

# PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF MONTACHUSETT CHARTER SCHOOL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*This was prepared by the International Academy of Montachusett Charter School applicant group.*

**Mission:** The mission of the International Academy of Montachusett Charter School is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, thinking ability, and leadership qualities they will need to achieve college acceptance and succeed in life. We will accomplish this mission by providing any child who enrolls in our school – regardless of his or her background, socioeconomic status, prior academic experience, or other factors – with an international and proven, college-preparatory public education in a student-centered setting that emphasizes community, civic responsibility, and personal development as well as academic rigor.

**General Overview:** International Academy of Montachusett Charter School (referred to as “IAMCS” within this application) will be a Commonwealth charter public school of choice serving a diverse student population. We seek to open with grades KG-3 and grow one grade level per year until we are a KG-12 school in year ten. For the initial charter period, the enrollment plan is as follows:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	KG - 3	322
Second Year	KG - 4	418
Third Year	KG - 5	514
Fourth Year	KG - 6	610
Fifth Year	KG - 7	706

The charter school will be non-selective in its admission process. If there are more applicants than spaces available, a public lottery will be held to randomly enroll students. Our mission, values, vision, structure, and academic rigor will offer our students the opportunity to succeed in a supportive academic environment. Parents are seeking high quality educational opportunities for their children. This outcomes-based school will offer all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, language, income, or ability, an opportunity to enroll in a college-preparatory school based on a proven educational model and curriculum.

We plan to retain the services of proven provider, SABIS<sup>®</sup> Educational Systems, INC. (referred to as “SES” within this application), which manages three highly successful charter public schools in Springfield, Holyoke, and Lowell, Massachusetts. SES is a 129-year-old global education network that operates on four continents operating in 16 countries and educates approximately 70,000 students. SES currently serves 12 charter schools and 1 private school in six states. SABIS<sup>®</sup> Network schools employ the same educational model used across its international network of prestigious private schools.

**Community Need and Support:** The essential purpose of IAMCS is to offer families and students a free, highly successful and proven college-preparatory KG-12 program of choice in communities where access to such options is extremely limited. The school districts and communities we propose to serve, Fitchburg, Leominster, Clinton, Wachusett Regional, and North Middlesex Regional are located in the Montachusett region. The entire region includes 236,475 people in twenty-two communities located in north central Massachusetts. The Sizer Regional Charter School in Fitchburg serves grades 7-12 and Montachusett Regional Vocational High School with grades 9-12 are the only choices for upper middle and high school students. There are no other options for students in grades KG-6. Our school aims to elevate the struggling students of the Montachusett region to their true potential. By closing achievement gaps, helping young people recognize that learning and academic achievement have great value, and creating a community of learners and citizens, we believe IAMCS will have short- and long-term positive effects on our community.

During the past two years, support for a charter school in the Montachusett region has been very positive based on data collected by the founders. This is evidenced by more than 1000 individuals who signed a petition, the number of visitors (5500) to the project's blog and over 700 friends on Facebook. In a public survey distributed in English and Spanish to more than 400 people, 88% said they would support an elementary charter school in Fitchburg. This evidence clearly shows that families in Fitchburg and surrounding communities are looking for an alternative choice to educate their children. Currently, the founders are promoting IAMCS by re-engaging past supporters and encouraging new supporters through community outreach, social media, surveys, and face-to-face meetings.

**Founders' Capacity:** The originating founders came together because of a shared belief and passion that all children deserve access to an exceptional education regardless of socioeconomic status. We recognize that there is a need for a tuition-free, high performing public school in Fitchburg and surrounding communities. Therefore, the founders began working together three years ago on the proposed charter school in the Fitchburg area. During this period, the founders invited enthusiastic likeminded professionals to join in this endeavor. The entire group is committed to the provision of an excellent education for children in North Central Massachusetts, in order to ensure that they are given a solid foundation to becoming capable, successful, and productive contributors to the area. The founders share the belief that by addressing all aspects of the child's development, coupled with a rigorous academic program, this vision will be achieved. Most importantly, many of the founders are parents of children who have completed or are currently attending a public school and have a high stake in seeing that all children are appropriately educated. In addition several members have strong ties to the political community, churches, non-profit entities, schools, and other organizations with whom we are seeking to partner with to enhance the service delivery of this program.

**Educational Program:** Our founding board wishes to contract for management and operational services with proven provider, SABIS<sup>®</sup> Educational Systems, INC. – a full service education service provider offering turnkey management of our school. IAMCS will fully implement the SABIS<sup>®</sup> Educational System, including its assessment system, instructional methods, and school management model. This rigorous program is designed to challenge students and exceed state and federal performance standards. The SABIS<sup>®</sup> curriculum is designed with the intention that

all students obtain the necessary skills to be successful in higher education, work, and society. The program provides a well-rounded, student-centered education with heavy emphasis on the core subjects of English, mathematics, and other subjects such as science, world languages, social studies, art, music, health, physical education, and computing.

The SABIS<sup>®</sup> curriculum is a spiral curriculum design, meaning that previous concepts are revisited in a more advanced form in later units or grades. Students exhibit mastery of essential concepts at each level of advancement along the spiral curriculum. The SABIS<sup>®</sup> curriculum is comprehensive, dynamic, and continuously upgraded by the SES Academic Operations Division. For every course, the objectives are clearly laid out on the pacing charts (“lesson plans”) provided weekly to teachers. Each unit of a course has its sub-objectives and, in turn, every lesson plan or period has its own sub-objectives. These objectives consist of skills, abilities, and new concepts that students acquire, or master, as a result of having attended a particular lesson. By breaking down the courses, the material becomes more meaningful, teachable, and measurable. The SABIS<sup>®</sup> curriculum also provides for a variety of enrichment opportunities such as: AP courses; Math League; academic prefect; activities happening during the daily Student Life period; students advancing a level in math or world language independent of their peers; taking two or three science, math, or language courses at once; or travel abroad (for the annual Student Life Camp).

A core component of the SABIS<sup>®</sup> Educational System is the frequency of assessment throughout the curriculum, which enables timely identification of individual’s needs and talents. Thus, students who are capable of advancing rapidly have the opportunity to do so and are prepared to successfully complete a variety of internationally recognized examinations. Conversely, students who are struggling are identified in real-time and are provided with Intensives classes designed to fill learning gaps that may have developed.

IAMCS will implement the educational system described above, a system implemented at all SABIS<sup>®</sup> Network schools. SABIS<sup>®</sup> Network schools have a proven track record of student learning and closing the achievement gap with students just like those of Fitchburg and its surrounding communities. The following short list of achievements at the SABIS<sup>®</sup> International Charter School (SICS) in Springfield, Massachusetts, is exactly what we want for Fitchburg and its surrounding communities.

- SICS is considered the best performing school in Springfield and among the top performing schools in Massachusetts with its 10<sup>th</sup> graders (last grade of state testing) consistently performing among the best in the entire state.
- In 2014, SICS graduated its 1,000<sup>th</sup> student – the first charter school in the U.S.A. to reach that milestone by June 2014.
- In September 2014, SICS was recognized as a pioneer in implementing key RTTT initiatives by the Massachusetts Department of Education.
- In September 2014, SICS hosted its biggest college fair, to date, with representatives from 82 colleges and universities.
- SICS Class of 2015 was its 15<sup>th</sup> graduating class; 100% of all its graduates for the past 15 years have been admitted to college; the Class of 2015 was awarded an average scholarship of \$100,000 per student.

- SICS has been recognized among ‘America’s Best High Schools’ in *U.S. News & World Report* for six consecutive years and was the recipient of its Silver Medal for 2015.

**History on Founder’s Development Efforts:** After two attempts, the founding board’s efforts to open a Commonwealth charter school (Academy for the Whole Child Charter School) in the north central Massachusetts region were unsuccessful. Rather than giving up, the board decided to move forward with a new proposal. After many hours of “soul searching” and taking into consideration the strengths and weaknesses of our previous proposals, the board looked into the possibility of partnering with an education service provider (ESP). In late February 2015, SES contacted us to find out if we were intending on submitting a new proposal and if they would be seeking an ESP. They indicated their interest in working with us. So now it was up to us to try and learn as much as we could about their history and track record in Massachusetts, educational philosophy, data management, curriculum system, and reputation - including the positive and negative.

After extensive research of the SABIS<sup>®</sup> Educational System and other education management companies, the board started to warm up to the possibility of a partnership with SES. The area of most concern was the board’s strong views around small class sizes to support the emotional, developmental, and learning needs of the whole child which was in direct opposition of the SABIS<sup>®</sup> philosophy on class size. For some of the board members, this was a deal breaker. We had to see for ourselves by visiting SABIS<sup>®</sup> Network schools. After site visits to Holyoke Community Charter School and SABIS<sup>®</sup> International Charter School, even the toughest critics on the board were convinced that the multi system of supports and resources for classrooms, students, and staff can really work in larger class sizes. Their method creates a student-centered learning environment where children don’t fall through the cracks. We saw this firsthand during our visits. The board also met with many students and staff to talk about their experiences with SES. Their stories were authentic and heartfelt thus solidifying the board’s decision to partner with SES.

Another feature of the SABIS<sup>®</sup> Educational System is their highly developed and aligned curriculum to state standards and their performance monitoring system. These systems are highly effective and unique. The board recognizes that these were areas of weakness in our previous charter applications and now that we have partnered with SES, it will be a strength going forward. In other words, our partnership with SES gives the board the capacity it has needed to guarantee excellent student outcomes, effective management procedures, and financial sustainability.

In summary, the board is first and foremost committed to our community and the education of our children. Our passion for a charter school in the Fitchburg area has not waned. Student success is paramount. SES can make this happen through their proven, evidenced-based educational system. We are proud to present this application to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in partnership with SABIS<sup>®</sup> Educational Systems, INC.