

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2012-2013

Proposed School Name:	Proposed School Location:	Proposed Opening Year:
City on a Hill Charter Public School II	Boston	2013-2014
City on a Hill Charter Public School New Bedford	New Bedford	2014-2015
Grades Served At Full Capacity:	9-12	
Number of Students At Full Capacity:	280	

Public Statement:

“City on a Hill plans to open a second campus in Boston (CoaH II) in August 2013 and a third in New Bedford (CoaH NB) in August 2014. These schools will meet student and family demand for high quality educational options in both communities, and address Governor Patrick’s charge that educators apply lessons learned in Boston to Gateway Cities. As replications of the existing school in Roxbury, the new campuses will serve students in grades 9-12 from the respective cities of Boston and New Bedford. Students will be admitted in the ninth grade. The mission of both of the campuses will remain as that of the original City on a Hill: to graduate responsible, resourceful, and respectful democratic citizens prepared for college and to advance community, culture and commerce, and to compete in the 21st century.”

Mission Statement:

“City on a Hill II and City on a Hill New Bedford graduates resourceful, responsible, and respectful democratic citizens prepared for college and to advance community, culture, and commerce in order to compete in the 21st century. CoaH II and CoaH New Bedford does so by emphasizing academic achievement, citizenship, teacher leadership, and public accountability.”

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	9	110
Second Year	9,10	186
Third Year	9,10,11	241
Fourth Year	9,10,11,12	280
Fifth Year	9,10,11,12	280

Both proposals describe the same growth plan.

Note: Applicant group is the Board of Trustees of the City on a Hill Charter Public School (CoaH), a Commonwealth charter school opened in 1995. The existing CoaH serves Boston students in grades 9-12 with a maximum enrollment of 280.

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

Primary Strengths

- The mission and vision clearly define the purpose and values of the school, communicates high academic standards, and student success, and is reflected throughout the application in a meaningful way. (Section I.A.)
- The applicant group described how their model distinguishes itself from the other options available in Boston, and New Bedford. The applicant group described the decision-making process to identify cities outside of Boston for expansion, and the specific choice made to propose a school in New Bedford. During the interview, the group stated that the first replication will allow effective sharing of resources with the existing Boston school, and develop successful processes that will support opening the third school in New Bedford. (Section I.C.)
- 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 and Boston community organizations. See public comment. (Section I.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While the proposed replication in Boston received no opposing public comment, the proposed replication in New Bedford received opposition at the public hearing and via public comment from members of the community, including a school committee member, a representative of the teacher’s union, and elected local officials. Mayor Jonathan Mitchell opposes the New Bedford proposal. See public comment. (Section I.A.)

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- The educational philosophy describes clearly the applicant group’s core beliefs, and values which align strongly with the mission and vision statements. (Section II.A.)
- The described curriculum, implemented at the existing school, provides a clear sense of what students

Primary Weaknesses

- The existing school has struggled with student performance on the SAT test and Advanced Placement exams. In response, the school has instituted mandatory SAT prep courses for juniors as well as a focus on higher order thinking, and writing across the curriculum. (Section II.B.)

will know, and be able to do upon graduation consistent with the mission, and high expectations. (Section II.B.)

- The application describes a clear instructional philosophy that emphasizes an effective learning environment for all types of learners supported by school structures, such as freshman academy, tutorial, advisory, and the development of a pre-Algebra course for entering students performing below grade level. (Section II.B.)
- The application contains a clear description of the processes utilized to evaluate teacher performance as well as identify, and deliver effective professional development. (Section II.B.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- The application described a variety of assessments that are consistent with the proposed school's mission and educational program. (Section II.D.)
- The application group acknowledged that a great challenge at the existing school continues to be accelerating learning for students who enter far below grade level. The applicant group has increased efforts to communicate during enrollment outreach to interested families that college preparation and success is the goal, and that in order to do so completion of the educational program will likely take five years rather than the traditional four. (Section II.C.)
- The promotion and graduation standards are based on high expectations, and are aligned with the school's mission, educational

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

program, and the assessment system. Graduation requirements include completion of an independent capstone project called City Project which involves a 100-hour internship. (Section II.C.)

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The proposed educational program provides an extended school year of 189 days as well as extended school day (7:40 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.), including daily small group tutorials during the school day. Additional services are in place after school, including required MCAS test tutoring for all sophomores, required SAT test prep for all juniors, and additional academic tutoring for struggling students. (Section II.E.)
- In the application and the interview, the applicant group clearly described structures and practices used to establish and maintain school culture and norms consistent with the mission, educational philosophy, and educational program. The program includes three school-wide community service days, and weekly town meetings. (Section II.E.)
- Teacher planning and collaboration is supported by the implementation of a weekly ‘department day’ for each content area to facilitate co-planning amongst content area teachers, tutors, special education teachers, and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers to best meet students’ needs. (Section II.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

Special Student Populations and Student Services

Primary Strengths

- The application provided clear evidence of knowledge regarding program requirements, and implementation for special education and English language development (ELD) programs. During the interview, the applicant group clarified the use of the appropriate assessments to be used with English Language Learners (ELLs). (Section II.F.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

Enrollment and Recruitment

Primary Strengths

- During the interview, the school leadership shared the challenges of enrollment as it relates to the retention of ninth graders who begin at the school far below grade level, and who may chose to not stay because they do not wish to be retained or spend five or more years in high school. The applicant group stated that the group has experience in adjusting to a varying enrollment pattern and there is inherent flexibility in the model to allow variation in the number of sections for each grade. (Section III.A.)
- During the interview, the applicant group provided a clear rationale for the size of the entering ninth grade class (110) to best implement aspects of the educational program, including the student-teacher ratio. (Section III.A.)
- During the interview, the board of trustees and school leadership spoke about their examination of student attrition at every board meeting and the varied reasons students transfer

Primary Weaknesses

- Reviewers expressed concerns regarding the degree of anticipated retention, and attrition for the proposed schools based on the historical pattern found at the existing school. During the Department's analysis of the existing school's graduation, and attrition data, it was clear that a number of factors contribute to attrition during the first two years of enrollment at the school, including retention and a five year graduation trajectory. In reviewing the mobility of students in other Boston high schools, it was clear that there are varying degrees of attrition across the system, and that similar or greater attrition rates exist at other Boston high schools though a greater number had lower cumulative and annual attrition. (Section III.A.)

out of the existing school in order to implement specific strategies to tackle the problem. (Section III.A.)

- School leadership is pursuing an innovative application process that would allow for coordination between the district and the proposed charter school to actively include all graduating eighth graders enrolled in the New Bedford public schools in the enrollment lottery process. (Section III.A.)

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- The board of trustees has the experience and qualifications necessary to implement the proposal, and have demonstrated the capacity to found and sustain a high quality charter school. (See Capacity for Network of Schools.) (Section III.B.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

Capacity for Network of Schools

Primary Strengths

- The existing school was awarded the 2012 National Blue Ribbon Award by the U.S. Department of Education. (Section III.C.)
- During the interview, the applicant group reflected meaningfully on the completion of its past charter terms, and the lessons learned during that time which influenced the evolution of the existing school, and the development of the proposed network of schools. (Section III.C. and III.D.)
- It is clear from the application and the interview that the applicant group is reflective about its program, collects and uses data to evaluate success, and implements strategies to foster

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

continuous improvement. Examples of these efforts include the implementation of tutorials, MCAS test tutorials, SAT test prep, and a pre-Algebra course targeted to address students who perform below grade level. (Section III.C. and III.D.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- 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 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.)
- During the interview, the applicant group described specific activities to ensure consistency of the school model amongst schools, including the role of the Chief Academic Officer and school level academic committees. (Section III.D.)
- During the interview, school leadership described the present work at the existing school to collaborate and share practices with faculty of other Boston public high schools and the commitment to continue such programs at the proposed New Bedford school. (Section III.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While during the interview, the applicant group described the desire to retain and graduate all students who enter the program in ninth grade without lowering standards, the school’s track record of losing students over time demonstrates limited success at the school to do so. The applicant group acknowledged that they are not satisfied with the status quo and seek to continue to improve, and state that growth, especially into a different city, will be an opportunity to improve practices. (Section III.D.)
- While additional clarity was provided during the interview, the general staffing chart and brief narrative staffing plan for both schools provided confusing information that was inadequate to determine the hiring timeline and the use of fractional staffing. During the interview, the applicant group stated that the small size of the school, and flexibility of the model allow staff members to often juggle multiple leadership responsibilities. (Section III.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group demonstrated through the proposed budgets and

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

associated budget narratives realistic assessments of projected sources of revenue. The proposed budgets are based on conservative assumptions. (Section III.F.)

- For the immediate opening proposed in Boston, though a site has not been identified, the applicant group proposes to co-locate with another school or entity during its early period of growth. (Section III.E.)