

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2012-2013

Proposed School Name: Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School Springfield

Grades Served At Full Capacity: 9-12

Number of Students At Full Capacity: 250

Proposed School Location: Springfield

Proposed Opening Year: 2014-2015

Proposed Sending Districts: Chicopee, Holyoke, and Springfield

Public Statement:

“The mission of Phoenix Charter Academy Springfield is to challenge teenagers in Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee with an academically rigorous and individually tailored curriculum. At Phoenix Springfield, students who have not been successful in traditional schools will have the support and training necessary to succeed in high school and college. Named after a mythological figure of strength, healing, and renewal, we believe in the capacity of our students to regain control of their academic future and recast themselves as strong and independent adults. Phoenix Springfield will open in 2013, and will grow to serve 250 students by its third year.”

Mission Statement:

“The mission of Phoenix Charter Academy Springfield is to challenge teenagers in Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee with an academically rigorous and individually tailored curriculum. At Phoenix Charter Academy, talented students, some of whom have not succeeded in other schools, have the support, resources, and training necessary to succeed in high school and college, and become economically secure in their futures. Named after a mythological figure of strength, healing, and renewal, we believe in the capacity of our students to regain control of their academic futures and recast themselves as strong, independent, and self-sufficient adults.”

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	9-12	125
Second Year	9-12	175
Third Year	9-12	250
Fourth Year	9-12	250
Fifth Year	9-12	250

Note: Applicant group is the Board of Trustees of the Phoenix Charter Academy (PCA), a regional Commonwealth charter school opened in 2007. The existing PCA serves Chelsea, Everett, Lynn, and Revere students in grades 9-12 with a maximum enrollment of 225. The applicant also is under a three year contract with the Lawrence receivership to manage and operate the Phoenix Academy Lawrence, a district high school which is a replication of the model in Chelsea.

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

Primary Strengths

- The proposed school is a replication of the existing Phoenix model. The mission statement addresses all of the required criteria, including its continued reflection throughout all sections of the application. (Section I.A.)
- The vision statement provides a compelling image of the proposed school’s future as well as a strong impact statement for stakeholders. (Section I.B.)
- Within the application and during the interview, the applicant group provided compelling information about the needs of the three targeted communities and the group’s commitment to serving the targeted student population that has struggled in other public school settings. (Section I.C.)
- This charter application received letters and/or written testimony in support during the public hearing and public comment process, and included support letters within the application, including a letter of support from Commissioner Edward Dolan of the Department of Youth Services. See public comment and application. (Section I.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- The educational philosophy describes the group’s core beliefs and values about education in alignment with the mission and vision. These beliefs about student success emphasize strong relationships, individualized interventions, and high expectations for all students. (Section II.A.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

- The application contains a meaningful discussion of the changes made to the educational program over the course of the existing charter school’s term. The applicant group provided evidence of an embedded reflective practice that involves stakeholders and permeates the decision-making at the existing school. (Section II.B.)
- During the interview, the applicant group emphasized the ability to transfer knowledge and implement successfully at a new school through the strength of the educational model and the committed staff. The applicant group referenced the first year of work in Lawrence under the receivership, to support the ability to transfer their model to a new city. (Section II.B.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- The performance, promotion, and graduation standards are based on high expectations, and are aligned with the proposed school’s mission and educational program. (Section II.C.)
- Similar to the curriculum and instruction narrative, the application contains a description of the evolution of the assessment system over time to best provide teachers relevant student performance data to effectively adapt curriculum and instruction. (Section II.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The application provides a clear plan for establishing a school culture and norms consistent with the proposed school’s mission, educational

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

philosophy, and educational program, including community meetings, and advisory. (Section II.E.)

- The educational model includes a 190 day school year with extended days to support student success and high school graduation. (Section II.E.)
- The proposed school provides targeted supports for the anticipated student population, including an onsite child care center for parenting teens, and a student support center with dedicated staff. (Section II.E.)

Special Student Populations and Student Services

Primary Strengths

- The application provided clear evidence of knowledge regarding program requirements for special education and English language development (ELD) programs. (Section II.F.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The application does not provide a description of how the special education program or the English language development program will be evaluated. (Section II.F.)

Enrollment and Recruitment

Primary Strengths

- In alignment with the mission and re-engagement of the targeted student population, the proposed school provides five opportunities during the school year for new students to enter the program. (Section III.A.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- The PCA board of trustees has the experience and qualifications necessary to implement the proposal, and have demonstrated the capacity to found and sustain a high quality charter school. (Section III.B.)
- To identify and address potential challenges to growth, the PCA board

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

of trustees added a strategic planning committee to the board's committee structure, and a vice chair board position. (Section III.B.)

- The application and the interview provided detailed discussions of the anticipated challenges to network development and the processes in place at the board level to support school and organization-level decision-making as it relates to key functions. (Section III.B.)
- The PCA board of trustees expressed a commitment to recruit an additional two board members from the Springfield and Lawrence area to support community representation on the board as well as a desire for increased diversity. During the interview, the group described the efforts underway to do so. (Section III.B.)

Capacity for Network of Schools

Primary Strengths

- During the interview, the applicant group reflected meaningfully on the completion of its first charter term and the lessons learned during that time which influenced the development of the proposed school. The applicant group also described the role of the Lawrence school in the development of its network and the lessons learned in opening the new school. (Section III.C. and III.D.)
- The applicant group has instituted changes in leadership structures through the development of a network office to support the addition of the proposed school in western Massachusetts. The network office will support the faithful implementation of the model across the network, as well as the

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

development, finance, and leadership and student recruitment needs. (Section III.C. and III.D.)

- During the interview, the applicant group described specific activities to ensure consistency of the school model amongst schools, including the use of specific dashboards to report on student enrollment, academic performance, and fiscal health. (Section III.D.)
- During the interview, network leadership described leveraging contacts within existing charter management organizations and networks, such as Edward Brooke, Roxbury Preparatory, and Unlocking Potential, to identify necessary network structures to build organizational capacity, share resources, and best practices across the schools. (Section III.D.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- During the interview and in the application, the applicant group described clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for the network leader, network administrators, and school leadership. (Section III.D.)
- The applicant group proposes to institute a full planning year prior to opening to effectively identify, train, and develop new leadership and teachers. (Section III.D.)
- The network leader described specific supports provided to both Chelsea and Lawrence school leaders to effectively manage faculty and support whole school success. (Section III.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The application describes a clear plan to acquire the necessary facility as well as specific potential options in Springfield. (Section III.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The budget narrative reflects potential concerns related to inaccurate expense accounting with the implementation of a network office and associated staff that serve each of the schools within the network. During the interview, the applicant group acknowledged that it would rely on Department guidance to stipulate how a network should accurately report expenses within its financial accounting. (Section III.F.)