

PROPOSED BENTLEY ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document was prepared by the Bentley Academy Charter School applicant group.

The driving force and philosophy behind the founding group's desire to open Bentley Academy Charter School is an unyielding belief that every student deserves the chance and choice to live their educational life to its fullest, be that high school, college, or post graduate study. Regardless of the choice a student makes to pursue college or career, the road to educational and personal fulfillment begins with a strong elementary school experience.

MISSION: Bentley Academy Charter School prepares all of its students for personal and academic success to get to and through college. Through a combination of high academic standards, data-derived instructional methods, and community supports and partnerships, Bentley Academy Charter School establishes the critical foundation necessary for students to thrive as they advance in their academic careers.

VISION: BACS students will achieve at the same high levels regardless of socio- economic status, race, or other element of privilege or challenge. By applying our key design elements and with vigorous reinforcement of our core values, BACS will eliminate the achievement gap and graduate students with the academic skills and personal mindset to succeed in middle and high school so that a wide range of post- secondary options are available to them.

CORE STRATEGIES: To achieve the vision, Bentley Academy Charter School has designed a school around the following six strategies:

1. **Create a culture of achievement:** setting a culture that encourages and supports scholars to reach higher and achieve more is a key piece of student success. Clear and consistent standards applied throughout the school set the stage for better communication and productivity among teachers, between teachers and scholars, and among scholars themselves. A college focused school culture will encourage scholars to see themselves as collegiate scholars and will leverage the community to impart the importance of continued education for all scholars.
2. **Develop comprehensive and rigorous curricula:** allowing scholars to stretch their educational horizons is an important piece of college preparatory work. Scholars who feel supported are more comfortable pushing themselves and their understanding without fear of failure.

3. Differentiate instruction: using data to differentiate instruction is a powerful tool that teachers can use to rapidly increase student achievement.
4. Attain excellence in leadership and instruction: staffing the school with teachers, administrators, and staff who have strong instructional, collaborative, and management skills is an important pre-requisite for school success. Regular observations, high quality feedback, and professional development ensure that teachers are working smart, not just hard.
5. Expand the learning day and year: more time used well can make a significant difference for scholars and teachers. More time not only allows for more targeted instruction, but also more enrichment and more opportunities for teacher collaboration. BACS will have a reimagined school day that takes into account the needs of both the teachers and the scholars.
6. Engage family and community: a school's biggest allies are the scholars' caregivers. They have the ability to reinforce or negate any progress that student is making, so keeping them well informed and focused on the same college preparatory goals can be a factor in school and student success.

BACKGROUND on PARTNERSHIPS and COMMUNITY: Salem Public Schools, Blueprint Schools Network, and Empower Schools have been working together for over six months to create a plan that accelerates achievement for the students of the existing Bentley Elementary School. The collaboration is the first of its kind in Massachusetts. It uses available regulatory pathways to allow the school to access important autonomies that will enable it to implement the kind of changes necessary to improve student achievement.

Bentley Elementary School, an existing K to 5 school in Salem, has a rich history, beginning with being named after one of Salem's "most productive and beloved citizens," Reverend William Bentley. But in the fall of 2011, Bentley Elementary School was named a Level 4 school by the state of Massachusetts based on student achievement data. The school has been through major changes to try to recapture the spirit of Rev. Bentley, most recently changing from a transformation model to a restart model which allowed a 'fresh start' to take place after a year and a half of student achievement data not meeting benchmarks. During the restart year, Bentley will be managed by Blueprint Schools Network. The next step in Bentley Elementary School's journey is to become a Horace Mann charter school to maintain, long term, the autonomy that it needs to continue to partner with Blueprint and implement its model, and the accountability that it desires to be a great place for scholars and teachers.

Salem is a vibrant, diverse, emerging community home to more than 42,000 people and some of the area's most impressive cultural exhibits. The Peabody Essex Museum, the Salem Maritime National Historic Site, and the House of Seven Gables are among the attractions that share Salem's rich history and cultural offerings with the region, and the world. Salem is also home to a strong public school system that includes an existing Horace Mann charter school and an Innovation School as well as Salem Academy, a Commonwealth Charter School. However, the percent of Salem residents with an Associates or Bachelor's degree continues to lag behind the state average, and the percent of residents who have not finished high school exceeds the state average. Indeed, Salem is the only city that is not a Commissioner's District to have a Level 4 school: Bentley Elementary.

Bentley Elementary School, of all elementary schools in Salem, serves the highest percentage of low income students and special education students. Additionally, it also educates the highest percentage of English Language Learners (not including the elementary school with a dual language program). The school also measures far above the district average in these same categories. However, Bentley Elementary is now uniquely poised, due to the bold vision and leadership of the Mayor and Salem School Committee, to transform itself into a school where every student excels, where every teacher is improving his or her craft, and every parent and community member's strengths are being leveraged for kids.

The founding team and founding board of Bentley Academy Charter School are made up of local stakeholders: the current Head of School at the Bentley restart, the Head of Operations of the Bentley restart, lead teachers, key partners, and two current Salem School Committee members.

Bentley Academy Charter School will open in August, 2015 with a Kindergarten through grade 5 student body consisting of 275 students.