

**Executive Summaries of Charter Schools
for the 2013-2014 Application Cycle**

- *Academy for the Whole Child Charter School (Fitchburg)*
- *Argosy Collegiate Charter School (Fall River)*
- *Fenix Charter School (Lynn)*
- *New Heights Charter School of Fall River*
- *Springfield Preparatory Charter School*
- *STEAM Studio Charter School (Andover)*

PROPOSED ACADEMY FOR THE WHOLE CHILD CHARTER SCHOOL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This was prepared by the Academy for the Whole Child Charter School applicant group.

The Academy for the Whole Child Charter School (A4WCCS) will provide a stimulating, nurturing, and inclusive school community that is safe and joyful; encourages academic excellence and innovation; respects the developmental and individual learning styles of children; and recognizes families as a full partner in each child's success. A4WCCS will ensure that each child will attain his/her full potential and is prepared to succeed in a global economy that demands 21st century skills by combining academic rigor, utilizing research-based curricula resources and teacher created materials; development of artistic creativity through arts integration and community partnerships; encouraging personal and social responsibility; and by emphasizing the intellectual, emotional, and social needs of each child.

The purpose of A4WCCS is to provide an exemplary education for children in Fitchburg starting in Kindergarten through grade 4 with a maximum enrollment of 278. We will rely on and utilize the most current research and best practices available in the field. A4WCCS will be an equitable place of learning where "all" children have the same opportunities for a robust and well-rounded education, regardless of socio-economic status, including a longer school day and before and after school programs. At A4WCCS teachers, parents, community members, and students will work collaboratively to ensure that all the needs of the whole child are addressed.

The need for this type of educational option is urgent based on Fitchburg's current demographics, the needs of families and the school district's performance and accountability rating by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The City of Fitchburg population is 40,319. It is a diverse community with a high needs population: 15.5% of families live on incomes below the national poverty level as compared to 9.9% statewide and 12.5% nationwide. Most striking is the percentage of children living in poverty at 21.6% compared to the state at 12.8%.¹ The Fitchburg Public Schools is a Title I district serving 4915 children. 77% of children served in the district are considered low income; 32% of children are from families whose first language is not English and 13.2% of children are limited English proficient as compared to the state at 7.7%. Special needs population is 21.1 % as compared to the state at 17%.²

Currently, the Fitchburg Public Schools performance and accountability rating by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) is level 3 on a five level scale (Level 1 highest).³ Another compelling indicator is the district's lack of progress to narrow the CPI (Composite Performance Index) achievement gap in English Language Arts and Math. In ELA, the achievement gap has widened since 2008 from -9.2 to -11.2 in 2012. In math, the achievement gap has widened from -10.2 in 2008 to -14.0 in 2012.⁴ These indicators,

¹ 2010 Massachusetts census report – City of Fitchburg

² 2013 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Fitchburg School District enrollment data

³ Schools are classified into Level 3 if they are among the lowest 20 percent relative to other schools in their grade span statewide.

⁴ 2012 MADESE CPI Achievement Gap – ELA and Math: Fitchburg School District

along with others, have placed the Fitchburg Public Schools in the lowest 10% of all districts in the state.

Community support for this school has been very positive as evidenced by the number of 1720 visitors to the project's blog, attendance at two parent informational sessions, including A4WCCS committee members at 64; and response to a public survey in English and Spanish distributed to more than 400 people in which 88% said they would support an elementary charter school in Fitchburg.

The intent of the Academy for the Whole Child will be to show that the philosophy of “all children will learn, no exceptions, no excuses” works! Being cognizant of the low socio-economic population of students that A4WCCS anticipates serving, and knowing how poverty negatively affects student learning, we will be proactive in identifying and addressing the needs of this population as well as students with special and/or creative talents so all children will have equal opportunities to succeed. Children who attend A4WCCS will represent the *Fitchburg community coming* from varied ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds; and varied learning abilities including regular education, special education and English language learners. We believe that a small school is better equipped to meet the individual needs of students and their families by maintaining small class sizes where each child is recognized as an individual and as a learner. Essential to our philosophy is creating a strong partnership between school and family recognizing that the parent/caregiver is the child's first teacher. All efforts will be made to support the whole child during the school day and to encourage them to pursue their interests beyond the school day.

While adhering to the Massachusetts Frameworks and the Common Core Standards the instructional methodology at the A4WCCS will focus on educating the whole child in an integrated, individualized fashion. A4WCCS believes in teacher empowerment since the point of contact between student and teacher is the most powerful. “What teachers do in classrooms have twice the impact on student achievement as do school policies regarding curriculum, assessment, staff collegiality, and community involvement.”⁵ Curriculum, instruction, and assessment will be teacher created, developed and driven based on analysis of student progress results. A variety of researched-based instructional materials will be incorporated. Program offerings will be ELA (creative writing, composition, reading, spelling, vocabulary, phonics), STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math), World Language, Health and Wellness, and History/Social Sciences. Arts integration will strengthen content learning. “Arts integration is the investigation of curricular content through artistic explorations. In this process, the arts provide an avenue for rigorous investigation, representation, expression, and reflection of both curricula content and the art form itself.”⁶

Along with a comprehensive academic program, children will be engaged in Reggio Emilia inspired approach to education.⁷ This approach centers around the child based on the principals of respect, responsibility and community through the exploration and discovery within an enriching environment. Small group instruction combined with “mindfulness” strategies⁸ infused throughout the school day will ensure students' emotional well-being. In addition to academic

⁵ Marzano, R.J. 2003. What works in Schools. Alexandria, VA : ASCD

⁶ Donovan, L., Pascale, L. 2012. Integrating the Arts Across the Content Areas. Leslie University: Shell Education, Huntington Beach, CA. p. 14

⁷ Mulqueen, Meghan. *Louise Boyd Cadwell and the Reggio-Inspired Approach to Education*. <http://www.misshope.org/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/reggio-approach.pdf>

⁸ MindUP Curriculum. 2011. Goldie Hawn Foundation: Scholastic Inc. Publishers.

preparedness, graduates of A4WCCS will have acquired the critical thinking skills that they will need to succeed in the complex world they will inherit. A4WCCS children will be equipped with the emotional and cognitive tools that will enable them to manage emotions and behaviors, reduce stress, and sharpen concentration with increased empathy and optimism. We are positive that our children will be confident, self-assured and successful life-long learners.

We, members of the Founding Group, are confident that our knowledge, education and experiences with a demonstrated track record and our familiarity and continued engagement with the proposed population will further guarantee overall success. These include student achievement, curriculum and instruction, creative design, law, finance, governance, non-profit management, engineering, data analysis, marketing, computer science, nutrition and wellness, and facilities management.

PROPOSED ARGOSY COLLEGIATE CHARTER SCHOOL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This was prepared by the Argosy Collegiate Charter School applicant group.

Mission. Providing all scholars in grades 6 through 12 with a seamless middle to high school education that educates them for a rigorous and relevant four-year college degree and ensures they are able to compete in a 21st century global economy, Argosy Collegiate Charter School prepares Fall River’s diverse community of learners with the academic foundation and character values necessary to be successful in college, career, and life.

Vision. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* highlighted the growing crisis in American public schools when it argued that America’s low-skill labor force was no longer able to compete in the global marketplace, and that our economic security lay vulnerable as a result. Thirty years later, this warning is playing out in the city of Fall River which has an unemployment rate among the highest in the state of Massachusetts (12.5%) and academic achievement results in the bottom 10% as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

Serving a community with tremendous need, Argosy Collegiate Charter School (“Argosy Collegiate”) will educate all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and students with high needs, in grades 6-12 to remediate academic gaps experienced in elementary school and accelerate learning in middle and high school, thus preparing every scholar to succeed in college, career, and life.

We fiercely believe that all students are capable of achieving at high levels.

Our primary goal is to ensure that 100% of our scholars graduate from a four-year college with valuable knowledge, employable skills, and strong character values. A four-year degree better prepares our young people with the rigorous skills and experiences that leaders seek in a competitive 21st Century global economy, and are, therefore, most relevant to the current and trending economic climate within the Massachusetts knowledge-based economy. Life success – which we define as the ability to pursue one’s interests, support one’s family, gain meaningful opportunities, and participate positively within the larger community – is an inextricable part of our mission.

Argosy Collegiate will open with 100 sixth grade students in 2014, use a slow growth model by growing one grade of 100 students per year, and reach full growth span in 2020. To provide entry directly into our high school, we will backfill through ninth grade. Our key design features, as outlined in our educational philosophy and education program and as informed by our mission and core beliefs, are structured to support the success of all students:

- 1. More Time.** A strong academic foundation is first informed through the extended and prioritized use of time. The National Center on Time and Learning (2011) highlights the impact of extended, prioritized learning time focused on students’ needs on all students, and particularly those with special needs.
- 2. More Literacy, More Math, More Supports.** At the core of our academic program, we focus on reading, writing, and math and meeting the needs of all students. Academic Supports are based on student data and guided by the Massachusetts Tiered System of Support.
- 3. Data-Driven Instruction.** We assess often and are relentless about analyzing data to determine gaps, progress and instruction. Leadership has the dedicated time to support teachers on

instructional and cultural priorities and teachers have the dedicated time to evaluate and action plan from weekly and cyclical data.

4. School Culture. With a positive and strong school culture based on our DREAM values (Determination, Respect, Excellence, Ambition, Mastery), middle school scholars can seamlessly transition to high school with little risk of dropping out, and have college-bound goals informed by the skills and knowledge to get them there.

5. College Skills Program. This four-year program supports our scholars' transition from middle to high school, and prepares them academically, socially, and programmatically for successful college and professional careers. The program includes a four-year advisory relationship component in addition to a yearly support course to build skills and tools for high school graduation and college success.

Need. Our mission, vision, and educational design are in direct response to the chronic economic and academic need in our city. Fall River is one of 24 Massachusetts Gateway Cities⁹, and is a community rich with First Language Not English (FLNE) residents. In May 2013, the unemployment rate was 12.5%, nearly double the state unemployment rate (6.8%) and the third highest of the Gateway Cities.¹⁰

We will focus our student recruitment and facility location on two areas of chronic need – the South End (high school graduation rate of 30.32%, with 5.88% attaining a bachelor's degree, and 22.1% of residents living below poverty levels.¹¹) and Flint Village (a high school graduation rate of 29.29%, a bachelor's degree rate of 6.54%¹², and 29.9% of residents living below the poverty level¹³).

Fall River is rated among the lowest 10% of districts across the Commonwealth as measured on the MCAS. On the 2013 MCAS, 36% of fourth graders (from which we would enroll our inaugural sixth graders in August of 2014) were proficient or advanced in ELA, and less than a third (30%) were proficient or advanced in Math. Less than half (42%) of sixth graders were proficient or advanced in ELA, and a third (34%) were proficient in Math. In eighth grade, 54% were proficient or advanced in ELA, and 32% in Math.

Three public high schools serve Fall River students - none with a college preparatory mission for all students. B.M.C. Durfee serves the majority of Fall River high school students, yet only one in four graduates plan to attend a four-year college or university.¹⁴ Greater Fall River Regional Vocational Technical High School (Diman)¹⁵ graduated its senior class of 2012 with 18% planning to attend a four-year college or university.

The low academic performance of Fall River's Public Schools combined with our high unemployment rate evidence the inability of local residents to access a new and competitive global economy based upon 21st Century skills and evidence the need to change this reality for our current and upcoming generation of students. This reality compels the Founding Group to propose Argosy Collegiate in Fall River.

Support. Throughout the planning stages, we have solicited input and support from the Fall River community. We have connected with multiple organizations, communities, and groups, meeting with and talking to families and community stakeholders in the Flint and the South End. Community demand is evidenced by the support of over 1,000 families who have signed a petition of support for Argosy Collegiate. We have developed relationships and partnerships with numerous local

⁹ <http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/gateway-cities/20120904-gateway-cities-fact-sheet.pdf>.

¹⁰ http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/town_comparison.asp.

¹¹ www.city-data.com/zips/02724.html.

¹² www.clrsearch.com/Fall_River_Demographics/MA/02723/Education-Level-and-Enrollment-Statistics.

¹³ www.city-data.com/zips/02723.html.

¹⁴ http://www.fallriverschools.org/Durfee/PDFs/school_profile_2013.pdf.

¹⁵ <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=08210000&orgtypecode=5&leftNavId=307&>.

organizations to support students, families, and staff. In support of our college preparatory mission, we have garnered the support of many local stakeholders including an institutional partnership with the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

Capacity. Lead Founder, Fellow with Building Excellent Schools, and proposed Executive Director Kristen Pavao is a proven urban educator and native of Fall River. The Founding Group of Argosy Collegiate Charter School is a team of dedicated and experienced professionals, committed to the revitalization of Fall River and the academic success of its students. Collectively, the Founding Group brings expertise in regular and special education, instructional and senior educational leadership, public board governance and governance leadership, financial planning and management, legal expertise, strategic planning, public relations, and associated regulatory requirements, real estate development, marketing, curriculum development, and fundraising. We have benefitted from the generous collaboration and dissemination of best practices from high quality schools across our state, region, and nation, and have the continuing support and expertise of Proven Provider Building Excellent Schools. The Founding Group, along with the support of families, elected officials, and many business and community leaders, stand ready to do what it takes to develop, found and sustain a highly structured, college preparatory 6-12 charter school in Fall River, and to work with others to ensure that all students have access to the opportunity of a bright and promising future. We embrace the community of practice across all sectors, and we believe deeply in being part of the larger educational framework in and outside of Fall River.

PROPOSED FENIX CHARTER SCHOOL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This was prepared by the Fenix Charter School applicant group.

MISSION STATEMENT

Fenix Charter School partners with families and communities to provide powerful learning experiences that transform students' understanding of themselves and the world. Through integrated and project-based curricula grounded in the core values of social entrepreneurship, students develop the competencies that will prepare them to complete higher education, thrive in a global economy, and be change agents in their communities.

This public school will serve students in grades 5 to 12 and their families in the community of Lynn, Massachusetts.

VISION STATEMENT

Fenix Charter School will expand educational opportunities in diverse communities and serve as a catalyst for systemic changes in public education. The increasing complexity of our global economy and the chronic social challenges that students and their families face daily, demand that schools advance the core values of social entrepreneurship: *a relentless focus on creativity, innovation, collaboration, and social responsibility*. Students are then empowered to complete higher education, thrive in new economies, and seize opportunities to be change agents in their communities.

COMMUNITY TO BE SERVED: LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS

The city of Lynn, located in the North Shore of Massachusetts, is a complex linguistic, social, and cultural mosaic. A historically immigrant community, Lynn is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse communities in the commonwealth. The community has a fascinating and compelling history where it has blazed trails in economic, social, and technological innovations. Unfortunately, the city also has a history of chronic racial and educational barriers that have kept segments of the population from unleashing their true potential. Only 21.5% of Lynn residents have a bachelor's degree and only 14.2% have a graduate or professional degree. 16.2% have some college training but no degree. Only 35% have a high school diploma or GED. Lynn students have performed consistently in the bottom 10% of the state in MCAS over the last four years, and this trend demonstrates a chronic pattern of underperformance.

Lynn has always found a way to reinvent itself at various points in its history and the present educational conditions demand reinvention. To reverse the declining economic and educational trends, a stronger educational system that offers diverse educational models and programs is needed. Our plan is to collaborate with Lynn Public Schools, other charter schools in area like KIPP Academy, and private/religious schools like Saint Mary's to create a network of schools that offers Lynn families viable educational options that best match the diverse needs of their children.

EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Fenix Charter School is an attempt to honor the pioneering history of Lynn by providing a school to Lynn families that will prepare their children for the 21st century and beyond. Our educational focus will be on *social entrepreneurship* in anticipation that the 21st century will mark the rise of the social entrepreneur. Social entrepreneurship is becoming the foundation of the new economy:

Solving problems at the local and global levels has generated an explosion of jobs and opportunities in the for-profit and non-profit sectors. The *Green Economy* is one example of this new economy.

As a primary vehicle to help students to experience first-hand what it means to be a social entrepreneurs, students will be engaged in *project-based learning*. Students will work in teams to research real issues that are affecting the Lynn community and develop viable solutions. This process involves researching and analyzing the problem, designing and testing possible solutions, choosing the best design based upon the best outcome, and sharing their results with civic authorities and professional experts in the fields related to their projects. Through project-based learning students will discover how the disciplines interact and their real-world applications as they practice the core values of creativity, innovation, collaboration, and social responsibility on a daily basis. A growing body of research has demonstrated the effectiveness of project-based learning in significantly improving the performance of diverse students in standardized assessments, attendance, retention, and college enrollment/completion rates.

We are excited about our school support partnership with Big Picture Learning (BPL). BPL is a non-profit organization that has a rich history of developing and sustaining innovative, rigorous, and high performing schools. For 17 years BPL has remained a leading pioneer in project-based (real world) learning, and their school support model has an impressive track record of raising the achievement levels of diverse students in under-resourced communities.

Fenix Charter School will serve students in grades 5 to 12. The school will open in the fall of 2014 with 75 fifth graders and expand by one grade level each year until the school reaches maximum capacity of 600 students by grade 12. Fenix Charter School's believes that an innovative educational program that targets the middle and high school grades ensures higher student performance and builds the foundation for college and career readiness.

DIVERSE TEAM AND CONNECTIONS TO THE LYNN COMMUNITY

Our school design (founding) team is a diverse and innovative group of professionals, parents, and students who strongly believe that an infusion of imagination and creativity into our educational systems can serve as a catalyst for the transformation so needed in many of our urban schools. We have extensive expertise and professional experiences that span education, art, technology, science, health/human services, media/communications, and business/finance. Our team composition also mirrors Lynn's student demographics: Design team members understand the cultural, linguistic, and social challenges that Lynn students and their families face daily.

Design team members have personal and professional roots in the Lynn community. We have reached out to Lynn community leaders and families through personal meetings and focus groups to learn more about the unique needs of Lynn students and their families. Cultivating partnerships with families and community stakeholders will continue to be a hallmark of the school's mission.

We are exploring being the first Commonwealth Charter School to be unionized in Massachusetts in order to pioneer a model that integrates worker protection rights with educational innovation.

OUR HOPE

The name of our charter school, *Fenix*, is the Spanish translation of Phoenix, the mythical bird of healing and transformation. The school's motto is *transforming communities*. Our hope is that this school contributes to a renaissance within Lynn that can serve as a model for other urban communities. The school itself will serve as a prime example of social entrepreneurship: We are developing an educational model that has far-reaching implications in how we educate our youth.

PROPOSED NEW HEIGHTS CHARTER SCHOOL OF FALL RIVER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This was prepared by the New Heights Charter School of Fall River applicant group.

This proposal calls for the creation of the *New Heights Charter School of Fall River (New Heights)*, an innovative, early college school designed to address the needs of the Fall River student population and community-at-large. New Heights will provide a public school option for the city's students to close the achievement gap in educational attainment and college success. Our mission is to provide urban students in grades 6-13 the opportunity to develop a career pathway that will lead to and through college graduation with a focus on community engagement, integrity, and community service. It is our belief that through gradual exposure to college expectations, with built-in supports, students will build confidence, academic skills, and the social knowledge they need to succeed in college and beyond.

Program Description:

Our solution is to develop an innovative model for middle and high school students that is predicated upon a four-legged stool approach, each leg essential to supporting the students:

- **Academic Rigor & High Expectation:** Rigorous classes including college courses coupled with extensive academic support in addition to a seamless transition from middle, to high school, to college and beyond.
- **Culture of "Us":** Focus on character and identity development through the creation, and nurturance, of our Community Scholars notion, which is predicated upon community and "school" service.
- **Relevancy:** A culture of College NOW and career readiness that will serve as a clear pathway from 6th grade through high school, college, and ultimately, the workforce. How is this relevant is a question we will ask of our staff, our students, and our families on a daily basis.
- **Relationships:** Students will receive staff, familial, community, and technological support through our unique programming. Technology will serve as the strong foundation, keeping students connected and engaged in the creation of innovation.

New Heights will serve urban students for whom the option of attending college is not an imminent reality.

- In year one of the school, we will enroll 100 6th graders, 100 7th graders, and 100 9th graders
- In year two, we will enroll 100 6th graders and 100 9th graders for a total of 200 new students.
- In year three (and beyond) we will enroll 100 6th graders.
- At capacity, we will enroll 800 students.

Lower School (Grades 6-9)

New Heights will open with 300 students in the 6th, 7th, and 9th grades. In grades 6-9, the main

focus will be to address academic skills deficiencies and ensure that students are performing to grade-level standards by the time they enter high school. Students will take an accelerated course sequence in order to prepare them for college-level courses in high school. Additionally, students will develop as “citizen scholars” through explicit instruction in study skills, effective student habits, and the pillars of New Heights’ school culture, including community service and respect. In 9th grade, the main focus will be to bolster students’ academic ability and confidence and provide options for students to invest in their community via service-learning activities. At the beginning of 9th grade, students will be assessed and provided with an individualized learning plan which will outline the courses and steps needed to become college-ready as measured by the state comprehensive exam as well as the Accuplacer Placement Test. Students will be registered for 8 courses per day: two periods of Math, two periods of English, a History, a Science, a World Language, and an elective period consisting of Physical Education/Health, Information Technology and/or an advisory. The Lower School students will attend advisory several times throughout their day – for “morning meeting”, for “mid-day meeting/lunch”, and finally, for a “end of day meeting”. Each advisory will be expected to take on a social or community service project with the aim of expanding students’ worldview. One day per week, during the Enrichment period, which begins at the end of our academic day, 3:30, and concludes at 4:30, students will be expected to do service either within the school (school service) or within the community.

Upper School (Grades 10-13)

The primary focus of the Upper School will be to prepare students for college and career opportunities through rigorous coursework and engaging, real-world learning experiences. Students will transition from the highly structured environment of the Lower School to an environment of more independence in preparation for college and career success. Using the community as their lab, students will augment their learning experience by engaging in coursework on a college campus, taking online courses, receiving practical work experience through internships and employment, and participating in intensive seminars at New Heights. Students will be held accountable for their performance in these varied learning environments through projects, presentations, and written reflections.

- During 10th grade, students will have the opportunity to enroll in two college-level courses, one per semester, on the high school campus taught by college staff. At the end of 10th grade, a decision will be made with regards to advancement to the Upper School based on a comprehensive evaluation of the student’s portfolio as well as conversations with the student and his or her family.
- During the 11th and 12th grades, students will be encouraged to complete four college courses and additional New Heights’ seminars. In addition, 11th and 12th grade students may enroll in college courses during the summer.
- In the “13th grade,” students will be fully enrolled in college courses, though they will be able to continue to receive wrap-around supports from New Heights.
- In addition to rigorous academic responsibilities, students in the Upper School must also provide a minimum of two hours of peer tutoring per week to Lower School students, to satisfy our community service requirement.
- Students must also complete a “College Portfolio” which they will begin to gather in the 11th grade, including letters of recommendation, multiple college essays, a statement of intent, a resume, at minimum three completed college applications, and examples of academic work or accolades earned in the Upper School, through community service, or employment.

Student Impact: New Heights will serve a student population that may not see its own potential for college, and perhaps the greater issue, understand why an investment in education today may mean a happier, more fulfilled tomorrow. We expect our students to take ownership of their education through our Resiliency Culture, they will understand their role in society, and above all, they will discover the wide array of options available to them in college and beyond. Students who do not meet our academic expectations may be required to attend an intensive academic remediation program during on Saturdays or during the summer. Saturdays and Summer Academies will provide one-on-one tutoring in the student's areas of deficiency as well as online, competency-based, instruction.

Capacity: New Heights Founding Members draw from unique backgrounds in alternative education programming and school development as well as in higher education access programming and policy. In collaboration with Blueprint School Network and our Founding Board of Trustees we are uniquely poised to execute the mission and vision of this school. Blueprint Schools Network is a national non-profit organization dedicated to working directly with large school districts to close the achievement gap in their lowest performing schools. Blueprint will help with planning (including student and staff recruitment), implementation, site-based monitoring and ongoing evaluation and reflection. We spent a year fine-tuning a model we believe addresses the needs of an academically underserved student population in a community that will benefit from additional public school choices. Many of our Founding Board of Trustees were involved in the planning process thus played an integral role in program development. They are fully acquainted with our model and are already working on our behalf to ensure that New Heights will have a solid start.

PROPOSED SPRINGFIELD PREPARATORY CHARTER SCHOOL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This was prepared by the Springfield Preparatory Charter School applicant group.

Mission. Springfield Preparatory Charter School is an inclusive K-8 public charter school that prepares all students for success in high school, college, and life through a focus on rigorous academics and character development.

Vision. At Springfield Preparatory Charter School (“Springfield Prep”) we believe that all students have the right to an excellent education – regardless of race, socioeconomic status, home language, special education need, or zip code – and that fulfilling this right is our nation’s most pressing challenge. To ensure that our students are prepared for high school, college, and life, we will help our students to: (1) master academic fundamentals, (2) think analytically, and (2) exhibit good character. We will do this by developing rigorous and highly engaging curricula, setting high expectations for staff and students, and explicitly teaching the character skills that will help our students become good people, as well as good students. In founding Springfield Prep, we aim to join the growing ranks of gap-closing public schools and offer an education of the highest quality for the most underserved students of Springfield, Massachusetts.

Educational Program. Our philosophy consists of ten principles that are based on how students learn, particularly those who come from low income backgrounds and have disabilities and language barriers.

1. **Outstanding teaching.** Great teachers make an enormous difference in the success of their students, both in class and later in life. At Springfield Prep, we will invest the necessary resources to ensure our teaching is rigorous, highly engaging, data driven, and individualized.
2. **High expectations.** We will develop a culture with deeply ingrained college-going expectations and set high academic and behavioral expectations so that our students have the skills and drive to make college a reality.
3. **Structured and joyful school culture.** With consistent routines and clear systems, we will create an environment where students are physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe. Our classrooms will be warm, bright, and welcoming; there will be a consistently positive tone across the school; and there will be frequent opportunities to celebrate student growth.
4. **Inclusive model and individualized supports.** While we will hold all of our students to the same ambitious expectations, we will also provide individualized services to support all of our students’ unique needs. Our two-teacher model in K-4, “focus” blocks in grades 5-8, and inclusion model of special education will provide diverse learners and English language learners with the supports that will help them to succeed.
5. **Rigorous and engaging academics.** Motivating students through engaging curriculum and instruction is one of the most effective ways to increase academic achievement. We will use carefully planned curriculum that both challenges our students and captures their attention and imagination.
6. **Focus on character.** Success requires more than just academic achievement; it requires students to be good people. We will devote time to explicitly teaching our PRIDE values – Preparation, Respect, Integrity, Determination, and Enthusiasm – so that our students are confident leaders who can advocate for themselves as they progress through high school, college, and their careers.

7. **Emphasis on literacy.** We believe that reading is *the* skill. To ensure mastery of literacy skills, our program will provide a balance of explicit, systematic instruction in foundational skills along with immersion in rich and varied fiction and nonfiction texts.
8. **More instructional time.** Additional time in class will allow us to provide our students, many of whom will enter below grade level, with foundational academic skills, advanced work, and classes like music, physical education, and technology, so that our students are well-rounded learners and citizens.
9. **Thoughtful use of data.** We will use data from interim assessments so that we can quickly and flexibly respond to the needs of both struggling and advanced learners.
10. **Partnership with families and the community.** We will make school a welcoming place for families, provide frequent opportunities for face-to-face interactions with parents, and develop strong systems of communication so that parents are always aware of how their child is doing in school. We will actively engage with our community partners to provide the strongest education possible for our students.

Need. Although Massachusetts ranks first in the nation in reading and math according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 40% of Springfield students overall perform at grade level in ELA and only 29% do so in math. Springfield Public School (SPS) students lag far behind the state average on critical benchmarks like third grade reading proficiency and high school graduation rates (40% of SPS third graders are proficient in reading, compared to 61% statewide; the graduation rate in Springfield is 52%, versus 85% across the state). Springfield has the second highest rate of low income students in Massachusetts (88%) and the third highest rate of high needs students (89%). The South End neighborhood in particular faces numerous challenges: a median household income of \$14,244; extraordinarily low rates of educational attainment (32% of residents have high school diplomas and 7% have college degrees); and an unemployment rate that is more than twice the state average (19%). Ninety-six percent of South End students are classified as low income, 26% are identified as ELL, and 18% have IEPs. The academic results of South End students who enter the city's high schools indicate severe academic underperformance: nearly 50% of ninth graders fail Algebra 1; nearly 40% fail English; nearly 45% fail Science; and nearly 25% fail Social Studies. Despite the obvious need to provide improved educational opportunities to this community, the South End does not have an elementary school, which leaves 4,386 residents, 417 of whom are in grades K-5, without an easily accessible school.

Meeting the Need. In our outreach to parents, we have heard three primary concerns about the state of education in Springfield, and the South End in particular: (1) long travel times to school, which raises safety and accessibility issues, (2) lack of tutoring or extra support services, especially for those with special education and/or language needs, and (3) lack of order in local schools, which are sometimes unsafe as a result. Our model addresses these concerns head on. We are committed to serving families who live in the South End, and who currently lack high quality, and easily accessible, public educational options; our extended day and year coupled with a two-teacher model in K-4 will allow us to provide students, especially those with disabilities or language barriers, with the individualized attention they need; and our structured school model will provide routine and order so that students feel safe and supported. As a Commonwealth charter school, we will be sufficiently autonomous to implement these organizational and instructional practices efficiently and effectively to prepare all of our students for high school, college, and their careers.

Support. Our founding group has assessed parental support through targeted community outreach, including over ten information sessions and grassroots canvassing events. Our group has spoken with large numbers of parents, heard their excitement about Springfield Prep, and collected over 400 signatures

of support. We have also met with over 100 community stakeholders – business, nonprofit, religious, philanthropic, and education leaders – many of whom have pledged their support for our work.

Capacity. The founding group of Springfield Prep is a high capacity team of professionals with diverse skills and experience in K-12 education, law, real estate, finance, accounting, management, and fundraising. We are supported by an Advisory Council of charter school leaders from across the state, as well as the national school charter support organization Building Excellent Schools (BES). Lead Founder and proposed Head of School Bill Spierer is an experienced educator and attorney who successfully completed the BES Fellowship in urban charter school development, which connects Mr. Spierer and the founding group to a network of high performing charter school leaders in Massachusetts and across the country. Mr. Spierer has worked as a teacher, teacher coach, Department Chair, and Grade Team Leader, and is currently Dean of Students at a higher performing K-8 charter school. Through extensive community outreach, targeted professional development, intensive school study, and a strategic school design process, the founding group has laid the groundwork to launch an effective public charter school.

PROPOSED STEAM STUDIO CHARTER SCHOOL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This was prepared by the STEAM Studio Charter School applicant group.

STEAM Studio is a **proposed public charter high school for creativity and innovation** that focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art + Design, and Mathematics. Our curriculum blends the mind of a scientist or technologist with that of an artist or designer, and teaches flexible thinking and creative problem solving needed to succeed in today's global economy.

Our learning model is a union of best-of-breed academics and project-based learning in which students pursue two concentrations:

- **Computing and Digital Arts:** Students take on the roles of professionals working in the field and explore areas that combine computing with the arts and humanities such as: mobile app creation, game design, software development, music and video production, and film/animation.
- **Health Sciences:** Students take on the roles of professionals working in the field and do projects in areas such as: internal medicine, nutrition, biotechnology, orthopedics, epidemiology, bioinformatics, clinical research, and health care policy.

Students invent and develop solutions with a “learning by doing” approach that prepares students for higher education and careers in high-growth, high-demand fields.

OUR FOCUS

- ❖ **Inspire students to be innovators, creators, and breakthrough thinkers**, by engaging them in challenging courses and projects that:
 - **Build** creative confidence to approach the challenges students will face in the future
 - **Cultivate** critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication
 - **Develop** leadership & well-rounded life skills
 - **Prepare** students to excel in higher education or at jobs in the innovation economy
- ❖ **Help all students flourish.** Students who are struggling with a particular subject get the time and attention they need to master that area, while those who are ready to learn more can take on greater challenges.
- ❖ **Incorporate the latest advances** in technology and online learning, where students have anytime, anywhere access to all content– on smartphones, tablets, and PCs.

OUR APPROACH

Academic Foundation: Blended Classroom learning – integrating face-to-face with online instruction based on the Common Core and State Standards.

Project-Based Learning: Extends classroom learning with exciting projects that foster analysis, reflection, critique, and dialog. Students work individually and on teams, where they perform various project roles (e.g. designer, engineer, and entrepreneur). Students tackle real world challenges that provoke the imagination and ignite passion.

Students work in themed spaces – called Studios. Studios allow students who are visual thinkers, spatial reasoners, and mechanically minded to approach learning from a practical hands-on standpoint. Studios include Computing/Design, Biotech, and Music/Video Production

OUR CULTURE

Entrepreneurship in Practice: Entrepreneurship is a major theme throughout the school. Students will interact with innovative organizations, including UMass Lowell's Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and the Cambridge Innovation Center, home to New England's most exciting technology start-ups and life sciences companies.

Global Connections & Collaborations: Students will collaborate across countries & communities on projects that impact the world and produce documentaries sharing their experiences.

Teacher Community: Staff will collaborate several hours each week to discuss experiences; address what needs attention; enhance school culture; and refine curriculum and projects.

Parents as Partners: We will build close ties with parents and they will be briefed bi-weekly on what their children are learning and on their progress.

IN ADDITION TO THE ACADEMICS

We aim to instill these essential habits of mind in our students:

- **Confidence:** Being unafraid to tackle hard problems. Knowing how to break large problems into smaller pieces and address those pieces.
- **Creativity:** Being able to synthesize new ideas and apply them to new challenges.
- **Perseverance:** Seeing the value of grit and determination in both overcoming adversity and embracing opportunities.
- **Resilience:** Adapting to changing circumstances, new technology, different cultures, and new ways of thinking. Affirming the idea of lifelong learning.
- **Initiative:** Developing the attitude and skills of a self-starter, someone who dives into the solution of problems and makes discoveries even when the final outcome is unknown.
- **Kindness:** Treating people with kindness & respect, and treating oneself the same way.

SENDING DISTRICT & LOCATION

The sending district will be Andover and the school will be located in Andover. It will span Grades 9-12 with a maximum enrollment of 450. The school will enhance learning options and offer unique project-based concentrations - Computing & Digital Arts and Health Sciences – not offered in Andover or surrounding communities.

COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATION OF SUPPORT

Parents from across the community are expressing strong support for STEAM Studio. Additionally, Andover High School is 200+ students over capacity. In spring 2014 or 2015, Andover residents will likely be asked to fund a multi-million dollar expansion at Andover High. If STEAM Studio is granted a Charter, Andover residents will likely not have to fund an expansion.

FOUNDING GROUP'S ABILITY TO MAKE THE SCHOOL A SUCCESS

Team members are experienced in K12 and higher education, and possess deep knowledge of public policy, financial oversight, and governance. Our Founding Team:

- Current 10-year Andover School Committee member and former high tech CEO, with 10+ years budget experience with Andover Public Schools (\$30M- 68M) and in the private sector
- E-Learning expert with 18 years of leadership and management experience in digital education at edX, PBS, and WGBH
- Neuropsychologist and learning expert who teaches at Harvard Medical School
- Experienced course developer, instructional designer, online teacher and author

- Artist and designer at MIT. Expert at the intersection between science and design, and a former charter and public high school Math and Visual Arts teacher
- Software engineer/entrepreneur, former Mass. Library Commissioner; 7 Yr. Finance Comm.
- Professor of Engineering at Tufts University with vast technology & medical industry expertise.