

PROPOSED SOMERVILLE PROGRESSIVE CHARTER SCHOOL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This was prepared by the founding group of the Somerville Progressive Charter School.

Mission: The Somerville Progressive Charter School (SPCS) will be a democratic, K-8 public school that will inspire and enable children from diverse backgrounds to develop their full intellectual, social-emotional, and creative potential through in-depth, meaningful learning experiences that draw on their intrinsic curiosity and reflect their individual needs, interests, and learning strengths. The school will offer a broad range of educational programming—including a special focus on science and languages—to serve an economically and culturally diverse community.

Educational Program: SPCS will offer an academically challenging, progressive education for the 21st century. Each child is a unique learner whose needs must be met and whose strengths must be leveraged through creative educational practices that respond to his/her educational and social-emotional challenges. In our community, these practices include:

- Curriculum and instruction that are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF) and made relevant by reflecting students' needs, interests and learning strengths;
- Collaborative, thematic, and experiential learning in mixed-age groups;
- Expanded learning time and consistent targeted remediation for those who need it;
- Allowing students to direct and take responsibility for a portion of their own learning; and
- Additive bilingual education for native and non-native English speakers that reinforces grade-level content, validates children's identities, fosters positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors, and gives children the great advantage of being able to read, write, and speak in two languages.

A school reflecting our city's socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural diversity will provide a rich learning environment and will best prepare students for life in our multicultural society. To attract and serve a broad cross-section of our population, SPCS will offer a wide range of educational programming options designed to meet the needs and play to the strengths of Somerville's diverse families. Capitalizing on our community's linguistic, cultural, and educational resources, the school will have a special focus on languages and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education.

Enhancing options for students: SPCS will expand our city's educational options by offering a fully progressive, democratic school that is designed to meet the needs—and capitalize on the strengths—of Somerville's large immigrant population.

Community's demonstration of support: Demand for academically challenging, progressive education in our community far exceeds the number of seats that will ever be available at SPCS. Over a hundred and forty families have already expressed interest in applying to our school and we have not yet begun our general recruitment campaign. Thirty-five families (22 of which speak a language other than English at home) have filled out written Application Request forms. We have received the signatures of an additional 63 families (not including founders) expressing interest in sending their children to SPCS. Forty-five of those signatures were on forms written in Spanish, Portuguese or Haitian-Creole. We

have received letters of support from community leaders and organizations, which have pledged to help us recruit students from the city's Latino and Haitian communities (see Letters of Support and Advisory Board profiles at Attachment D within the submitted aafinal application). Students whose first language is not English are already responding positively to our unique language and support/enrichment programs.

Founding Group Capacity: Our 30-member founding group is composed of parents and educators with expertise in every field relevant to establishing a progressive charter school – education, school administration, social work, finance, law, development, architecture, science, art, information technology, real estate development, and business and project management. Heidi Lyne, a founder, proven provider, and proposed board member, has spent her career teaching in and helping to lead progressive schools in Massachusetts. She currently is Head of Lower School at the Neighborhood House Charter School in Dorchester, MA. Under her leadership, the Lower School has introduced progressive educational practices and has seen its students' MCAS scores rise each year. In 2010/2011 the school received an EPIC award for nationally-recognized student achievement gains. Our other proven providers, Dr. Julie Nora and Mary Pendergast, are administrators at the International Charter School (ICS), a Regents-commended, Rhode Island public charter school. Under Dr. Nora's leadership, ICS has introduced both progressive educational practices and a two-way immersion bilingual education program, which have resulted in nationally-recognized improvements in English language learners' academic achievement. This year, ICS 4th graders' scores on the NECAP Science Exam out-performed the Rhode Island average, despite the fact that 51% of the school's students are English Language Learners and 65% qualify for free or reduced price school lunches. Dr. Nora will serve on our Founding Board of Trustees. The Somerville Progressive Charter School is supported by a committed and capable consortium of people with a wide range of skills, working together to create a new educational opportunity in our community.