. Please walk us through the service delivery system for special education students, including the eligibility process, evaluation, service delivery and staffing. Who will oversee special education program in year one?**
 - If the child comes with an IEP we have to look to see if they are up to date, and we will honor the IEP.
 - If we are not aware that the student has an IEP, you're talking about the referral process. It means looking at student work and looking at the data. We have a Response to Intervention model and we have options for students through safety net courses, etc. The Galileo tutorial is useful for the school because it produces reports. We also have behavioral supports through Positive Behavior Intervention Support. We will look at all data on a student and if there is no growth, we will determine if the student goes to the next referral process. That process begins with getting appropriate releases, having the students tested, then the academic team, including teachers, special education teachers, parents, the psychologist, the director of curriculum and instruction and maybe the director of the school. The special education teacher will write the IEP. The student's schedule will be adapted if necessary. The director of schools will oversee the program in the first year.
- 2. Please walk us through the service delivery system for English language learners, including the eligibility process, service delivery, and staffing.**
 - It includes a home language survey and employing a test for placement as well as progress monitoring. All the appropriate information and forms for parents. Then the director of schools will schedule their classes so they can have all of the minutes that are entitled to them and make sure the supports are in place so the student can be successful in a mainstream classroom. We are bringing in a teacher for English language learners from the beginning and we will use assessments to track the acquisition piece as outlined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The ESL teacher in year one will also deliver services in the regular classroom. Over the years we are thinking about having more paraprofessionals over time. We expect 10-13 percent English language learners.

Enrollment and Recruitment

- 1. What is the founding groups understanding about enrollment and recruitment in charter schools?**
 - a. What is your rationale for a viable and sustainable size and growth strategy?**
 - b. What will you do for outreach? How will you try to ensure adequate enrollment?**
 - We have set dates for public sessions in the library, All Saints Church, WMCA, etc. We also plan to send post cards to certain residential areas, and advertise with Channel 13 and the Gazette. We are going to go out in teams. We will go to public housing developments, pediatrician offices and other places where parents congregate for services for their kids. We also have online access. We are also having our literature translated into a lot of different languages.

Capacity

- 1. Who on this founding group has made a commitment to be on the founding board? (It is not clear for James Donahue or Mustapha Fonfana.) Also, who is targeted for a position at the school?**
 - Five of the founding group has commitments to be on the board. Both James and Mustapha will be on the board of trustees.
 - We are being very careful, we are looking for a unique fit. We want a full long term commitment.
 - Four out of the nine founders hope to have jobs at the school.

Governance and Management

- 1. What attributes does your proposed board possess that will enable you to successfully implement the plan proposed in the application? What other skill sets do you need on the board?**
 - Right now we have a strong educational background in the core group. This will make it possible to get the core of the program established.
 - Some of the newer members bring connections and networks in the community to draw in more resources, including fundraising.
 - We will be looking at their connections to the community; we will look at educational expertise, and fundraising.
- 2. How will the school leader be evaluated?**
 - We have the job description in the appendix. Then we have a very clear process noted in the appendix.
- 3. What is the rationale for this administrative structure in a school of 240 students?**
 - We wanted to take a totally different approach, and divide responsibilities so the whole purpose is to have the director of curriculum and instruction focus on the education staff, initiatives, data analysis, and not be concerned about building issues. The director of schools is going to be the one operating the building. Although the two positions work hand in hand. The administrative structure, including the head of student affairs, business managers, etc. all work across, it's not just straight up. It's like a beehive structure.
 - We haven't looked at models for schools of this size. We have looked at other models of management structure. We had a clear image of what we wanted to do. The academic side is separate from the daily minutia.
- 4. If the director of schools and the director of curriculum and instruction are both ex-officio board members but only one reports to the board, how will you manage that?**
 - This took a lot of thought on the part of the board. This goes back to wanting the curriculum separate from the day to day. Also the director of schools hires the director of curriculum and instruction. But academics and curriculum are the driving concepts of this school. We had a long discussion about whether we should have the director of curriculum and instruction on the board at all. The chair of the board will be mindful about these issues. The ex-officio members will vote, but will have to step out when there are conflicts of interest.

Facilities and Transportation

1. Why is building expandability critical for facilities selection?

- We are visionaries. We are hoping at some point if the charter cap is lifted, we would like to be a 6-12 school. If we have the opportunity to do more we would like to do more depending on our capacity.
- The building is part of the sense urgency for 2010. We understand that real estate won't hold. We have secured three letters of commitment.

2. Since you can't use start-up charter school grants for renovation, what might your other financing options be?

- One of our options needs to be worked out, it's across from the Worcester Public Library, and it's a shell. The landlord has committed \$1.5 million of his own money. The numbers are no longer looking so great for us because it will be in the teens per square foot. Another option is a school in Worcester and that is about \$6 or 7 dollars per square foot and it's ready to go.

Budget

1. Please walk us through your budget.

a. What is the assumption about tuition pre-opening?

- During the pre-operational period, this would be the first installment of tuition in the first quarter of the fiscal year. These numbers are based on the quarterly operations for the school. Misunderstood that.

b. What did you base your salary estimates on?

- I met with someone from South Shore Public Charter School. We spoke about salary ranges for these positions. We also looked at Worcester Public Schools for their teachers and spoke with Seven Hills Charter School and Abby Kelley.

c. Number of FTE teachers year one (15 from page 49) or (12 from assumptions in budget line E3). Which is it? Who's missing?

- The staffing chart needs to be updated in the application, it is in fact 12 because we changed the specialists to part-time teachers.

d. Line item 14 - \$170,000 which administrators?

- The director of schools and the business manager are collectively getting that.
- Line item 33 is the director of curriculum and instruction and the technology specialist.

e. Line items 24 - No money spent on fundraising but you plan to have a grant writer? Grant writer is not on organizational chart. Where is money for a grant writer?

- It should be on the organizational chart, it's an error. The money for the grant writer is under administration as a part-time position.

f. Testing and assessments for special education?

- We didn't delineate between general education and special education. The total is \$ 2,000. We may need to adjust that.

g. Food service costs?

- From the research I did on food service it's a program that typically runs in the red. There are always parents that are behind paying the bills so it's important to have some start up funds there.

h. Student services?

- That is the wellness coordinator. That person is a nurse.

Action plan

1. Who will manage action steps if folks are currently employed?

- Part of the plan is to be able to secure start-up funds to hire administrative assistants shortly after chartering.

2. When will employees be hired? When will curriculum be developed? When enrollment be completed? When and how will you develop relationships with community organizations?

- In terms of teachers, job fairs begin around March and April. Sounds like the chicken and egg question. Those responsibilities would need to be shared by members of the board.