

Argosy Collegiate Charter School Executive Summary

Mission. Argosy Collegiate Charter School equips Fall River scholars in grades five through twelve with the academic foundation, financial literacy, and ethical development necessary to excel in selective colleges, earn professional opportunities, and demonstrate positive leadership.

Vision. Argosy Collegiate Charter School (“Argosy Collegiate”) is proposed for the City of Fall River. Educating students in grades 5-12, the school will open with 81 fifth grade students in 2014, use a slow growth model by growing one grade of 81 students per year, and reach full growth span in 2021. Serving a community with tremendous academic need and a significant population of first generation English Language Learners, Argosy Collegiate educates students in middle school through high school to remediate academic gaps experienced in elementary school and accelerate learning in high school, thus preparing every student to succeed in college, manage their financial independence, and access expanded professional opportunities.

The mission and vision are informed by the best practices of the highest performing charter schools across our state and nation. Currently in the Commonwealth, schools demonstrating strong performance are clustered around Greater Boston; we seek to bring such quality and trained leadership to the need in Fall River. Argosy Collegiate has the benefit, training, and network of Proven Provider Building Excellent Schools (BES), a highly respected national non-profit dedicated to the creation of high performing charter schools. Argosy Collegiate leadership and staff bring the benefit of extensive training and support in building a rigorous academic program and achievement-oriented culture, executing impactful instructional leadership, and detailed management of the operations, finance, and governance of a successful charter school. Our mission and vision have been tailored to meet the diverse needs of youth in Fall River and the school’s goals of closing the academic achievement gap, bridging the financial literacy gap, and developing student leadership as our young people prepare for the responsibilities and opportunities of college.

All students, regardless of race, socio-economic status, or home language deserve a quality, college preparatory education, and the foundation for high school must be established in the middle school years. For our most at-risk students, middle school accelerates academic decline into high school failure that must and can be prevented. We provide high-quality instruction within a structured, supportive school environment. Seven core beliefs guide our design:

1. Academic achievement is possible for all students.
2. Exceptional educators deliver exceptional results.
3. A clear code of conduct consistently implemented ensures a school culture of respect, responsibility, and character.
4. A seamless continuum between middle school and high school allows for strategic vertical planning and eliminates common transitional risk factors.
5. Data is systematically gathered and analyzed to inform instruction and student supports.
6. All operational, governance, and management decisions must optimize student achievement and ensure the realization of the mission.
7. Frequent communication with families regarding students’ academic and behavioral performance supports student achievement and character development.

Three years from now, in 2015, fifth graders in Fall River’s most underserved communities will have the academic skills, content knowledge, and character to move successfully into the next grade, with measurable achievement results in the core subjects. In 2018, our inaugural fifth graders will seamlessly matriculate into our high school. In 2023, our first graduating class will have completed their first year at the university, and will be examples to all that success is possible. Families will have access to a seamless, structured, high quality 5-12 education for their children; teachers will have opportunity to develop their practice and be part of a mission-driven team; students will gain the opportunity to remediate gaps and accelerate their learning; and Fall River will have the vehicle by which it can realize and demonstrate the success of many diverse learners.

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Need. Argosy Collegiate’s mission and educational program are in response to the significant need in Fall River for a public middle and high school that prepares students to excel in four-year colleges and universities. Fall River remains a chronically underperforming city, and is rated amongst the lowest 10% of districts across the Commonwealth. Four middle schools serve 2,255 students in grades six through eight. On the 2011 MCAS, middle school students average 56% proficient/advanced in ELA and 37% in math. Of the 2,255 middle schoolers, this means that 992 are not proficient in ELA and 1421 are not proficient in Math. Three public schools serve Fall River middle/high or high school students - Durfee, Diman Regional Vocational Technical, and Resiliency Preparatory. Grade 10 MCAS results for 2011 are outlined below.

School	# of students	ELA Proficient/Advanced	Math Proficient/Advanced
Resiliency Prep (6-12)	203	21%	16%
Diman RVTHS (9-12)	1350	84%	74%
Durfee HS (9-12)	2228	71%	56%
Total: 3,781		Average: 59%	Average: 49%

Yet these numbers do not capture a significant and pervasive problem in Fall River – high school graduation rates. High school graduation rates for 2011 were 71%, with rates 67% for low-income students and 52% for Hispanic students. At best, therefore, 7 out of 10 students are graduating, and within the Hispanic community, only 5 out of 10 reach high school graduation. Of those that do graduate, 22.5% from Durfee plan to attend a four-year public college or university; 21.2% of Diman graduates plan to attend higher education. Demographically, 21% of students in Fall River receive Special Education services, 23% are identified as ELL, and 78% are eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch. The student body is 65.3% white, 19% Hispanic, 6.8% African American, 4.5% Asian, 4% Multi-racial or Non-Hispanic, .3% Native American, and .1% Native American or Pacific Islander. Unemployment rates are 13.2% compared to 10.2% for the state. Per capita income is \$20,337, compared to \$33,203 for the state, and 20.2% of residents live below the poverty line. Community excitement and desire for choice and high quality schools in Fall River is evidenced by the nearly 600 parents who have signed a petition of support for Argosy Collegiate. These parents state that they are interested in sending their child to Argosy Collegiate should it open in the fall of 2014. Collectively, these parents have 395 children, 59 of whom are in grades K-8.

Capacity. Clear, consistent, and uncompromising leadership is critical to the success of a high-performing school. This includes strong day-to-day management by the Executive Director and oversight by a highly competent Governing Board. The founding group of Argosy Collegiate Charter School is an extraordinary team of dedicated and experienced professionals, committed to the revitalization of Fall River and the academic success of its students. Lead Founder Kristen Pavao is a proven urban educator and life-long resident of Fall River, and is the proposed Executive Director for Argosy Collegiate. Ms. Pavao is joined by several individuals on the founding team who collectively bring the requisite skills and expertise for strong and accountable charter school governance. Together they are prepared to execute on our college preparatory mission and vision for the young people of Fall River, as well as establish policies that protect the school’s organizational and academic success over time and guarantee its success into the future. Argosy Collegiate’s founding team is honored by the many business and community leaders who have offered their strong support, and the early and overwhelmingly positive response from local families looking for a quality choice for their child(ren). Together, we stand ready to do what it takes in the planning, development, and sustaining of a no excuses charter school in Fall River – demonstrating that demographics do not determine destiny and that all children, especially those in our gateway cities, can learn and achieve at high level.