

**FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2013-2014**

<b>Proposed School Name:</b>	Argosy Collegiate Charter School
<b>Grades Served At Full Capacity:</b>	6-12
<b>Number of Students At Full Capacity:</b>	644
<b>Proposed School Location:</b>	Fall River
<b>Proposed Opening Year:</b>	FY2015

**Public Statement:**

“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. Argosy Collegiate will open in 2014 with 100 sixth graders and grow one grade per year until reaching full capacity in 2020.”

**Mission Statement:**

“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.”

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

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	6	100
Second Year	6, 7	200
Third Year	6, 7, 8	300
Fourth Year	6, 7, 8, 9	400
Fifth Year	6, 7, 8, 9, 10	490

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

**Primary Strengths**

- The mission and vision define the purpose and values of the school, communicate high academic standards and student success, and are meaningful. The identified values of integrity and accountability are reflected in other areas of the application. (Section I.A. and I.B.)
- The vision reflects the broad academic and non-academic goals for students, and serves as an organizing principle for all sections of the application. (Section I.B.)
- The application describes the need for the

**Primary Weaknesses**

- None identified.

proposed school in the Fall River community, and describes the components of the proposed educational program targeting the needs of the anticipated student population; including, an extended day and year; increased time on mathematics, and literacy; daily academic support periods; and a college skills program modeled after the program at Boston Collegiate Charter School. (Section I.C.)

- The applicant group demonstrated a passionate understanding of and connection to the proposed mission and vision during the interview, as well as a strong commitment to serve families and students of Fall River with a high quality public school option. (Section I.B.)
- This charter application received letters and/or testimony in support during the public hearing and public comment process, including but not limited to Senator Michael Rodrigues, Representative Patricia Haddad, Representative Carole Fiola, Representative Alan Silvia, and the Fall River City Council. See public comment. The applicant group also reported the success of a petition for the proposed school signed by over 1000 families, 85% are Flint and South End residents. (Section I.C.)

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

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The educational philosophy describes the founding group's eight core beliefs about education, including increased time on learning; a strong school culture to support character development; high expectations and college readiness for all students; effective educators are essential to student achievement; and family involvement in student learning supports student success. The philosophy aligns with and builds on the school's mission, and vision. (Section II.A.)
- The application explains the rationale for the commercial curriculum resources

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- None identified.

identified for use by the proposed school, and provides a generalized description of the backwards planning processes that will be used by teachers and administrators to develop curriculum over time. During the interview, the proposed school leader reiterated the reliance on teacher-developed curriculum, as well as the use of curriculum from other high performing charter schools, and commercial sources. (Section II.B.)

- The proposed school intends to implement a financial literacy curriculum informed by the National Financial Educators Council, JumpStart Coalition, National Council of Economic Education, and the President’s Advisory Council on Financial literacy. The application contained a well-developed outline of the proposed financial literacy curriculum to be implemented across the entire grade span. (Section II.B.)
- During the interview, the applicant group acknowledged the challenges of addressing the needs of incoming students performing far below grade level, and serving the needs of a variety of diverse learners. The proposed school intends to address these challenges, and support accelerated student achievement through significant time dedicated daily to literacy and mathematics skill development, daily academic support periods, implementation of a tiered system of academic supports, Saturday Academy, and a school culture and climate that is conducive to accelerated learning. (Section II.B. & II.E.)
- The proposed school will implement programming targeting non-academic goals, such as college readiness through a four-year college skills program; character development through the DREAM framework of Determination, Responsibility, Excellence, Ambition, and Mastery values; and wellness and nutrition programming in alignment with its mission. (Section II.B.)

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

**Primary Strengths**

- The promotion and graduation standards are clearly described, based on high expectations, and aligned with the proposed school’s mission and vision. (Section II.C.)
- The application explains how achievement data will be collected and managed; it also describes a variety of externally developed assessments used to measure student progress, including Terra Nova, Fountas and Pinnell, and Achievement Network (ANet), as well as internally-developed interim assessments. (Section II.D)
- Within the application, and during the interview, the applicant group stated that data collected from their proposed assessment system will allow all stakeholders to hold the proposed school accountable for results. At the school level, student achievement data will be used by teachers to frequently monitor and respond to student performance, and teachers will be supported by the leadership team to use data effectively. (Section II.D.)
- The application describes the proposed mission-aligned approach for measuring and reporting student progress toward attaining non-academic goals, including the use of weekly Collegiate Reports, Friday Advisory, and the College Skills Program. (Section II.D.)

**Primary Weaknesses**

- None identified.

**School Characteristics**

**Primary Strengths**

- The proposed school will implement an extended year of 185 days, and an extended day, with a shortened day on Fridays for teacher professional development. The proposed school will also offer Saturday and Summer Academy programming for students as needed. (Section II.E.)
- The application describes multiple

**Primary Weaknesses**

- While the proposed school would not implement high school grades until the fourth year of its charter term, it is unclear how the systems and structures of the proposed school would be adjusted for high school students, including discipline. During the interview, the applicant group indicated that the proposed high school would follow a more traditional schedule

structures for establishing a school culture and norms consistent with the school's mission and vision. The proposed plan includes faculty, student, and family orientations; home visits for new families; implementation of DREAM values; and weekly school community meetings. (Section II.E.)

with 45-55 minute periods. (Section II.E.)

- The application describes multiple strategies to involve parents as partners in their child's education, and to build and maintain family-school partnerships, including weekly student performance reports, and monthly whole school newsletters. (Section II.E.)

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

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The application describes the plan for a responsive, general education classroom utilizing strategies targeted to diverse learners' needs, including small group instruction; a focus on fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension; and the extensive use of visual representations. (Section II.F.)
- The application contains detailed descriptions of the implementation of the proposed special education, and English Language Development (ELD) programming. The information contained in the application supports the applicant group's capacity and ability to comply with state and federal laws and regulations as required. (Section II.F.)
- During the interview, the applicant group described the process for the development of the special student populations and student services section, which included development by the proposed school leader and a proposed board member qualified as a special educator and district administrator; feedback from experts in the field; and review by the academic committee of the proposed board. (Section II.F.)
- During the interview, the applicant group stated that they believe their proposed

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- None identified.

special education and English as a Second Language (ESL) staffing to be adequate for projected enrollment, but plan to revise their proposed staffing if the enrollment of students with disabilities or English Language Learners (ELLs) exceeds the projections which are based on Fall River Public Schools enrollment. (Section II.F.)

### **Enrollment and Recruitment**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The applicant group provides a specific rationale for a viable and sustainable size based on the input of Fall River families, and their desire for a small school community. The applicant group proposes a slow-growth model that will reach the full enrollment of 644 students in 2020-2021. (Section III.A.)
- The proposed school will allow the entry of new students through grade 9, which exceeds the regulatory backfilling requirement. (Section III.A.)
- At the interview, the applicant group indicated that the proposed 10% attrition rate is likely an overestimation, based on Atlantis Charter School's low attrition rate, and the lack of college preparatory programs in Fall River. The applicant group stated that they would adjust their entry point enrollment to accommodate for any changes in attrition after grade 10. (Section III.A.)
- During the interview, the applicant group stated that they have set goals to enroll students with disabilities, English language learners, and low-income students in proportions comparable with Fall River Public Schools. The applicant group described their recruitment efforts since their application submission, and stated that the proposed school leadership and board will monitor progress annually towards meeting their enrollment targets. (Section III.A.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- None identified.

## Capacity and School Governance

### Primary Strengths

- The proposed board members have a range of experience and qualifications, including K-12 education, higher education, management, health care, real estate, finance, law, technology, special education, and the governance of public bodies and non-profit boards. Members include a former principal who was also a literacy coach and special education teacher, a present higher education administrator of teacher development at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, as well as a former superintendent who also served on the Sturgis Charter School board of trustees. (Section III.B.)
- In response to the concerns previously identified by the Department, the applicant group recruited several new board members with expertise in K-12 education, special education, teacher development, and charter school governance, and formed an advisory council to support the proposed board of trustees, and school leadership on charter school development and implementation. The applicant group has also established academic achievement, and finance committees within the proposed board who have been active in the development of the application. (Section III.B.)
- The application describes the reasons the proposed board supports Kristen Pavao for the proposed Executive Director position, and describes the steps the proposed school leader has taken since last year's application to continue to develop professionally, and to learn from present and former leaders of high performing charter schools. (Section II.B.)
- The governance model presents a clear workable structure and encourages an appropriate relationship between the board of trustees, school leader, and administration regarding the governance and management of the school. (Section

### Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

III.C.)

- The application describes a viable process for policy making. The proposed board and school leader clearly and accurately articulated the differences between board and administrative decisions at the interview. (Section III.C.)
- Building Excellent School's (BES) "Connect to Excellence" program will provide on-going support to the proposed school's board of trustees that includes support in developing processes related to board member recruitment, strategic planning, and succession planning. (Section III.C.)

**Management**

**Primary Strengths**

- The application states that the organizational structure of the proposed school was based on other high performing charter schools. During the interview, the applicant group described the intent to develop and promote individuals from within the organization into leadership roles as the school grows to full enrollment and grade span, including developing the directors of achievement to become principals. (Section III.D.)
- The application describes clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for the school leader, and other administrative staff. (Section III.D.)
- Within the application, and during the interview, the applicant group described the process for teacher evaluations, including the use of frequent observations, and weekly support for first year teachers from a member of the leadership team. The application also described extensive planning regarding professional development for teachers and non-instructional staff, including how professional development needs will be determined and the proposed schedule for professional development which includes a three week summer institute, weekly Friday afternoons, and twelve days during

**Primary Weaknesses**

- During the interview, the applicant group acknowledged that the proposed staff salaries are on the low end of the Massachusetts Public Charter School Association Salary Survey, but indicated they are confident they will attract qualified educators. The applicant group indicated that with the additional support provided by the Charter School Planning (CSP) grant, and additional revenue with the growth of the proposed school, the school will be able to offer a more competitive salary to staff. (Section III.D.)
- While reviewers noted concern regarding the sustainability of a 9.75 hour work day proposed for instructional staff, during the interview, the applicant group stated that teachers will be attracted by the mission, and the training and support provided. (Section III.D.)



the school year. The described professional development has three focus areas: classroom management, and school culture; curriculum, and instruction; and data, and assessment. (Section II.D.)

- BES' "Connect to Excellence" program will provide on-going support for the proposed executive director and leadership team in the areas of leadership and school culture, including regular coaching, consultation, and training; assistance with recruitment and hiring of staff; assistance with student and family engagement; cultural audits; assistance developing operational systems; and access to the BES network of high performing schools and school leaders. (Section III.D.)

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

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The applicant group has identified three potential locations for the school, and also indicated that the real estate market in Fall River is favorable. At the interview, the applicant group indicated that they have already released a request for proposal, and have been actively searching for an appropriate location and hope to select the location by March 1<sup>st</sup>, if chartered. (Section III.E.)
- The application describes a structure and process for managing school finances with a specific outline of fiscal controls. There is a clear plan for how the school will track finances in its daily business operations. (Section III.F.)
- During the interview, the applicant group described the extensive planning, preparation, and review process for the development of the draft budget submitted with the application. (Section II.F.)
- The budget narrative describes the applicant group's efforts to raise additional funds, including the creation of a resource development committee, and the hiring of a director of development in

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- While the application states that families will be responsible for transportation to the Saturday Academy program, during the interview, the applicant group stated the commitment to provide any necessary transportation to ensure that students have access to their proposed Saturday Academy. (Section III.E.)

year 3. The proposed board of trustees has already committed to raise \$30,000 annually. (Section III.F.)