

Springfield Collegiate Charter School Executive Summary

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

Vision. All students have the right to an excellent education regardless of race, socioeconomic status, home language, special education need, or zip code. We propose a highly structured K-8 college preparatory school that offers a rigorous academic curriculum, data-driven instruction, comprehensive academic supports, a focus on positive character development through our PRIDE values, and a joyful school culture attained through frequent celebration of student achievement and growth. Under the training and support of Proven Provider Building Excellent Schools, Springfield Collegiate Charter School (“Springfield Collegiate”) draws from best practices used by the nation’s top performing urban charter schools. We believe college preparation must start on a child’s first day of primary education and that all students have a right to be prepared to succeed in academically rigorous high schools and colleges. We therefore provide a seamless K-8 education within a single school.

Springfield Collegiate adheres to eight core values that define our educational philosophy.

- 1. High Expectations, No Excuses.** We will do whatever it takes to make sure all of our students are prepared for academically rigorous high schools and colleges. We expect all of our students to work hard, behave well, and succeed, and we provide the supports they need to do so. We create a joyful and engaging learning environment, in which achievement is continuously celebrated.
- 2. Character matters.** Success requires more than just academic achievement; it requires students to be good people. We devote time to explicitly teaching our PRIDE values – Preparation, Respect, Integrity, Determination, and Enthusiasm – so that our students can be successful in and out of the classroom.
- 3. Our college preparatory mission drives everything.** Our college mission drives all academic and organizational decision-making. All financial, human resource, and curricular decisions are made with the goal of effectively remediating academic gaps and accelerating student achievement.
- 4. Literacy is our priority.** Reading is the most powerful academic skill students can acquire. We offer multiple hours of targeted literacy instruction every day to ensure that students can read with comprehension and insight and analyze and effectively respond to texts across the disciplines.
- 5. Excellent teachers drive exceptional results when joy and rigor permeate the classroom.** Effective, mission-aligned teachers are the key determinant for student achievement, and teacher quality is the most important factor driving student achievement. We invest in recruiting, retaining, training, and supporting game-changing teachers who can transform our students’ lives, and who infuse joy and rigor into every lesson.
- 6. More time on task is critical.** More time in the classroom is critical for students who enter school far behind their more affluent peers. We view instructional time as sacred and reinforce this message by providing a highly structured classroom environment. We plan our lessons meticulously, pace them appropriately, and teach procedures explicitly so that no amount of instructional time is wasted.
- 7. We assess often, use data strategically, and intervene aggressively.** Frequent analysis of student data informs key instructional and operational decisions. We analyze all data on a frequent, ongoing, and strategic basis to determine how our students are performing and where we need to provide remediation or acceleration.
- 8. Families are our most important partners.** Strategic and active family engagement promotes strong educational outcomes. We provide multiple avenues to develop strong relationships with parents and we open our school doors to families to participate in academic and co-curricular events and to celebrate student achievement.

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Need. The need for quality educational outcomes for Springfield students is pressing and urgent. Currently, 41% of students in Springfield Public Schools (SPS) perform at grade level in ELA and 27% are proficient in math. Further, 53% of SPS students graduate from high school and proficiency rates show that a majority of those are academically unprepared for college. Springfield is one of the poorest cities in Massachusetts and has the second highest rate of low income students in Massachusetts; 85.6% of Springfield students receive free or reduced price lunch – a rate higher than that of comparable urban centers like Boston, Worcester, and Lowell.

Proficiency rates in Springfield’s elementary schools show chronically low achievement that plagues students as they progress into the upper grades. In grade 3, for example, when students transition from learning to read to reading to learn, 60% of children in Springfield’s public schools *cannot* read proficiently. Fifth graders enter middle school poised for failure and middle schools struggle to provide remediation. Springfield has the lowest eighth grade proficiency rates of any Massachusetts district in math and the third lowest in ELA.

The South End of Springfield is severely economically depressed and lacking in strong educational options for its children. Notably, there is no elementary school that serves this neighborhood of 4,386 residents, 417 of whom are students in grades K-5. The South End struggles with a high poverty rate (63%) and 96% of South End families with students that attend SPS schools are low income. Meetings with parents in this community indicate a strong desire to have a school that they can access easily, and which provides their children with a high quality education. Of the 417 South End students in grades K-5, 25% attend the Daniel B. Brunton School, which requires a 45-minute commute and where only 38% of third graders are proficient in ELA and 47% are proficient in math. Other students are dispersed across more than fifteen schools, none of which demonstrate strong academic performance, and six of which are designated as Level 4 schools. A strong school, using a seamless K-8 model and providing rigorous instruction from the first day of Kindergarten, is desperately needed in Springfield and in the South End neighborhood in particular.

Our community outreach with Springfield’s professional, philanthropic, business, and educational leadership, and to parents of SPS students, especially those residing in the South End, indicates a strong desire for an elementary school in the South End. The need for strong educational options for Springfield’s families is urgent. We answer this call for quality education at the K-8 level.

Capacity. Strong leadership with the ability to set high expectations, pursue them with zeal, and execute at a high level is critical to the success of a high performing school. The Executive Director must provide diligent, focused, and effective day-to-day management and the Board of Trustees must be mission-driven and provide careful oversight. Lead Founder and proposed Executive Director William Spirer is a trained and experienced educator and leader informed by and networked to the strongest charter school leaders locally and nationally. The founding group of Springfield Collegiate is a high capacity team of professionals with the diverse skill and experience to lead and govern a public charter school. It has the expertise to lay a strong foundation for the school and establish policies that will ensure its success and organizational and financial viability well into the future. The Lead Founder and proposed Executive Director, Board of Trustees, and school are supported by Proven Provider Building Excellent Schools.

Over the past six months, the founding group has met monthly, laying the groundwork for its preparation of the final charter application, planning and executing its extensive community outreach efforts, and developing the vision and strategic plan for the school. In these early stages, the group has benefited from its expertise in law, real estate, finance, accounting, marketing, and education, and has diligently built on its existing relationships with the residents of our target community. The founding group approaches the work of education with seriousness and urgency and is poised to successfully guide Springfield Collegiate through its formation, development, and growth.