

Road to Success Charter High School Executive Summary

This is prepared by the founding group of the proposed Road to Success Charter School.

Mission:

The Road to Success (RTS) Charter High School is a college-preparatory high school serving the most vulnerable students from Salem, Lynn and Peabody -- those who have struggled in school due to language or life issues (i.e., English Language Learners, those involved with DCF, homeless, or pregnant/parenting). Grounded in the beliefs that history should not determine destiny and that students will rise to high expectations in the right environment, RTS will provide students with the opportunity to take control of their futures and thrive academically despite personal adversity and significant life stressors.

RTS will be a school that creates opportunity, breaks down stereotypes, and provides the tools necessary for all who attend to excel in high school and college, regardless of socio-economic background, primary language, family support, race, creed, or religion. RTS will provide a public school alternative for the most vulnerable high school students in our communities, including students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out. RTS will foster a sense of resiliency in our students, defined as the capacity to succeed in spite of adversity or life stressors. There are two guiding principles that are central to RTS:

- 1. All students should be given every opportunity to receive an education that will prepare them for the 21st century and to take an active role in that education.*
- 2. Our approach will meet the educational and emotional needs of our students.*

Need:

RTS aims to serve those marginalized high school students in Salem, Lynn and Peabody who have not been successful in school. We plan to place the school in Salem, where it will be easily accessible by public transportation. There is an ever-growing number of students in our communities that are at risk of not thriving and succeeding academically. Research has shown that students who are poor, who are members of certain minority groups, who are male, who have limited English proficiency, who have learning or emotional disabilities, who move more often, and who are over age for their grade are particularly at risk. While all students are welcome at RTS, we will focus on serving the following three groups of students: English language learners; students involved with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and homeless students; and pregnant and/or parenting teens.

Educational Program:

While RTS will utilize several means of assessment, one unique aspect of our program will be our “pre-assessment.” Upon enrollment to RTS, all new students will be required to complete a 3-week “immersion” program during the summer prior to the first year of enrollment. This program is intended to evaluate each student and accurately place them into an appropriate place along the path to graduation. Because RTS will not be a traditional high school with four grade levels (grades 9 through 12), staff will need to know where that student is at in terms of proficiency with the core subjects of English/Language Arts, Science, Math, Civics and Government, Foreign Language, and History. RTS’s Summer Immersion Program will also give newly enrolled students an opportunity to become familiar with the aspects of our school culture, meet other new students and become acclimated to the school

campus – which will be particularly beneficial to those students coming from either Lynn or Peabody to attend RTS in Salem.

RTS will offer an educational program designed to support the diverse learning styles of our students. We will utilize a strengths-based educational approach that incorporates differentiated and inquiry-based instruction along with experiential learning. A key component in our differentiated approach to educating students is the individual Learning Achievement Plan (LAP). The LAP is a unique aspect of our program. The LAP will be developed by each RTS student, with the help of his or her teachers, academic advisor and school staff. It will be geared specifically to the student's needs and goals and will map out each student's course through RTS and beyond.

RTS will prepare all of its students for post-secondary education. We hold them to high expectations and provide the support they need to meet them. RTS's curriculum will be structured around 21st Century Learning Frameworks, and linked directly to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Students will be encouraged to find links across disciplines and to the broader world outside of their home communities. Students will be challenged by the curriculum and will learn to foster their skills in an international and multicultural context.

Students at RTS will gain skills necessary for success on the Math MCAS test early in their experience. Mathematics electives will focus upon real-world skills and will be related across disciplines. Fostering reading, writing, and speaking skills early in their time at RTS will enable ELL students to close the language gap between themselves and their peers and be in a position to excel academically. Literature selections will reflect our differentiated multicultural approach and the diversity of the student population at RTS.

Civics and government will be a core part of the course of studies at RTS primarily because of the significance of such disciplines to the lives of students that have lived as minority and marginalized students. We have spoken of a desire to instill resiliency and a voice into the students at RTS and we see the study and *practice* of civics and government as the best way to accomplish such a goal by requiring students to develop and defend ideas, as well as allowing them to explore the social systems that have profoundly affected their lives.

The RTS academic year will consist of four 10-week sessions (quarters) and we will allow students to enroll (or re-enroll if the student has previously dropped out) at the beginning of each 10-week session. By doing so, we can ensure that students get new courses and a “clean slate” four times a year. Students will be required to attend school from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday, with each school day beginning with a 10 minute whole-school meeting beginning at 9:00 AM. RTS's academic program will include an Extended Day Program beginning at 3:15, at which each student, depending upon his or her Learning Achievement Plan (LAP), will receive individual and/or small group tutoring in the core academic subjects (with a ratio of no more than 1 tutor to 3 students) or in MCAS preparation (for those students who have not yet taken and/or passed the Grade 10 MCAS). In addition to tutoring, RTS's Extended Day Program will allow for students to attain non-academic goals by taking additional non-core curriculum classes (electives) and participating in guided enrichment activities.

Capacity:

The founding group of RTS has the capacity to make the school a success based on their extensive expertise, vision and passion. Most of the members of RTS's founding group have worked with or been

involved with youth who have struggled with overcoming barriers to achieve their potential. Our founding group is united in the goal of providing students with a high-quality academic program and the social supports needed to graduate from high school and succeed in college. Each of the founding members has made a commitment to developing a school which has high expectations for youth, while simultaneously being attuned to their unique needs.

As required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, RTS will be governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will be responsible for: upholding the mission of RTS; developing school policies and changing them when appropriate; hiring the Executive Director to manage the school's day-to-day operations and holding him/her accountable for meeting established goals; and formulating a long-range strategic plan and Charter School Accountability Plan that will ensure RTS's continued stability. In addition to these responsibilities, the Board will be responsible for ensuring that RTS is in compliance with all of the state and federal laws as they apply to the school, and that the Board itself is operating in accordance with the rules set out by all applicable Massachusetts laws and regulations. Finally, the Board will be responsible for operating the school in accordance with its charter and with any approved amendments to its charter. To ensure oversight of each of these specific areas, the Board will elect a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary, and will establish standing committees including, but not limited to, Finance, Development and Trusteeship.