

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2012-2013

Proposed School Name: Springfield Collegiate Charter School

Grades Served At Full Capacity: K-8

Number of Students At Full Capacity: 465

Proposed School Location: Springfield

Proposed Opening Year: FY2014

Proposed School Support Organization: Building Excellent Schools (BES)

Public Statement:

Educating students in kindergarten through eighth grade, Springfield Collegiate Charter School develops the academic and character foundation necessary for success in high school, college, and life. Springfield, the City of Firsts, has long been home to innovation in the sciences, arts, and industry. Springfield Collegiate gives this name new meaning, as it provides students the opportunity to be the first in their family to put themselves on the path towards college—starting on the first day of kindergarten. Springfield Collegiate Charter School will open with 81 kindergarteners, growing one grade of 48 students per year to serve 465 K-8 students.

Mission Statement:

Educating students in kindergarten through eighth grade, Springfield Collegiate Charter School develops the academic and character foundation necessary for success in high school, college, and life.

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	K	81
Second Year	K,1	129
Third Year	K, 1, 2	177
Fourth Year	K,1, 2, 3	225
Fifth Year	K, 1, 2, 3, 4	273

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

Primary Strengths

- The mission statement defines the purpose and values of the school and is succinct. (Section I.A.)
- The application communicated a strong mission and vision to create a highly structured K-8 school built on a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, with an emphasis on

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

literacy, located in the South End community of Springfield. (Section I.B.)

- The application discusses the reason for the selection of the community and provided a specific rationale for how this proposed school will enhance or expand the educational options for students and families in Springfield. During the interview, the applicant group clearly articulated the need for the proposed school in the selected neighborhood and outlined the on-going efforts to engage the South End community in the proposed school's development. (Section I.C.)
- This charter application received letters and/or written testimony in support during the public hearing and public comment process, and included within the application support letters from local community organizations such as Square One. See public comment and application. (Section I.C.)

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- The educational philosophy describes the founding group's core beliefs and values; high expectations, a structured learning environment, data driven instruction, strong literacy and character education foundations, teacher quality and effectiveness, and accountability. The philosophy aligns with and builds on the school's mission and vision. (Section II.A.)
- The curriculum and instruction section are consistent with the mission and educational philosophy of the school, including a clear focus on literacy. While limited rationale has been provided to support some selections,

Primary Weaknesses

- During the extended planning year, the proposed school leader will develop the required curriculum and internal assessments, including but not limited to the learning standards, scope and sequence, and interim assessments, as well as its alignment to the Curriculum Frameworks. It is unclear what expertise the proposed leader has to do so for elementary grades, but it is clear that elementary schools in the national BES (Building Excellent Schools) network will be able to provide additional resources. In future years, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI) will

the applicant group has identified specific commercial curriculum resources for English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, social studies, and science to implement at the proposed school. Additionally, the proposed school will include fitness and performing arts classes at each grade. (Section II.B.)

- At the interview, the applicant group elaborated on the model of co-teaching that would be implemented in grades K-2 and how this instructional model will have a positive impact on students with diverse learning styles. (Section II.B and II.E.)

oversee the development of curriculum and assessment. (Section II.B.)

- It was unclear from both the application and the interview if the proposed school leader and board understand the unique challenges of developing and executing an early education curriculum, although the proposed leader intends to spend time working with leaders of similar models as part of the BES fellowship. See Management. (Section II.B. and II.E.)
- Reviewers expressed concerns that the application did not articulate a comprehensive vision of an early childhood and elementary education model that could meet the diversity of needs found in its young students. During the interview, the proposed school leader described experiences through the BES fellowship that have and will continue to develop his knowledge and understanding of a successful model that meets students' developmental needs. (Section II.B.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- The assessment section clearly explains how achievement data will be collected and managed; it also describes a variety of internally developed assessments used to measure student progress, including daily exit tickets and weekly quizzes. Additionally, the regular use of common interim assessments will allow the school to identify trends and respond quickly to student, grade level, and school wide performance data. (Section II.D.)
- In both the application and the

Primary Weaknesses

- The application did not include adequate details of a meaningful and practical approach for measuring student progress towards attaining non-academic goals. (Section II.D.)
- The application provides a limited and inadequate discussion of the performance, promotion, and graduation standards for the proposed school. While it is clear that the school plans to implement standards-based grading based on the best practices of other elementary charter schools, the limited discussion regarding its

interview, the applicant group articulates a commitment to use student performance data to improve instruction, including the use of externally developed assessments such as the Stanford 10, the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP), and Achievement Network (ANet). (Section II.D.)

policies and the integration of the varied assessments into the grading system, limits the ability to evaluate the group's capacity to implement. During the interview, the group articulated a commitment to maintain rigorous standards but also acknowledged the challenges inherent with students entering far below grade level or experiencing obstacles to their learning. (Section II.C.)

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The proposed school will implement an extended year of 186 days and an extended day, with a shortened day on Fridays for teacher professional development. (Section II.E.)
- The application clearly describes the plan for establishing school culture that is consistent with the mission and vision. The application describes the proposed school's culture and a clear plan to establish and reinforce the culture, including community meeting, and community celebration. It also includes an extensive behavioral philosophy and disciplinary plan that is aligned with the proposed school's mission and vision. (Section II.E.)
- The proposed school will admit new students in kindergarten through 6th grade. At the interview, the applicant group was able to articulate how students who enter at the upper grades will be taught and introduced to the school culture. (Section II.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The review panel noted concerns with the structure of the schedule for students in grades 5-8 with a proposed extra hour at the end of the day. The applicant group provided limited clarification about how the schedule would be structured differently for these older students, and noted it could be spent as enrichment time, tutoring, homework completion time, or for discipline purposes. It remains unclear if it is considered part of structured learning time during the school day or afterschool programming. (Section II.E.)
- In the sample teacher schedule provided in the application, it is clear that teachers will have limited planning time during the first years of operation if they are required to teach and/or support the fitness and performing arts classes. It is unclear the qualifications of faculty to take on these teaching responsibilities or the support provided to enable such additional responsibilities. (Section II.E. and III. D.)

Special Student Populations and Student Services

Primary Strengths

- The application provides generalized information on the policies and procedures for serving students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs). The application demonstrates knowledge of the requirements to implement a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) program, and to use ACCESS evaluations to assess English proficiency. (Section II.F.)
- During the interview, the applicant group spoke about the resources that it would access through partners or contractors to provide support services to students and their families, including Square One. The group also articulated flexibility in the budget to provide counseling services, as needed. (Section II.F.)

Primary Weaknesses

- In the application and the interview, the applicant group was unable to clearly explain when pull-out services for both ELLs and students with disabilities would be provided if needed. It was indicated in the application that homework center and tutorial are times for extra academic support for all students, including ELLs and students receiving special education services. While it remains unclear at which grade students can access these supports, for students in the lower grades, homework center is during recess and tutorials take place during performing arts and fitness classes. For students in grades 5-8, homework center is after school, and tutorial takes place during focus period, a scheduled part of the school day. It is unclear if this would also be utilized for pull-out instructional services for ELLs and students with disabilities. (Section II.F.)
- In the application and interview, the applicant group provides insufficient information to establish their capacity to adequately serve students with disabilities and ELLs, and lacks an individual with professional expertise in implementing an ELD or special education program. (Section II.F.)
- In the application, the applicant group provides limited information about the qualifications of individuals who will implement the ELD and special education programs. The staffing chart indicated one lead classroom teacher who was also the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, and one individual performing the administrator and teacher responsibilities for the special

education program. During the interview, the applicant group indicated that the special education staffing plan has evolved to have one full-time special education teacher during the first year. (Section II.F.)

- The application describes evaluating the special education program through a parent survey rather than the review of student assessment performance as it proposes to do with the ELD program. (Section II.F.)
- While the applicant group indicated the Response to Intervention (RTI) system as a tool for supporting struggling students during the interview, and the application contains references to RTI in the narrative, the draft recruitment and retention plan, and a pre-referral schematic, the proposed school’s description of the use of RTI as an intervention within the proposed program was inadequate. The application lacks detail of how, when, and what kinds of interventions will be provided, as well as how and when progress monitoring of interventions will occur. (Section II.F.)
- While not adequately addressed in the application, during the interview, the applicant group stated the proposed school would provide a full nutrition program with breakfast, lunch, and a snack daily. (Section II.F.)

Enrollment and Recruitment

Primary Strengths

- During the interview, the applicant group clearly articulated the need for slow enrollment growth as integral to the successful implementation of the school model. (Section III.A.)
- In the application, a clear commitment is made to fill vacancies through the

Primary Weaknesses

- The requested maximum enrollment reflects a 33 student enrollment bubble created by enrolling 81 kindergarten students during the first year of operation rather than the 48 for the two classroom per grade level model proposed. The applicant group

sixth grade which exceeds the backfilling requirements in the statute. (Section III.A.)

is clear that, if federal charter school planning funds are available, the enrollment will be lowered to 72 kindergarteners. The applicant group stated that opening with a kindergarten and first grade was not appropriate for the successful implementation of its model. It is not apparent that the group has considered the challenges of creating an enrollment bubble of this size. (Section III.A.)

- The attached draft enrollment policy does not reflect the most recent Department guidance (August 2011) on required elements of enrollment policies and implementation practices. (Section III.A.)

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- The founders and proposed board members have a range of experience and qualifications, including finance, technology, community organizing, management, real estate, and law. (Section III.B.)
- The governance model presents a clear workable structure and encourages an appropriate relationship between the board of trustees, school leader, and administration regarding governance and management of the school. (Section III.C.)
- The application identifies criteria for the selection and evaluation of a school leader. During the interview, the proposed board was able to articulate the reasons for the selection of the proposed leader, William Spierer. (Section III.C.)
- BES' "Connect to Excellence" program will provide three levels of support for board development:

Primary Weaknesses

- The proposed board lacks a member with an education background to assist in monitoring the proposed school's academic performance and the school leader's effectiveness in developing and implementing the proposed academic program. (Section III.B.)
- The submitted draft bylaws do not reflect the most recent Department guidance (February 2011) on required elements of board of trustee bylaws. The draft bylaws omit a number of the required elements and indicate the use of prohibited practices such as proxy voting. (Section III.C.)

ensuring that there is a process for recruiting new board members; assisting with strategic planning; and general board development. (Section III.C.)

- The proposed board provided insight during the interview of the challenges they may face, what they have learned about governing a charter school through BES related training, and what they need to learn to continue to grow into the role of a board of trustees. (Section III.C.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- The application provides a clear reporting structure narrative. General teaching goals are articulated, and teacher supervision and evaluation procedures are outlined in the application. (Section III.D.)
- Professional development is clearly described in this section with three focus areas: classroom management, and school culture; curriculum, and instruction; and data, and assessment. The professional development schedule includes a four week summer institute, weekly Friday afternoons, and eight full days during the school year. (Section III.D.)
- There are descriptions of clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for the school leader and other administrative staff. (Section III.D.)
- BES' "Connect to Excellence" program will provide on-going support for school leadership including but not limited to the development of the hiring process for staff; cultural audits; and review of

Primary Weaknesses

- The proposed school leader has no elementary education experience or school leadership experience. Mr. Spirer has three years of teaching experience through the Teach For America (TFA) program. Mr. Spirer was a high school social studies teacher during that time, a grade level and department leader, and provided instructional support to first year TFA teachers for one year. After teaching in New York City, Mr. Spirer completed a law degree and served as an attorney for the Massachusetts Committee for Public Counsel Services in Lowell. (Section II.D.)
- The application indicates that the proposed school leader will perform the twice annual teacher evaluations for all teachers, upwards of 26 teachers at the end of the charter term, and the evaluation of 5 members of the leadership team. It is unclear how the school leader would have the capacity to do so or why teacher evaluations wouldn't be further delegated amongst members of the leadership team, including the

assessments. (Section III.D.)

Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Student Support Coordinator, or Principal. (Section II.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The application provides a structure and process for managing school finances with specific fiscal controls. There is a clear plan for tracking finances in the daily business operations. (Section III.F.)
- At the interview, the proposed board indicated their commitment to fundraising. The board has the financial support of the Davis Foundation for the planning year if federal charter school planning grants are unavailable. (Section III.F.)
- The applicant group has identified a number of potential buildings for the location of the school in the desired neighborhood. (Section III.F.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.