

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 colleges–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.