

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2012-2013

Proposed School Name:	Proposed School Location:
Pioneer Charter School of Science II	Saugus
Pioneer Charter School of Science IV	Woburn

School Name:	PCSS II	PCSS IV
Grades Served at Full Capacity:	7-12	7-12
Number of Students Served at Full Capacity:	360	360
Opening Year:	2013	2014
Sending Districts:	Saugus, Peabody, Lynn, Danvers, Salem	Woburn, Stoneham, Medford, Melrose, Wakefield, Saugus

Note: Mission statement is identical for both proposed charter schools.

Mission Statement:

“The mission of Pioneer Charter School of Science II/Pioneer Charter School of Science IV, (PCSS II/PCSS IV), is to prepare educationally under-resourced students for today’s competitive world. PCSS-II/PCSS IV will help students develop the academic and social skills necessary to become successful professionals and exemplary members of their community. This goal will be achieved by providing the students with a rigorous academic curriculum with emphasis on math and science, balanced by a strong foundation in the humanities, a character education program, career-oriented college preparation, and strong student–teacher–parent collaboration.”

Public Statement (Combined statements from II and IV):

“The mission of Pioneer Charter School of Science (PCSS) II and IV is to prepare educationally under-resourced students for today’s competitive world. PCSS-II and IV will help them develop the academic and social skills necessary to become successful professionals and exemplary members of their community. This goal will be achieved by providing the students with a rigorous academic curriculum with emphasis on math and science, balanced by a strong foundation in the humanities, a character education program, career-oriented college preparation, and strong student–teacher–parent collaboration. PCSS-II will be established as a regional school in Danvers, Lynn, Peabody, Salem, and Saugus. PCSS-II is proposed to start in 2013-14 academic year with 180 students in grades 7-9, and to be located in Saugus. PCCS-IV will be established as a regional school in Medford, Melrose, Saugus, Stoneham, Wakefield, and Woburn. PCSS-IV is proposed to start in 2014-15 academic year with 180 students in grades 7-9, and to be located in Woburn. When fully operational, PCSS II and IV will each serve grades 7-12 with 360 students maximum. The development group is a proven provider and consists of the Board of Trustees of the PCSS (the flagship school) in Everett.”

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	7,8,9	180
Second Year	7,8,9,10	240
Third Year	7,8,9,10,11	300
Fourth Year	7,8,9,10,11,12	360
Fifth Year	7,8,9,10,11,12	360

Both proposals describe the same growth plan.

Note: Applicant group is the Board of Trustees of the Pioneer Charter School of Science (PCCC), a regional Commonwealth charter school opened in 2007. The existing PCSS serves Chelsea, Everett, and Revere students in grades 7-12 with a maximum enrollment of 360.

Amendment Request: PCSS Board has submitted a major amendment request to add grades K-6 and 420 seats to the existing charter school.

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

Primary Strengths

- The mission statement defines the purpose and values of the proposed school, and is reflected throughout all sections of the application. (Section I.A.)
- The mission and vision statements incorporate academic and non-academic goals consistent with high academic standards and student success. (Section I.A. and I.B.)
- The vision statement is aligned with the mission and serves as an organizing principle for the application. (Section I.B.)
- This charter application received letters and/or written testimony in support during the public hearing and public comment process, including existing members of the school community. See public comment. (Section I.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The applicant group provides limited evidence of sufficient demand in the proposed districts. During the interview, the board provided limited evidence of parental support beyond families already familiar with the existing school, or specific outreach efforts performed in the proposed communities to assess demand, outside of Saugus. (Section I.C.)
- Letters of opposition have been received from the City Council of Woburn, Woburn Superintendent Mark Donovan, Lynn School Committee member Charlie Gallo, and Melrose Superintendent Cyndy Taymore. At the public hearing, Saugus School Committee member Arthur Grabowski, and Mayor Scott Galvin of Woburn, spoke in opposition to the proposed schools. See public comment. (Section I.C.)

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- PCCS is proposing a replication with no modifications. The educational philosophy clearly describes the schools' core beliefs and values. It also aligns and expands on the vision and is integrated into an educational program that supports the mission

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

and vision. (Section I.A, I.B, and II.A)

- The applications clearly outline the curriculum that will be used, including examples of the content and skills to be taught in core academic content areas, and the character education standards. (Section II.B.)
- The applications describe the process and procedures of how curriculum is evaluated. This process has been developed over the course of the charter term and involves teachers collaborating with administrators to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment across grade levels and content areas. (Section II.B.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- Graduation standards are based on high expectations, and are aligned with the schools' mission emphasizing mathematics and science, and character education, including 40 hours of community service. (Section II.C.)
- The application describes the use of school wide project fairs, including an annual science fair and senior project fair, consistent with the school's mission, student goals, educational program, and high expectations of students. (Section II.D.)
- There is a clear system of assessment that is linked to curriculum and instruction, and facilitates decision making about adjustments to the educational program. (Section II.C, II.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The applications described limited measures of reporting student outcomes to demonstrate within-year and year-to-year student gains/losses. They report using internally developed interim assessments, MCAS, and PSAT as means to measure and report student performance and progress. (Section II.D.)

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The proposed school will implement an extended year of 200 days, and an extended day of 8:00 a.m. - 3:35 p.m., with academic and extracurricular after-school programming. (Section II.E.)
- The application describes a variety of meaningful strategies to involve parents/guardians as partners in the education of their children, and the building and maintaining of family-school partnerships. During the interview, the applicant group stressed the importance of the size of the school and their ability to build relationships with students and families as a factor in their success. (Section II.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The applications contain limited information on how relationships will be developed with community organizations in the new communities where the proposed schools will be located. (Section II.E.)
- Throughout the applications and the interview, the applicant group provided generalized information regarding the educational programming implemented at the existing PCSS and did not reflect meaningfully on how the completion of its first successful five year charter term has influenced the development of the submitted proposals or the intended network. (Section II.E.)
- The applications describe a culture of high expectations to be replicated at the proposed schools with a strong emphasis on discipline but provided limited information on the implementation strategies for school culture and the unique challenges for the proposed new communities. (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.)
- The applications describe a thoughtful process for evaluating both the special education and ELD programs. (Section II.F.)
- The applications describe the processes and procedures that the proposed schools will use to identify,

Primary Weaknesses

- The applications provide limited information on the plan for and implementation of a responsive, general education classroom, beyond tracking in mathematics and science courses. (Section II.F.)
- The applications did not adequately address ancillary services in this section or the budget, such as contracted physical therapy, or occupational therapy, and only included information on the general health services they will provide.

assess, and serve students who are English Language Learners (ELLs). (Section II.F.)

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- The applications indicate special education staffing levels that are adequate to serve the anticipated population of 16%. For example, during the first year of operation, the schools intend to employ two full time special education teachers to serve an anticipated 29 students. (Section II.F.)
- Additionally, the schools anticipate hiring at least one licensed ELL teacher during the first three years of operation to serve the projected 8% ELL student population. (Section II.F.)

Enrollment and Recruitment

Primary Strengths

- The applications propose a slightly modified version of the flagship school's original growth plan which allows the schools to admit a greater number of students during the first year of operation, including new students in grade 9. The schools will have one year of graduation data available during the first charter term. (Section III.A.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The applications provide limited detail of the strategy for outreach and recruitment of families in all of the proposed sending districts. At the interview, the applicant group stressed the demand from Saugus reflected on the waiting list of the flagship school. (Section III.A.)

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- After recently completing its first charter term, the board of trustees has the necessary experience, and demonstrated the capacity to found and sustain a high quality charter school. (Section III.B.)
- The composition of the board is representative of the schools' mission and vision, predominantly professional scientists and engineers

Primary Weaknesses

- The applications do not describe how the proposed board will recruit new members. During the interview, the board stated challenges in developing broad and diverse representation, finding individuals who have the desired skill sets, and are able to make the commitment required of board members. The board stated that targeted board recruitment is a

working for private science-technology firms or higher education (seven of ten board members). (Section II.B.)

- During the interview, the board articulated what areas of expertise it seeks to develop including management, finance, and real estate. (Section III.B.)
- In the applications and the interview, the board described a clear workable reporting structure, and an appropriate delineation of roles and responsibilities between the board and the schools' leadership regarding the governance and management of the school. (Section III.C.)
- The board of trustees has engaged in annual internal and external evaluation of board effectiveness over the course of its charter term. (Section III.C.)

priority. (Section III.A.)

- The governance model described in the applications contained inconsistent information in the management section regarding the responsibility of the board in regards to the hiring and evaluation of staff, specifically stating the hiring of all faculty and staff are subject to board approval implying the oversight of day-to-day management. (Section III.C.)

Capacity for Network to Manage Schools

Primary Strengths

- The applications clearly explain the changes to the organizational chart and describe the lines of authority among school leadership and staff at individual school and among schools. (Section III.D.)
- During the interview, the applicant group explained in greater detail the role of the staff from the existing school in supporting the development of the new schools, specifically in regards to developing classroom teachers to play leadership and administrative roles in response to the growth as a network. (Section III.D.)
- The applicant group has instituted changes in leadership structures through the development of a network office to support growth. The network office will support the faithful

Primary Weaknesses

- While the applicant group has developed a plan for a network, it is not clear if they have collaborated with any external supports or existing charter school networks that they can leverage for best practices. (Section III.D.)
- The applicant group identifies a few anticipated challenges but does not appear to have considered the many substantial challenges they would encounter in developing the network, as well as their charter amendment for the existing school. The limited information provided regarding the proposed governance and management changes is inadequate to judge the applicant group's capacity to effectively govern three schools, and the proposed expansion. (Section

implementation of the model across the network, as well as the quality of curriculum and assessment across the network. (Section III.C. and III.D.)

- III.C. and III.D.)
- The applicant group provided a limited explanation of how the development of a network of schools will impact the evaluation and development of curriculum materials as well as professional development for teachers. (Section II.B and III.D.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- The applications describe how faculty and administrators will be evaluated and by whom. Teachers receive frequent observations and feedback from the Dean of Academics that results in a summative evaluation at the end of the school year. (Section II.B. and III.D.)
- In the interview and the application, the applicant group described the activities it currently undertakes to ensure continuous improvement of the school model, including regular opportunities for faculty and leadership to collaborate as a whole school, grade level, and content area. (Section III.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The applications do not identify potential candidates for any leadership positions; however, at the interview, the applicant group indicated that the current Executive Director was a potential candidate for the Chief Executive Officer of the network. (Section III.D.)
- While additional information was provided during the interview, the applications provided limited detail to explain the timeline for implementation of the network personnel and the coordination of network personnel with proposed school level staff to support network and school level goals. (Section III.D.)
- The reviewers noted concerns about the adequacy of the staffing plan to support the proposed variety of course offerings, including science during the first year of operation. (Section III.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group has committed to provide transportation, as it does with the existing school, to those students who would not be eligible for transportation from their sending districts. (Section III.E.)
- While the applications do not describe a viable plan for a facility for either location; during the interview, the applicant group indicated that they have successfully identified a viable option for the proposal in Saugus. (Section III.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While certain areas were clarified during the interview, there were inconsistencies between the budget narrative, and proposed budget in regards to the staffing plans. (Section III.F.)