

**FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2012-2013**

<b>Proposed School Name:</b>	YouthBuild Academy Charter School
<b>Grades Served At Full Capacity:</b>	9-12
<b>Number of Students At Full Capacity:</b>	173
<b>Proposed School Location:</b>	Lawrence
<b>Proposed Opening Year:</b>	FY2013
<b>Proposed Management Organization:</b>	Lawrence Family Development Education Fund, Inc. (LFDEF)

**Public Statement:**  
“Lawrence Family Development and Education Fund, Inc. proposes to open YBACS, a Commonwealth charter high school in Lawrence, Massachusetts. It will educate 173 students in grades 9-12 who are considered “high-risk” dropouts. Since 2006, over 2,500 Lawrence students left school-51% non completers. Students will earn a high school diploma by participating in rigorous courses that define the knowledge and skills students must have to achieve success in the workforce and in post-secondary education. Students lifetime skills and leadership development through quality community service, career and post-secondary direction and planning.”

**Mission Statement:**  
“YouthBuild Academy Charter School (YBACS) is an initiative of the Lawrence Family Development and Education Fund, Inc. The proposed high school will reinforce the Fund’s mission and vision of strengthening families and building community through education. YBACS will specialize in the academic and social development of youth and young adult residents (ages 16-22) of Lawrence, Massachusetts who have previously dropped out of high school. It will re-engage them in a rigorous course of study based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks grades 9-12 leading to a high school diploma. It will also articulate leadership and personal development through community service for career readiness and post-secondary matriculation. The academic program expands the Lawrence Family Development and Education Fund Inc.’s Proven Provider status for high expectations and culturally-relevant, student-centered experiences which foster academic achievement and self-advocacy.”

**Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:**

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	9-12	60
Second Year	9-12	100
Third Year	9-12	140
Fourth Year	9-12	173
Fifth Year	9-12	173

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

### **Primary Strengths**

- The mission and vision of re-engaging students who have dropped out of high school with a focus on social development, career readiness, and academics is meaningful. (Section I.A. and I.B.)
- During the interview, the applicant group spoke passionately about the value of the proposed school to the community of Lawrence and their capacity as a group to serve the anticipated population similar to students being served by the present YouthBuild General Educational Development (GED) diploma program. (Section I.C.)
- The group stated that they intend the proposed school to be a recovery program for students who have already dropped out of high school. Through the assessment of students' academic skills, and socio-emotional needs, the proposed school will offer an individualized high school diploma program for students who have previously dropped out of high school. (Section I.B. and I.C.)
- The application provided a clear description of the student population that the proposed charter school would serve and the anticipated needs of the population. (Section I.C.)
- This charter application received letters and/or written testimony in support during the public hearing and public comment process, including Senator Barry Finegold, Representative Marcos Devers, City Councilor Dan Rivera, and Essex Juvenile Court Associate Justice Mark Newman. See public comment.

### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The mission statement as written will require revision; it describes the proposed management organization and its initiatives in addition to the required mission statement criteria. (Section I.A.)
- The application does not contain clear YouthBuild elements in the mission or vision statement. The YouthBuild aspects of the proposed educational program were not fully explained or integrated into the proposal. (Section I.A.)
- The vision statement does not serve as an organizing principal for all of the sections of the application, nor is it aligned with the mission statement. (Section I.B.)

(Section I.C.)

### **Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The educational philosophy describes the founding group’s core beliefs and values about education, and reengaging the targeted student population. The educational philosophy is aligned with the proposed school’s mission. (Section II.A.)
- The proposed school intends to implement a curriculum which will include a career and vocational (CTV) education component in addition to the traditional academic content areas. The career pathways will include business and consumer services, construction, hospitality and tourism, and health services. (Section II.B.)
- In alignment with its educational philosophy, the application describes instructional methods selected to engage and effectively support the learning of the anticipated high risk student population, including problem based and cooperative learning strategies. (Section II.B.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- Reviewers were unable to determine the content and skills to be taught in the required content areas with the provided limited curriculum outline that omitted history and the career pathways curriculum. During the interview, the applicant group stated that they are recruiting expertise in the selected career pathways. The applicant group indicated that the proposed school’s curriculum would be written, with the help of consultants, once teachers have been hired. (Section II.B.)
- During the interview, the applicant group stated that the targeted student population is looking for opportunities to learn a trade or skill, but provided limited details as to how this was determined and how the four pathways were identified. (Section II.B.)
- The application does not describe a clear plan and curricular components that will facilitate ongoing development, improvement, and refinement of the curriculum. During the interview, the applicant group noted that the curriculum would be linked to the Curriculum Frameworks but did not describe how the curriculum would be developed. (Section II.B.)

### **Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The application describes specific types of measures that will be used to

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The applicant group provided limited detail on how the curriculum and

assess student performance and engagement that are in alignment with the proposed instructional methodologies, including the use of performance assessments. (Section II.C.)

- The application describes a wide variety of assessments that will be administered, that were strategically chosen to identify student needs, both academic and socio-emotional. The assessment system is in alignment with the proposed school's mission and educational program. (Section II.D.)

instruction would support high standards of academic achievement. The application provides inadequate details on performance, promotion, and graduation standards. Two contradictory systems of assessing student performance are described in different parts of the application, competency-based and traditional grading, and it remains unclear the attributes of a particular grade. During the interview, the applicant group could not clarify the development of competencies and how they relate to curriculum development. (Section II.B. and II.C.)

- It is unclear how the proposed assessment system is linked to curriculum and instruction or how it will be used to facilitate adjustments to the educational program. The application does not adequately explain how the system will measure academic progress of students in relation to the chosen curriculum and the Curriculum Frameworks. (Section II.D.)
- The assessment system incorporates a multitude of tools creating potentially unnecessary complexity, a few are administrative tracking systems for student work and others appear redundant to implement. For example, the system includes AIMSweb, GMADE, and GRADE. (Section II.D.)

### **School Characteristics**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- In alignment with its mission and educational philosophy of re-engaging students, the proposed school plans to implement restorative practices as its primary method to address student discipline. (Section II.E.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The application does not clearly describe how the longer school day and year will be implemented for teachers and students. During the interview, the applicant group was unable to provide additional

- In both the application and interview, the applicant group described how various partners, including area community colleges, will offer opportunities for students, such as dual enrollment, as well as collaboration with teachers. (Section II.E.)
- During the interview, the applicant group stated that though they would be unable to be a fully operating Career/Technical/Vocational (CTV) high school during the first years of operation, they would implement programming to allow students to receive an OSHA and/or ServSafe certification that would improve employment opportunities if students chose not to attend post-secondary education. (Section II.B. and II.E.)

- information about how the length of the school day (8 a.m. – 4 p.m.) and year (200 days) would support student reengagement and teacher effectiveness. (Section II.E.)
- In the interview and the application, the applicant group could not provide a clear description of how the mission, educational philosophy, curriculum and instruction, assessment, and school characteristics are all integrated into the implementation of a comprehensive school program. (Section II.E.)
- During the interview, the applicant group stated their intent to pursue becoming a CTV high school and to integrate the existing YouthBuild program into the proposed charter school, although neither plan was stated in the application as a future goal. (Section II.E.)

### **Special Student Populations and Student Services**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- In the application and the interview, clear evidence was provided of knowledge regarding program requirements for English language development (ELD) programs. A member of the proposed board of trustees, Dr. Raquel Bauman, is an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and administrator. (Section II.F.)
- The application describes the plan for a school nutrition program and proposes to serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day in recognition of the anticipated needs of the targeted student population. (Section II.F.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The application provides limited details on the processes and procedures the school will use to identify, assess, and provide specialized instruction to students with disabilities. (Section II.F.)
- The application does not provide a description of how the special education program will be evaluated. (Section II.F.)

## **Enrollment and Recruitment**

### **Primary Strengths**

- After the first year, the application proposes three enrollment entry points for students to enter the school through the design of the three 14 week trimesters in support of re-engaging students who have dropped out of high school. (Section III.A)

### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The draft enrollment policy and draft recruitment and retention plan provide inadequate, and in some cases inaccurate information. In the application and the interview, the applicant group described inaccurately the eligibility requirements for students who can apply and enroll at the proposed school. (Section III.A)
- In the interview and in the application, the applicant group does not clearly articulate how the school will be responsive to the anticipated high mobility rate of the proposed student population. At the interview, the applicant group expressed confidence in attracting enough applicants for first year enrollment (60 students) and a waitlist, and expressed no concerns about possible attrition. (Section III.A.)

## **Capacity and School Governance**

### **Primary Strengths**

- The proposed board of trustees demonstrates a depth and breadth of knowledge regarding both Lawrence and the targeted population of students. The board includes members who possess skills and experience in finance, social services, management, and education, including present members of a charter school board of trustees. (Section III.C.)

### **Primary Weaknesses**

- During the interview, the applicant group did not adequately address the potential conflicts of interest among the proposed board members. The proposed board of trustees contains members employed by LFDEF, Inc., the proposed management company. Some proposed board members may need to obtain a written State Ethics Commission opinion to address this concern. (Section III.B.)
- During the interview, members of the proposed board provided conflicting answers regarding whether the board or the management organization were responsible for fundraising. Although the proposed board did not clearly articulate fundraising goals, they

indicated that grants would be the primary source of funds after tuition revenue. (Section III.C.)

- During the interview, the proposed board was unable to describe why they intended to enter into a management contract with the proposed management organization and what services will be provided. Additionally, the community members of the proposed board were unable to explain the rationale behind the proposed 6.5% fee and how they will assess the services provided by LFDEF. (Section III.C. and III.D.)
- Although the proposed board has identified 8 out of 12 members, they have not identified the 4 representatives from the career pathways, a fourth representative from the LFDEF, or a board chair. (Section III.C.)
- The proposed school's budgets were developed by the proposed management organization and the board did not review nor provide input into the budget. (Section III.C. and III.F.)

### **Management**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- In the application and the interview, the applicant group described how the low student to teacher ratio (1:8.5 in Year 1; 1:8.3 in Year 2) would be beneficial for the targeted student population. (Section III.D.)
- The proposed board of trustees intends to contract with LFDEF, Inc., for substantially all educational services. The LFDEF presently manages a K-8 charter school and the current YouthBuild program in Lawrence. (Section III.D.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The application indicates that Ralph Carrero, current Superintendent of Lawrence Family Development Charter School, and April Lyskowsky, current director of YouthBuild-Lawrence, are proposed school employees. However, during the interview the applicant group stated that they have not identified a proposed school leader. (Section III.D.)
- While clarified during the interview, the application and the proposed

management agreement highlighted inconsistencies with the description of the reporting structure of the school leadership, specifically among the principal, executive director, and the proposed board. (Section III.D.)

- During the interview, the applicant group stated they have been exploring opportunities to share faculty with other community organizations, such as the existing YouthBuild, but this is not clearly explained in the application or the budget narrative. (Section III.D.)
- In the application, the staffing structure in the organizational chart does not match the narrative description and does not appear to be adequate for the services and proposed four career pathways. The application and proposed contract did not adequately explain the division of duties between the school employees and the management organization employees. (Section III.D.)
- The application provides limited details on how teachers will be evaluated and by whom. (Section III.D.)

### **Facilities, Transportation, and Finances**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- None identified.

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- Although the applicant group has identified four potential sites, it is unclear how much renovation would be required to ensure that they are ready for occupancy by August 2013 to implement the proposed program. (Section III.E.)