

PROPOSED NEW HEIGHTS CHARTER SCHOOL OF BROCKTON

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

This proposal calls for the creation of the New Heights Charter School of Brockton (NHCS), an innovative, Fast Track Early College Design school generated to address the needs of the region of Brockton, Randolph, and Taunton. Partnering with EDWorks, a national leader in early college design, NHCS will be the first early college of its kind in Massachusetts. EDWorks describes their early college design as follows, “Fast Track early college high schools are changing what it means to be a college student. These schools support students least likely to attend college, simply because of their circumstances, and put them into an atmosphere with high levels of support and expectations. Fast Track may be the answer to inspiring students to challenge themselves and go to college better prepared to earn a degree. Through Fast Track, students will have a four-year academic roadmap that accelerates them through a rigorous high school course of study and up to 60 hours of college credit before graduation. Fast Track high schools offer personalized plans for each student, reaching underserved student populations including students from families without college experience, low-income, English language learners and students of color” (See more at: <http://edworkspartners.org/fast-track#sthash.1PEkSYca.dpuf>). In order to bring the vision of NHCS, to provide free college credit to students while still in high school, to fruition, the founding team has partnered with three key agencies: Massasoit Community College will provide our college courses, the YMCA will provide health-related programming and access to facilities, and EDWorks will provide the support of an experienced education service agency to our grass roots organization. NHCS will provide a public school option for 735 (at full enrollment) of our region’s students to minimize the achievement gap in educational attainment and college success. Our mission is to prepare our students for college. Period. How does NHCS intend to achieve this mission? We will use our three key design areas – our “We go to college” culture, our Fast Track Early College design, and our Professional and Community Development to create a strong foundation for our students and staff to reach our goals. Above all, each of us: staff, students, families alike, will focus on the idea that EVERY student will be prepared to attend college.

Program Description: In order to realize our mission, NHCS will enroll students in grades 6-12, for a total school enrollment of 735 students, 105 students per grade. We will fill vacated seats twice per year in grades 6-11 and we will recruit heavily in the poorest neighborhoods, ensuring that the most vulnerable students in Brockton, Taunton, and Randolph are aware of this opportunity. NHCS will address the troublesome transitions between middle school, high school, and postsecondary education that prevent some students from successfully completing their education. Our students will enter NHCS in the 6th grade, spending their first three years in our “Lower School”, grades 6-8, with a primary focus on developing the academic skills necessary to get into and succeed in college. Upper School students, grades 9-12, may begin taking college courses in the 9th grade and continue earning college credit towards a Liberal Arts Associates’ Degree at MCC. A student’s instructional day at NHCS begins at 7:40 am, with breakfast in the classroom, and ends at 3:30 pm (extracurricular/enrichment activities will be held from 3:30-4:30pm). In addition, we will offer Summer Bridge programs to keep students academically on track and socially engaged in the learning experience.

Key Design Elements: Our primary goal is to meet our mission to prepare students in college by enrolling them early in college courses, providing the support services they need to succeed, and creating an environment that is both nurturing and encouraging. The founding team, in collaboration with EDWorks, identified three key design areas that create the foundation upon which NHCS is built. Design area one is our “We Go to College” culture. Design area two is the “Fast Track Early College Design”, a model designed by EDWorks. Design area three is “Professional and Community Development”. Each of these design elements weaves through our lower school (grades 6-8) and our upper school (grades 9-12) daily routines including NHCS’ curriculum, instructional model, professional development, school culture, and allow us to reach our mission of preparing our students for college.

Student Lower School Day: Our instructional day will begin at 7:40am with advisory and breakfast in the classroom followed by seven, 57-minute periods (2 Math, 2 ELA, 1 History, 1 Science, and 1 elective period). Our instructional school day will conclude at 3:30 pm. Starting in Year 2, NHCS will offer after school extracurricular activities. On Fridays, students will leave campus at 1:38, taking one fewer ELA course and one fewer math course that day, to allow for all staff professional development. Our school year exceeds the state-mandated minimum of 180 days of instruction by 4 days for a total of 184 school days.

Student Upper School Day: During the summer before 9th grade, students will be divided into one of two pathways: College Prep or College Ready, based upon teacher recommendation (including behavior, maturity, and academic performance), MCAS results, and the college ACCUPLACER placement exam. All college classes will be cohort-based for NHCS students.

- *College Prep:* 9th grade students on the College Prep pathway will begin their day in morning advisory and breakfast at 7:40. They will enroll in seven periods (2 Math, 2 ELA, 1 History, 1 science, and 1 World Language). 10th grade students enroll in seven periods (2 Math, 2 ELA, 1 History, 1 science, and 1 World Language). During their second ELA course, they will complete Massasoit’s Developmental English sequence. During their second Math course, they will begin Massasoit’s Developmental Math sequence. 11th grade students will enroll in seven periods (2 Math, 2 ELA, 1 History, 1 science, and 1 elective period). During their second ELA course, they will complete Massasoit’s English 101/102. During their second Math, they will complete Massasoit’s Developmental Math sequence. 12th grade students will enroll in 8 college courses, 4 per semester: 2 semesters of US History; 2 semesters of college Math (Topics in Math and Statistics); 2 semesters of a World Language; 2 semesters of Social Science. Anticipating the needs of students who chose not to or cannot attend college courses, we offer a “third” pathway for students to stay behind at NHCS and complete a rigorous high school course sequence.
- *College Ready:* 9th grade students on the College Ready pathway will begin their day in morning advisory and breakfast at 7:40. They will enroll in seven periods (2 Math, 2 ELA, 1 History, 1 science, and 1 World Language). During their second ELA course, they will complete Massasoit’s Developmental English sequence. During their second Math course, they will begin Massasoit’s Developmental Math sequence. 10th grade students will enroll in seven periods (2 Math, 2 ELA, 1 History, 1 science, and World Language). During their second ELA course, they will complete Massasoit’s English 101/102.

During their second Math, they will complete Massasoit’s Developmental Math sequence. In the 11th and 12th grade, College Ready students will attend college courses on the college campus three days per week and academic support workshops and technology workshops at NHCS two days per week. 11th grade students will enroll in 8 college courses, 4 per semester: 2 semesters of US History; 2 semesters of college Math (Topics in Math and Statistics); 2 semesters of a World Language; 2 semesters of Social Sciences. 12th grade students will enroll in 8 college courses, 4 per semester: 3 semesters of English; 2 semesters of social science; 2 semesters of a Biology with a lab; 1 semester of fine art.

Summer Bridge: The NHCS founding team understands the value of summer education opportunities, particularly for those students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds where summer learning loss is most prevalent. Our Summer Bridge program, located on the Massasoit Community College campus, is a 4-hour day divided into two parts: College Experience and Student Experience. The Summer Bridge will strengthen the community culture of our school and provide students an opportunity to learn new material in a fun, hands-on environment. The Summer Bridge schedule, which is currently being reviewed by the College Working Group, a team of Massasoit staff and NHCS founding members, is provided below for illustrative purposes. In addition to academic work, students will engage in culture-building activities with NHCS staff.

Summer Bridge Schedule

Summer before:	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th
College Experience	College Experience, such as Theater	CTI 101* Microsoft Word	ART 107 (Drawing I)* College Portfolio	College Tour and College Portfolio Completion
Student Experience	Team Building and Academic Support	Team Building and Academic Support	Team Building and Academic Support	Team Building and Academic Support

*College Courses

Student Impact: NHCS will serve a student population that is predominantly economically disadvantaged and likely the student will be the first in his or her family to attend college. Our students will be prepared for the academic and social rigors of a college degree. Students who graduate from NHCS will have the opportunity to earn up to 60 college credits. Our students will have participated in multiple community building projects and college visits through our quarterly retreat system, they will have strong relationships with our staff developed through our school culture, and they will have a plan for life after graduation. The Individualized Learning Plan starts on the first few days they arrive at NHCS and culminates in our College Portfolio project.

Capacity: NHCS founding members and the proposed Board of Trustees draw from decades of experience in alternative education programming, working with high needs populations (including economically disadvantaged, ELL, and special education) and school development as well as in higher education access programming and policy. In addition, our applicant group is comprised of individuals with experience in middle and high school administration, middle and high school teaching, college access and success programming, curriculum design, community outreach, special education, legal affairs, education finance, English language instruction from district and charter schools. We are currently meeting with residents in our region, including faith and community-based groups, middle and high school administration, members of the legal community, business leaders, and parents and caregivers.

Why we chose Brockton for the site of our charter school: Brockton, Taunton, and Randolph are ideal communities for a new model of public education. Currently, Brockton, Taunton and Randolph not have any public school choice within the district. The demographics of these communities speak to our intention to serve predominantly economically disadvantaged and first-generation students to prepare for college. The commitment from all layers of social, cultural, educational, and political communities our region to improve the lives of students plays a large role in the founding group’s interest in opening a new charter school in a community where there are no charter schools. Our school’s commitment to urban students clearly addresses the youth population in these communities, many of who are economically disadvantaged or first generation college families.

Why we chose a regional charter school: It is the intention of the NHCS founding group to address the lack of school choice in the Taunton, Randolph, and Brockton communities, particularly for those students living in poverty. Through our outreach activities in Brockton, families from surrounding communities, including Randolph, identified the need for a high quality public school choice either by signing our petition or submitting an application to attend NHCS during the 2014-15 cycle.

Choice of a Commonwealth Charter: A Commonwealth charter will give NHCS the autonomy to reimagine the traditional school model to include college coursework, amend the schedule and calendar to meet the needs of students, and put policies and practices in place on behalf of all students and their families. The Commonwealth charter will provide the NHCS’ founding group with the resources to address the educational achievement gaps in higher education enrollment and completion and continue to interrupt the pervasive cycle of poverty in urban cities.

Support for this model: In a recent report produced by the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy, titled *Early College Designs: Achieving College-and Career-Readiness for All*, the authors argue that getting into college is not the arbitrator of success. In fact, too many students in the Commonwealth are leaving their high schools and testing into developmental education courses (an issue that leaves many dispirited or deep in debt before they even begin earning college credit). “Early college experiences can be especially valuable for students who do not think of themselves as college-bound. In a randomized study, minority and low-income early college students—who have been traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education—had more successful postsecondary

outcomes as compared to peers who did not participate in early college programming. These findings, combined with national evidence on the efficacy of early college programming, suggest that this model may be especially effective for students who lack support from family and friends in setting college expectations. Ultimately, in addition to increasing college readiness and completion rates, early colleges have the potential to increase the size and diversity of the college-going population (see Rennie Center Report, pg. 1). And yet, despite national evidence that early college is “among the most effective strategies for promoting higher rates of postsecondary access, persistence, and completion” (see Rennie Center, pg. 2), our region does not currently have access to an early college high school. Massachusetts is home to a number of “early college programs” including dual enrollment, articulation agreements between districts and colleges, and Gateway to College. According to the Rennie Center report, however, “integrating early college experiences into traditional high schools and/or districts is just beginning to take hold as a viable strategy to promote college and career readiness” (Rennie Center, pg. 2). Unique to the NHCS design is our status as a standalone school, founded on research and best practice from national leaders, including our partner, EDWorks, as well as the research from Jobs for the Future, and the nearly 300 Early College High Schools in the country. NHCS can be an answer to move Massachusetts into a position to create new opportunities for learning, particularly for our most vulnerable students.