

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2011-2012

Proposed School Name: Baystate Academy Charter Public School

Grades Served At Full Capacity: 6-12

Number of Students At Full Capacity: 560

Proposed School Location: Springfield

Proposed Opening Year: 2013-2014

Public Statement:

“Baystate Academy Charter School, spanning grades 6-12, is where students become leaders of their own academic achievement and career pathway experiences. Students will surpass the “college-ready” standard for graduating high school by completing credits for their college freshman year by taking English, math, and science classes at Springfield Technical Community College in 12th grade. Expeditionary Learning will provide significant support in the design and subsequent implementation of the school, particularly in the areas of instructional practice and establishing an exemplary learning community.”

Mission Statement:

“Baystate Academy Charter Public School is a college preparatory school that provides challenging academic standards in professional health career settings in order to prepare 6 -12th grade students in Springfield to be inspired leaders in the 21st century workforce.”

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

| School Year | Grade Levels | Total Student Enrollment |
|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| First Year | 6, 7 | 160 |
| Second Year | 6, 7, 8 | 240 |
| Third Year | 6 - 9 | 320 |
| Fourth Year | 6 - 10 | 400 |
| Fifth Year | 6 - 11 | 480 |

Mission, Vision, and Description of the Community(ies) to Be Served

Primary Strengths

- The mission and the vision define the values of the proposed school. The emphasis on rigor, relevance, and relationships is meaningful and consistent with high academic standards and student success. (Section I.A.)
- The application describes the Springfield community’s education and employment challenges and the goal of the proposed school to address these challenges for

Primary Weaknesses

- The mission and vision do not fully reflect the richness of the proposed school’s educational programming. (Section I.A.)
- The Springfield Superintendent, Dr. A. J. Ingram, does not support granting a charter to this application. See public comment. (Section I.C.)

their students. (Section I.C.)

- This charter application received letters and/or written testimony in support, including but not limited to material from Kirk Smith, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Springfield, Jeffrey S. Ciuffreda, Executive Director of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce and area residents. See public comment. (Section I.C.)

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group provides a clear description of their core beliefs of high expectations and dynamic learning which are consistent with the proposed school's mission. (Section II.A.)
- The educational philosophy is integrated into the implementation of the educational program; evidence includes the choice of the Expeditionary Learning (EL) approach. (Section II.A.)
- The applicant group has developed relationships with EL schools to support their effective use of the EL approach. The application cites research that links raised student achievement with the EL model. (Section II.A.)
- The curriculum and instruction are consistent with the mission, vision, and educational philosophy of the proposed school. (Section II.B.)
- The proposed school's principal will be supported by an EL school designer and EL school network to develop and implement EL. (Section II.B.)
- The application describes general instructional methodologies that are student-centered and targeted to incorporate diverse learning styles. (Section II.B.)
- The application asserts that EL will provide teachers with 'high quality, targeted professional development' based on a 'work plan' developed by the proposed school's leadership team and EL school designer at the beginning of the

Primary Weaknesses

- The application does not provide a clear comprehensive plan that will facilitate the development, improvement, and refinement of the curriculum for the proposed school. (Section II.B.)
- The application does not describe the process and procedures used to evaluate whether the curriculum is effective and successfully implemented. (Section II.B.)
- The strength and weakness in this proposed school is in the variety and complexity of the various components of the educational program, EL programming, dual enrollment, internships, intensives, Saturday and summer programming. It is unclear how the various curricular components will be integrated into a comprehensive educational program. (Section II.B.)

school year. The work plan details teacher goals, metrics to measure progress and the structures and support provided by the administrators and EL. The application also identified professional development through the Achievement Network and Baystate Health. (Section II.B.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- The four point standards-based proficiency scale is clear and easy for all stakeholders to understand and appears to be implemented in a clear promotion policy. (Section II.C.)
- The application contains a meaningful and practical approach for measuring student progress towards attaining learning targets associated with non-academic goals called Habits of Character and Habits of Scholarship. (Section II.B. and II.C.)
- The application provides graduation standards that are based on high expectations, and are aligned with the proposed school's mission and educational program. (Section II.C.)
- The proposed school incorporates a variety of assessment tools, such as student-led conferences and passage portfolios, which are consistent with high expectations of students and the proposed school's mission and vision. (Section II.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- Though the assessment system has many different internally and externally developed instruments to measure and report student progress, it is unclear how the multitude of assessments will provide a cohesive picture of student learning and the effectiveness of teaching practice. (Section II.D.)
- The application does not provide a clear system to reflect how student performance on assessments will be used to facilitate decision-making about adjustments to the educational program and inform staff development plan that will support the goal of improved student learning. (Section II.D.)

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The proposed school has an extended day and school year to support the academic acceleration of all students. (Section II.E.)
- The application provides a clear plan to establish a school culture and behavioral norms using the EL approach that is consistent with the proposed school's mission, vision, and educational philosophy. (Section II.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The application provides limited information about the external programs which will be implemented at the school. During the interview, the applicant group provided additional information but it is still unclear what partners, outside of Baystate Health and STCC, will provide educational opportunities to students through internships. (Section II.E.)
- During the interview the applicant group

- The application describes a clear student behavior philosophy and indicated plans to implement an incentive system based on the successful systems of other charter schools. The proposed principal will develop the plan. (Section II.E.)
- The application describes a number of strategies to involve families in the education of their children and to build and maintain family-school partnerships that focus on strengthening support for the proposed school's goals. Parents of all students participate in a welcome meeting, a home visit, training to utilize tools on the proposed school's website to review student progress as well as regular communication with the student's advisor (Crew leader) and participation in student performance assessments, such as student-led conferences and student showcases. (Section II.E.)

indicated that it has not actively pursued relationships with entities other than Baystate Health and STCC to support the school's educational program and serve the youth who attend the school. However, the applicant group revealed that there are overlaps and alliances between and among organizations to which they currently belong. (For example: one member of the applicant group is currently the Executive Director for Partners for a Healthier Community, Inc. His board chair is also the Executive Director of the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County. (Section II.E.)

Special Student Populations and Student Services

Primary Strengths

- The application describes the plan to implement Response to Intervention (RTI) model at the proposed school to meet the needs of all students within the general education classroom. (Section II.F.)
- The application indicates that English Language Learners (ELL) will be provided content area instruction in sheltered English immersion classrooms with category trained teachers as well as the appropriate English language development instruction through push-in or pull-out support. (Section II.F.)
- The application indicates that the proposed school is committed to provide a full continuum of services based on the needs of its students and associated Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 plans. (Section II.F.)

Primary Weaknesses

- Reviewers expressed concern that the principal would oversee both the special education and English language development (ELD) programming during the first year with coordinators not hired until year two of the proposed school's operations. (Section II.F.)
- It is not clear if the projected teacher staffing during the first year will be sufficient to deliver the required student services; for example 38 students: 1 FTE for special education and 29 students: 0.5 FTE for ELL. (Section III.F.)
- The application does not address how the proposed curriculum, including the internships and community college courses, will be accessible to students with disabilities and students learning English. (Section II.F.)

Enrollment and Recruitment

Primary Strengths

- The application provides a clear and specific rationale for a viable and sustainable size and growth strategy. The proposed school commits to offer admission in grades 6-10, if seats are available, going above and beyond the backfilling requirement of the statute. (Section III.A.)
- In both the application and the interview, the applicant group indicated that broad outreach efforts will be used to target students that are representative of the Springfield community, including populations who are traditionally underserved. (Section III.A.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None.

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group is comprised of individuals with extensive experience and qualifications which demonstrate the potential to found and sustain an excellent charter school. In the interview, the applicant group noted specific areas in which they hope to develop capacity, including special education and ELD programming. (Section III.B.)
- The strong support and commitment from STCC’s president and the college’s board, including the presence of the college president on the proposed school’s board, enhances, complements, and supports the mission and educational philosophy. (Section III.C)
- The proposed board of trustees contains members from partner organizations, STCC and Baystate Health. The applicant group has submitted a written State Ethics Commission opinion which states that Ira Rubenzah, the president of STCC, is not prohibited from also serving as a board member for the proposed school. (Section III.B.)
- During the interview, the applicant group

Primary Weaknesses

- While the proposed board and interim executive director are committed to establish the proposed school, it is unclear if an extended planning period will be sufficient for the group and their selected school support organization, Expeditionary Learning, to implement the complex components of the proposed school. (Section III.B.)
- The proposed board of trustees contains members from partner organizations, STCC and Baystate Health. Proposed board members employed by Baystate Health must obtain a written State Ethics Commission opinion to address if conflict of interest laws would prohibit this practice. (Section III.B.)
- During the planning year when the interim executive director is in place, the reporting structure between the principal, interim executive director and board of trustees is unclear. The board of trustees intends to hire the principal during the planning period. (Section III.C.)
- The application provides limited information regarding the recruitment,

described ways in which EL can enhance the capacity of the school by providing a school designer along with strategies and structures intended to facilitate the development of curriculum, inform instruction, create professional development opportunities and establish a school culture and norms consistent with the mission, vision, and educational philosophy. (Section III.C.)

selection, and development of board members. The proposed board does not indicate plans to incorporate additional members of the community, outside of a parent representative. (Section III.C.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- The application describes clear roles and responsibilities for the school’s principal and other administrative staff in both the short term planning of growing the proposed school and the long term planning of a fully enrolled school. (Section III.D.)
- In the application and the interview, the applicant group clearly communicated the rationale and plan to build organizational capacity over the extended planning year prior to opening the proposed school in 2013. The interim executive director and the proposed board emphasized that their first challenge, if chartered, will be finding the right school leader. (Section III.D)

Primary Weaknesses

- The applicant group has identified an interim executive director to implement plans until a principal is identified. It is unclear how quickly the applicant group will recruit and identify a qualified and experienced principal who will be essential to the successful founding and operating of the proposed school. The proposed principal’s responsibilities include working with the EL school designer in developing curriculum and professional development, working with the Achievement Network coach in developing assessments as well as overseeing the special education and English language learning programming. The principal has a tremendous amount of responsibility during the planning period and first operational year. (Section III.D.)
- The applicant group’s hiring schedule for key administrative personnel demonstrates thoughtfulness but reviewers were concerned that some of the essential roles, such as business manager and student services coordinator, were relegated to hiring during year two or three. Other administrators or contractors would perform the responsibilities in the interim. (Section III.C.)
- The application provides a generalized explanation of the evaluation system for teachers, administrators, and board members. The underdeveloped system states the use of performance criteria aligned with the proposed school’s

mission. (Section III.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The proposed board has made arrangements with STTC for a facility lease on the school's campus in direct alignment with the school's college preparatory mission. The lease is also proposed at an economical price. (Section III.E.)
- The budget demonstrates knowledge of the practical matters relevant to the operation of a school. (Section III.F.)
- The proposed budget indicates substantial funding (\$1.5 million) during the planning and first three operational years through private grants as well as in-kind and in-cash contributions from Baystate Health. The commitment of Baystate Health to support the school by providing these contributions as well as fundraising support through its organization is of significant advantage to the proposed school. (Section III.F.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The substantial reliance on Baystate Health for financial and organizational support with no formal commitment in place poses potential risks if the school's relationship with the organization diverges from the present vision once permanent educational leadership is in place. (Section III.F.)