**Request Letter for Charter Amendment**

Pioneer Charter School of Science

51-59 Summer St., Everett, MA 02149

07.31.2015

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street

Malden, MA 02148 Dear Board,

On behalf of the Pioneer Charter School of Science Board of Trustees, I respectfully

Request your approval of an amendment to change our charter to include grades K-12, in place of the current 7-12. We request approval to add grades K-6 to our successful school model. This will increase our student numbers from a current maximum of 360 students to a new maximum of 780 students. Effective during the first year of this plan, the schools will be located on two campuses, an upper and lower school. These changes to our charter will be effective upon the approval of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. We intend to add grades K-2 for the academic year of 2016-2017. K-6 addition will be completed within three years.

The Pioneer Charter School of Science Board of Trustees wishes to make this change because of a high demand for an elementary charter school in the region. This demand has been demonstrated by the parents of current PCSS students, requests from community members, trends in the K-6 student population of the region and by the waiting lists from the other charter schools in the region. Moreover, this change will offer choice and opportunity to residents of Chelsea, Everett, and Revere. It will also allow us to expand the successful PCSS educational model to the elementary school level. Through the amendment educational opportunities available will be expanded by providing a focus on STEM (an area of opportunities where we fail to satisfy the demand as a nation), college preparatory curriculum, character education, extended learning time, effective use of data, parent engagement and a mission oriented coherent and rigorous K- 12 program.

This expansion is a natural extension of PCSS mission as well as the need to raise a

generation highly skilled individuals that will enter STEM fields:

* Getting better at mathematics and science starts with a strong foundation and an early focus. Students who do not receive early attention usually lack the skills or motivation to do well in mathematics and science at later ages.
* A recent survey of college graduates show that only 16% majored in STEM

although the best job prospects are in these fields.

* In Massachusetts there are 2.1 **jobs** for every 1 unemployed person in STEM

fields and there are 2.3 unemployed person for every 1 **job** in non-STEM fields.

The Pioneer Charter School of Science Board of Trustees voted to approve this request on 6/13/2015 at a meeting held in compliance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25. At that meeting, the Board of Trustees authorized me to submit

this request on their behalf.

The Pioneer Charter School of Science Board of Trustees also authorized the school to work with the Department to make any minor technical changes to the amendment submitted for approval if such changes are necessary to meet the requirements of statute or regulations, and are codified in Department guidance that was not adhered to in our submission.

The Pioneer Charter School of Science is an academic success, is a viable organization, and is faithful to the terms of its charter. The academic success has been proven by our MCAS ad SAT scores, which surpass not only the achievements of the sending districts, but also those of the state, and have done so over multiple years. The organization has been proven viable by its financial strength, ever-increasing enrollment & waiting lists, and successful audit outcomes. Over such a short time PCSS has been able to realize the vision set forth in the original charter. PCSS charter has been renewed without any conditions in 2012, been complimented for the success of its program and been awarded proven provider status. PCSS success has attracted local and national attention from the Boston Foundation (as a finalist for Pozen Prize) and Charter School Growth Fund.

Recently PCSS is ranked 17th in the state by the US News & World Report with a gold

medal recognition. PCSS is the most diverse non-exam MA public school in the top 20.

The Pioneer Charter School of Science Board of Trustees respectfully requests that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve this request at its next meeting, if possible.

Please contact Ms. Sanela Jonuz at 617-389-7277 or sjonuz@pioneercss.org if you have

any questions about this request.

Sincerely,

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Chief Executive Officer

C: Associate Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

PCSS K-6 Major Amendment

 **Mission and Key Design Elements**

* Describe how the amendment request is consistent with the school’s mission

The goal of this amendment proposal is to add Grades K-6 to the existing Pioneer Charter School of Science (PCSS). Elementary school students in sending districts, namely Chelsea, Everett and Revere, are currently underserved by the public school system. When students arrive to our seventh-grade classes, they are underprepared for the rigor of a college preparatory high school curriculum. We believe that a strong science and mathematics background at a young age are the building blocks for success. Therefore, we propose the opening of grades K-6 at PCSS. This expansion will enable us to provide students with a sufficient educational background that will allow them to succeed in high school and to become exemplary members of today’s society.

PCSS was founded in March 2006 as a regional public charter school serving Chelsea, Everett, and Revere. The school started in the 2007–2008 academic year with grades 7 and 8. Within a short period of time PCSS has established itself as one of the highest performing public schools not only in the greater Boston area, but in the state as well. The mission of Pioneer Charter School of Science is to prepare educationally under-resourced students in Chelsea, Everett, and Revere for today’s competitive world. PCSS helps students to develop the academic and social skills necessary to become successful professionals and exemplary members of their communities. This goal is achieved by providing the students a rigorous academic curriculum with emphasis on math and science, balanced with a strong foundation in the humanities, a character education program, career-oriented college preparation, and strong student/teacher/parent collaboration.

Various official and unofficial visitors have complimented PCSS for the strength of its academic program and the exceptional school culture that has been established. PCSS has been actively closing the achievement gap. On the MCAS PCSS students have consistently surpassed their sending districts and the state averages in all the grade levels that they were tested in. Recent data shows that the same trend extends to the student performance on the SAT. Moreover PCSS has made it to the gold medal level at the US News & World Best High School List and recognized as the 17th best high school in Massachusetts. PCSS is the most diverse non-exam public school in the top 20. Year after year, MCAS results have shown that PCSS has ranked at the top among all districts for performance and/or student growth.

PCSS has been making a real difference in the lives of its students. The first graduating class of PCSS started the school with the same dismal MCAS mathematics scores that were reflective of the sending districts. By the time they reached high school PCSS students increased their performance by 59 percentage points (almost three times more than where they started) while their peers in sending districts increased their performance from 19 to 35 percentage points (and the increase for the state average was only 26 percentage points). PCSS students had the second highest student growth results in the state for grade ten mathematics. The difference for the class of 2013 was 64 percentage points. PCSS has been offering a math and science focused rigorous college preparatory program to its 7-12 student population. With the new elementary school, PCSS aims to offer high quality education at the earlier stages of child development, to help form the necessary foundation for success in middle and high schools and to better prepare students for college.

The request is consistent with the PCSS mission to prepare its student for today’s competitive world by helping them to develop the academic and social skills necessary to become successful professionals and exemplary members of their community. By being able to target the development of these skills at a younger age PCSS will have a larger impact on the community it serves and provide more opportunities to its students.

* [Grade Span Change Only] Describe how this amendment enhances or expands the educational opportunities currently available to the targeted student population. Incorporate a discussion regarding the key design elements of your school into your response.

Pioneer Charter School of Science is the only charter school that is located in Everett. As a 7-12 school PCSS provides a high quality educational experience to residents of Chelsea, Everett, and Revere. With the addition of lower grades more families will have access to high quality educational programs. PCSS will offer a more consistent K-12 educational experience.

***Demand for elementary grades:*** There is a great demand for high quality elementary schools, in Everett in particular as well as the region PCSS serves in general. While there is no public school choice available within Everett for grades K-6, parents only have access to lower grade charter schools in the neighboring towns that serve the region. Mystic Valley Regional Charter School provides the only other alternative for interested parents in elementary grades and the huge waiting list (currently 3664 names on the waiting list) MVRCS has is a testament for the need.[[1]](#footnote-1)

***STEM Focus:*** Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is an area that not only promises to bring personal wealth (job opportunities available and transferable skills) and prosperity for our state, but STEM is the growth engine of the economy. However, it is a well-established fact that as a nation we have been trailing behind when it comes to mathematics and science. Moreover; the next generation will live in a world that will be fundamentally different than ours in terms of decisions that will need to be made due to advances in technology. Public policy decisions about cloning, genetics, environmental issues, communication technology, and many other issues that we will be hearing for the first time in coming decades will require higher level STEM skills for an informed citizenry.

While STEM skills promise many opportunities, mastery of these skills require the right building blocks being built at the early ages. Improving skills in mathematics and science starts with an early focus which will build a strong foundation. Students who do not receive early attention usually lack the skills or motivation to do well in mathematics and science at later ages. The gap in mathematics and science skills in minority or low income populations is staggering.

In a recent National Center for Education Statistics survey[[2]](#footnote-2) of the class of 2008 it was found that a degree in a STEM fields provides the best job prospects. The survey presents findings about the employment outcomes roughly 4 years after a college degree. Results are very promising for STEM majors. While STEM degree holders reported an average salary of $65,000, non-STEM majors reported an average salary of $49,500. The unemployment rate for STEM majors has been at 5% as opposed to 7.1% for non-STEM majors. Despite these promising numbers only a mere 16.2% of students majored in STEM.

Students who gain a strong foundation today will face brighter prospects in the future. STEM skills continued to stay in demand even throughout the economic downturn in Massachusetts. According to the Change the Equation Coalition business leaders cannot find the STEM talent they need to stay competitive. While in STEM fields there are 2.1 jobs for every 1 unemployed person, there are 2.3 unemployed people for every 1 job in Non-STEM fields.[[3]](#footnote-3) However, time dedicated towards science in Massachusetts elementary schools has fallen since 1994 (from 3.1 hours per week on average in 1994 to 2.4 hours per week in 2012).[[4]](#footnote-4) The coalition’s recommendations for Massachusetts coincides well with what PCSS aims to achieve:

* attend to very large racial, ethnic and income-based achievement gaps in math and science
* light students’ fires at a time when STEM jobs are plentiful but the number of students earning STEM degrees and certificates have not kept pace with demand.[[5]](#footnote-5)

***Gateway Cities:*** The region that PCSS serves is composed of gateway cities (Chelsea, Everett, and Revere). The state’s attention in recent years turned to the gateway communities for revitalization. Education is one of the cornerstones of the revitalization of gateway communities to turn them again into engines of growth. The Secretary of Education’s as well as the Commissioner’s remarks over the years clearly emphasize this. STEM plays a vital role in the revitalization of these gateway communities. To that effect the expansion project will serve a much needed cause by bringing high quality education to students at the entry level (this will result in a larger and long-lasting impact) with a focus on mathematics and science to ensure the development of a generation that is not only skilled in STEM, but that also has the motivation and confidence to take on the challenging and rewarding fields.

***College-Prep:*** It is becoming extremely difficult for the next generation to secure employment without a college (and increasingly a graduate) degree. If we want our children to be successful in college, college readiness needs to start in the early ages. As a college-prep public charter school PCSS would with this expansion project provide the much needed college readiness focus at the early ages.

The ACT summarizes well the importance of early intervention for college readiness:

*Efforts to improve students’ academic preparation have often been directed at the high-school level, although for many students, gaps in academic preparation begin much earlier. Large numbers of disadvantaged students enter kindergarten behind in early reading and mathematics skills, oral language development, vocabulary, and general knowledge. These gaps are likely to widen over time because of the “Matthew effects,” whereby those who start out behind are at a relative disadvantage in acquiring new knowledge*.[[6]](#footnote-6)

It is very important for students to develop the academic skills at early ages to close the achievement gap that persists with students from affluent communities.[[7]](#footnote-7) A student who does not have a strong start with early education will have difficulties later on because learning is cumulative and takes time (sufficient time per content is needed for mastery). Moreover, student interests and work habits develop at an early age. Interest leads to greater learning. Students who are exposed to rich content in mathematics and science at early ages may develop an interest in those subjects.

In a very short period of time College readiness has become the norm and part of the culture at PCSS. The PSAT and SAT scores indicate a high level of college readiness. The table below compares SAT score with the sending districts averages and also with Everett. The difference between PCSS and sending districts is remarkable especially with mathematics scores.

|  |
| --- |
| 2013-14 SAT Performance |
|   | Reading | Writing | Math | Total |
| PCSS | 460 | 454 | 523 | 1437 |
| Everett | 415 | 401 | 427 | 1243 |
| Sending District Average | 423 | 411 | 442 | 1276 |

One crucial detail that needs to be noted though is the fact that almost all of the PCSS students take SAT, not just a select few. The below chart presents information on participation rate based on the data from DESE.[[8]](#footnote-8)

|  |
| --- |
| 2013-14 SAT Participation Rate |
| PCSS | 100% |
| Everett | 60% |
| Sending District Average | 68% |

PCSS administers PSAT to all students in grades 7-11. While comparative data is not available from sending districts with PSAT the data below is for class of 2016. The data shows that PCSS students showed a steady increase in their PSAT scores over the years.

|  |
| --- |
| PSAT Cohort Scores |
| Class of 2016 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
| Reading | 39 | 42.4 | 44.9 |
| Math | 45 | 50.4 | 53.5 |
| Writing | 38.1 | 40.1 | 42.6 |

With only four graduating classes so far PCSS graduates have been accepted to great colleges. Moreover, PCSS has superb graduation rates compared to sending districts. College readiness at PCSS includes a combination of academic readiness, social readiness and work discipline. Students are provided with guidance through the help of the college admission counselor and their classroom teachers. Procedures and routines are geared towards preparation for the rigor of college. PCSS students are expected to work hard and long, complete work on time, prepare a senior project, and complete rigorous classes. The high expectations of the academic program will be extended to lower grades to ensure that college readiness starts at a younger age. This will help to close the achievement and readiness gap, especially for low-income and minority students.

***Citizenship:*** One of the tenants of PCSS has been the character education program and the need to raise responsible and informed citizenry. Ideally character development needs to be addressed at earlier stages of emotional development. The expansion project will enable us to start with character development when it is required most. The PCSS program targets not only the academic development of the students, but their social developments also. Character education classes, weekly quotes, several social intervention programs, student code of conduct, emphasis on community service, a school culture that promotes respect, hard work and responsibility work together to ensure the character development of our students. An elementary school will not only allow us to start these programs at lower ages, but will also provide an opportunity for our upper grade students to interact with and serve as role models for our lower grade students.

***Choice:*** We believe that every parent deserves a choice in public education. As the only non-selective STEM based secondary school in the area, PCSS has been providing a high quality choice in public education to the residents of Chelsea, Everett, and Revere. The expansion project will provide choice in high quality education to more parents at more entry points and therefore expand on the educational opportunities currently available.

***Extended Learning Time:*** PCSS is an extended learning time school with probably the longest school calendar (200 school days) in the state. In addition, the school day is longer at PCSS. Moreover, the PCSS after school and Saturday academies provide additional support or an avenue for enrichment for students. It is no secret that more time on education, implemented effectively, improves the overall results. This also enables us to be able to provide a comprehensive assessment system and offer several enrichment activities without shortchanging classroom time. Extended learning time at the elementary level will ensure more time on hand for our students compared to their peers in traditional district schools.

***Data Focus:*** PCSS utilizes a data-driven approach to monitor progress, ensure timely intervention, and evaluate the educational program. A comprehensive assessment system through internal (benchmarks, quarter finals, diagnostic tests, practice tests, projects) and external (MCAS/PARCC, PSAT, SAT) assessments provide a lot of data for academic performance. The use of internal and external assessments allow us to gain accurate information about student’s mastery of the subject matter. An analysis of the results are done with graphs and reports such as: Results with graphics, Student Progress Reports that show students’ cumulative scores, Item Remediation Analysis for each state standard, Item Analysis of each question, Learning Focus for each learning objective, and Student Performance Chart for each state standard, etc.

This analysis allows the teacher to get a more in depth explanation of the questions that students did not answer correctly and the standards that the questions covered. Teachers utilize the results of these assessments to modify their instruction (re-teach, remediate, groupings, extra support, etc). Results are also utilized by the administration to target students for extra help and tutoring, and target faculty for additional support.

Results and the analysis are shared and discussed with the entire staff for certain high stakes assessments. The results and reports are also discussed at the department and grade level meetings. Moreover, individual debriefing sessions are held between the administration and teachers to go over the results of the assessment and discuss possible action plans. The Dean of Academics closely follow the implementation of action plans and student progress from assessment to assessment.

Teachers and administrators use the assessment data to identify trends in terms of students’ areas of strengths and weaknesses. Based on this evaluation they determine whether students may need one-on-one tutoring or some type of enrichment for a specific topic or course. Assessment data is also used to determine appropriate student support services for those students who fail to attain the desired student outcomes.

***Parent Engagement:*** Parental support has been vital to the success of our program. PCSS engages parents through several activities. Communication play a key role. PCSS keeps lines of communication open and continuously keep them up to date with their children’s progress. Teachers communicate with parents through various ways throughout the school year. Parents are provided with interim and final report cards every quarter. Moreover, an interactive, password-protected, web-based school database system provides parents 24/7 access to their children’s records. Parents are able to monitor attendance, grades, and class averages, discipline, and assessments through the use of this system.

One of unique programs PCSS utilizes to engage parents is the home visit. We have been conducting home visits, especially to the homes of students whose parents have not been communicating as much as they should with the school and the teachers because of their work schedules. Usually low-income families work longer hours in hourly paid jobs, which may prevent them from attending school activities and teacher meetings. Home visits contribute to building a community, learning about the student, learning about the family, increasing parental involvement, and providing parents with additional means of interacting with their child’s school.[[9]](#footnote-9)

***K-12 experience:*** The expansion project will provide the opportunity to parents and students for a high quality K-12 experience under the same mission and focus. A mission oriented coherent education experience will significantly enhance opportunities available to our students.

* [Grade Span Change Only] Describe how the proposed change to grades served will impact any key design elements of the current educational program or curriculum model. Provide examples of how the key design elements of the current school model will be reflected in the additional proposed grades.

The educational program at PCSS will be adjusted to the needs of the lower grades so that the same rigorous academic program and school culture based on high expectation is reinforced. Key elements of our program can be expanded to ensure consistency and increase quality.

The school culture established at PCSS will be carried to lower grades with age appropriate adjustments. High expectations, respect and accountability will be the cornerstones of the culture we would like to establish with our K-6 population. While teachers will continue to be the role models in the classroom the availability of our juniors and seniors will provide additional opportunities for mentors and role models. The math and science focus of the school culture will lend itself through engaging and hands-on activities and events. In addition to classroom focus on these traits, events like Mad Science Days (a day of science experiments and illustrations performed for the pleasure of the whole student body), science speakers, science fair, science competitions, interdisciplinary projects will excite students about STEM.

*STEM Focus:* PCSS will ensure successful infusion of its mathematics and science focused education program to lower grades with this expansion project. Students will be provided with the opportunity to build strong foundations. Early exposure in mathematics and science will enable students to have the option to pursue further STEM related fields as opposed to the decision being made for them due to skill gaps based on lack of exposure or motivation at early ages. Students at PCSS will be better prepared to take on challenging subjects as they grow and will be skilled in and motivated to pursue STEM subjects. This will help to close the overall STEM gap, especially the gap that exists in minority and low-income populations. With the expansion students will not only build their mathematics and science skills for mastery, but they will also build their self-esteem and stamina. In order to close the achievement gap and for students to pursue an interest in STEM their journey should start very early.

*College Readiness:* The elementary school program will also consistently focus on the knowledge and skills that are essential for college readiness. To ensure that time is not lost student success will be tracked in earlier grades and intervention programs will be put in place. Deficiencies in foundations need to be identified and addressed at younger ages to prevent difficulties in high school and college. By being able to focus on student behavior and culture at a younger age PCSS will be able to improve student behavior and instill in students responsibility, academic discipline and positive work ethic. Counterproductive student behaviors that can impact academic performance and become habitual will be addressed earlier. The earlier students develop academic discipline and positive behaviors the more likely will these behaviors become habitual and natural.

*Character Education:* PCSS implements a Character Education Program for building good character, bringing out the best in our students, and ensuring that they acquire the basic life skills that will guide them to life-long success. The objective of the Character Education Program is to encourage students to take responsibility for their actions, to familiarize them with good character traits, to place role models before them, and to help develop good citizens with high ethical values. The program is built by using widely available and approved resource guides such as Character Counts, Good Character, Project Wisdom, and Character Education Partnership. This includes a Character Education class, quotes displayed throughout the school, special events and activities, and curriculum integration. In addition, teachers read announcements in their classes that will reinforce the quotes and messages that will be displayed throughout the school. Each month a character trait is announced. Parents are regularly informed about the trait of the month to ensure their involvement in their homes in our efforts to inspire good behavior. Other traits are integrated throughout the entire year, so that students are frequently reminded of these values and given the opportunity to make connections between various concepts.

Research-based studies show that character education at schools improves academic performance, general behavior, and attitudes and reduces discipline referrals, dropouts and expulsions, crime, and drug use.

The main principles of the character education program will are (a) your character is defined by what you do, not what you say or believe; (b) every choice you make helps define the kind of person you are choosing to be; (c) good character requires doing the right thing, even when it is costly or risky; (d) you don't have to take the worst behavior of others as a standard for yourself; (e) you can choose to be better than that; (f) what you do matters and one person can make a big difference; (g) the payoff for having good character is that it makes you a better person and it makes the world a better place.

The Character Education Program curriculum will include these topics: (a) trustworthiness, (b) respect, (c) responsibility, (d) fairness/justice, (e) caring, (f) citizenship, (g) honesty, (h) diligence, (i) integrity, (j) courage, and (k) work ethics.

While the program will be tailored with age appropriate activities and stories for elementary grades, upper grade students will also take part in reaching out to their younger schoolmates. This in turn will teach valuable lessons to our upper grades about responsibility and leadership. Moreover, our peer mentoring programs will be restructured to include elementary school students.

*Extended Learning Time:* The extended learning time program will be implemented at the K-6 level too. The longer school year and longer school day provides students much needed extra time and enable staff to implement a rigorous assessment system and various initiatives without sacrificing classroom time. While the school calendar will be similar to the upper school the daily schedule can be adjusted slightly for age appropriate activities and building situation.

*Data Focus:* PCSS will continue the data driven approach at the elementary expansion too. The assessment system currently used at the higher grades will be modified for the elementary level with age appropriate assessment tools. An age appropriate external assessment tool will be identified for the elementary level. We will work with the Neighborhood House Charter School in identifying the appropriate assessment tools and methods.

*Parent Engagement:* While building on the programs currently implemented PCSS will expand its efforts to engage its parents with the addition of the elementary school grades. Some sample goals of these programs will be as follows: (a) Ask parents to get their children to describe (in detail, daily) what they did in school; (b) Give an assignment that requires children to ask their parents questions; (c) Ask parents to watch a specific television program with their children and discuss it afterward; (d) Suggest ways for parents to include their children in any of their own educationally enriching activities; (e) Suggest games or group activities related to the children’s schoolwork that can be played by either parent or child or by child and siblings; (f) Suggest how parents can use home materials and activities to stimulate their children’s interest in reading, math and other subjects. Parents will be encouraged to volunteer for our DEAR program, trips and other school events. Open house sessions will be used as a way to bring parents together to discuss any changes that might take place throughout the year. Various family events will be organized to increase parental involvement. Teachers will be asked to send home weekly/monthly newsletters that will keep the parents up to date on what has been going on in the classroom.

* [OPTIONAL] Schools are encouraged to summarize briefly within their request the school’s track record of success in demonstrating faithfulness to its mission, implementing the key design elements outlined in its charter, and substantially meeting its accountability plan goals. The summary should provide additional context to any recent circumstances in the school’s history involving these areas of the school’s performance, including charter conditions, probation, recent amendments, performance against CSPC as reported in site visit reports, or charter renewal.

The founding members have envisioned PCSS as a place where each student will be given the opportunity to strive toward his/her highest level of capability. We can proudly say that this has already been achieved at PCSS. PCSS has established a culture of high academic and behavior standards. Not only are students continuously challenged in their classes, but also the policies and procedures of the school reflect the importance of academics and good character. Moreover, each student is provided with the support he/she needs not only in the classroom but outside of the classroom through after school tutoring programs. The academic program is reach in mathematics and sciences with classroom time, science fair, projects, activities, and competitions. PCSS demands its students to work harder and longer, to show exemplary behavior and to plan to go to college. In addition the procedures and policies are established to ensure an environment where these expectations will be realized, the school culture is set up in a way so that these expectations are the norm at PCSS.

PCSS has been academically successful in a short period of time. Our students not only surpass their peers in the sending districts when it comes to MCAS, they score at the top among all the districts in the state. PCSS consistently outperform nearby high schools on SAT and recently been placed 17th (among all MA high schools) with gold medal recognition on US News & World’s Best High School Rankings. PCSS is the most diverse non-exam public high school in the top 20. PCSS also has a great student culture that has been recognized by visitors and external organizations. More recently PCSS has been selected by the Boston Foundation as a runner up for the Pozen Prize for Charter Schools and been awarded $10,000 grant for the quality of its program. PCSS success has also attracted national organizations like Charter School Growth Fund. PCSS has been recognized as a Governor’s Commendation School in 2011 and since the state moved to the new accountability system PCSS has been a Level 1 school since state moved to the new leveling system.

PCSS received its renewal in 2012 with flying colors. The Commissioner described PCSS as an “academically successful program” and noted that “PCSS has also established a program that is faithful to its charter and organizationally viable.” Moreover the inspection team indicated that PCSS has met all of its accountability goals related to the faithfulness to charter and substantially met the accountability goals related to academic program and organizational viability.

PCSS successfully implemented programs towards the four pillars of its mission:

* rigorous academic curriculum with emphasis on math and science, balanced by a strong foundation in humanities
* a character education program
* career oriented college preparation
* strong student-teacher-parent collaboration

The academic program is rich in mathematics and sciences with double periods of instruction, a wide variety of electives, a mandatory science fair, and other projects, activities, and competitions (science clubs, mathcounts, state science fair, etc.). However, while focusing on mathematics and science PCSS also provides a strong education in the humanities. Students receive double periods of instruction in English during their middle school and early high school years. Multiple challenging electives in humanities (including Advanced Placement courses) are also offered every year. Assessment results speak to the strength of the academic program established.

The school culture reflects the importance of the character building and education at PCSS. Students are respectful, hard-working and motivated. Adults in the building act as role models not only in the classroom but outside of the classroom as well. The school’s well structured student conduct policy contributes positively to the overall school culture. The PCSS merit and demerit system provides students information about desirable and undesirable behaviors. Moreover, it contributes to the consistency of the student conduct. Character traits are also enforced in character education classes and advisories during the day.

College preparation is an important part of the PCSS. PCSS has developed a culture in which college readiness and acceptance is a norm. While college readiness is emphasized in regular classes PCSS offered eleven different advanced placement courses during 2014-2015 school year. Moreover, PCSS students visit colleges to learn about the admission requirements and experience the campus life. PCSS hosts various speakers from neighbor colleges to motivate students (Harvard Medical School, Boston College, MIT, etc). Career assemblies also provide students the chance to explore opportunities available after college. Students also meet with their college advisor individually to work on their college application process. The three graduating classes of PCSS has been consistently accepted to prestigious colleges and universities. Similarly more than 50% of the graduates consistently qualified for the John and Abigail Adams scholarship.

As mentioned above strong student-parent-teacher collaboration is an important part of the PCSS program. Teachers continuously contact parents. Lines of communication are always kept open between the school and parents. Parents are invited to school through various activities. A student database system is available to parents and students 24/7. To forge a lasting relationship with the parents PCSS teachers and administration conduct home visits throughout the school year.

The school culture at PCSS is testament to the success of the character education and the work put in to promote high moral values. The Dean of Students Office goes great lengths to ensure that behavior expectations are consistently upheld, students are recognized for model behavior and corrected for inappropriate behavior. High academic standards are at the center of the school culture. However, students are also exposed to different traits through various extracurricular activities and clubs (including but not limited to mathcounts, needle art, chess, classical film, robotics, sports teams, etc.). Moreover, PCSS has a flourishing athletic department despite the heavy focus on academics. Athletics not only provide students opportunities to compete, but also teach them discipline, perseverance, and dedication. More than forty percent of the student population participates in at least one sport.

**Access and Equity**

* Describe how the charter school has determined a need to increase maximum enrollment and/or increase the grade span. Strong evidence includes feedback from parent and faculty surveys, a historical pattern of an increase in submitted admission applications, and a growing population of eligible students in local region.

We have determined the need to increase the grade span and maximum enrollment mainly based on parent feedback and the growing population of eligible students in the region. Over the years our parents have been voicing the need to have a quality elementary school in the region and been asking us for availability of seats in lower grades. We have included in the appendix some sample support letters from our parents and community members.

The student population in Everett in particular and in the region in general has been steadily growing over the years. When looked at the last five years, the K-6 student population grew on average by 4% a year in Everett and 3% in Chelsea and Revere. During the last five years Everett has added 493 more students to the K-6 population. Numbers for Chelsea and Revere have been 491 and 398 students respectively. However, the overall growth in the state has been stagnant. In the whole state the K-6 population has only changed by 398 students from 2011 to 2015.

Total Number of K-6 Students

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Everett | Chelsea | Revere | State |
| 2015 | 3582 | 3721 | 3991 | 493922 |
| 2014 | 3490 | 3600 | 3922 | 494776 |
| 2013 | 3356 | 3425 | 3802 | 493976 |
| 2012 | 3200 | 3354 | 3719 | 492491 |
| 2011 | 3089 | 3230 | 3593 | 493524 |

This growth in student population has been the topic of discussion in many articles in the local Everett papers over the years. For example a March 18, 2014 article from Everett Independent states that “According to Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Thomas Stella, every school in the city is currently over capacity, as the district has seen an increase in enrollment across all grade levels as the city’s population has continued to grow.” Moreover, “A report released by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council earlier this year showed both an increase in birth rates per year over the past ten years, as well as a growing trend of new families moving into the district.” Despite the demand mentioned above the region currently lacks elementary level charter schools.

In addition, PCSS teachers have consistently expressed great concerns about the lack of skills and content knowledge of the incoming 7th grade class. Our staff regularly discusses the potential benefits of being able to start our educational program in the elementary level grades. Some sample letters from our teachers discussing the need for an elementary school are included in the appendix.

* Describe how the school has determined that there is sufficient parent support to fill existing and proposed seats and/or grades at the school under the proposed amendment.

As explained previously, the demand, feedback from our parents, and the long waiting list for the only charter school that serves Everett in the region gives us the confidence to fill the proposed seats. Moreover, PCSS enrollment and waiting list has been steadily increasing. We currently have more than 450 prospective students on the waiting list. The steady increase of the student population in the region also gives us the confidence to fill the proposed seats.

* Provide a brief summary of the school’s efforts to eliminate barriers to program access, including but not limited to, recruitment and enrollment practices, retention practices, and school policies, such as student support and discipline systems. Describe the progress made in attracting, enrolling, and retaining a student population that is demographically comparable to similar grades in schools from which the existing charter school(s) enrolls students. Describe actions taken and reported in their recruitment and retention plan to address challenges in any of these areas of school performance. Indicate how the school’s efforts may need to evolve during implementation of the proposed expansion.

PCSS has been diligently working to enable access to all through recruitment and enrollment practices. Over the years PCSS saw increase in the certain targeted populations despite the fact that a high percentage of incoming seventh graders has been siblings. We have been increasing our recruitment efforts and simplifying enrollment practices.

Our general recruitment practices involved mass mailing campaigns, ads in local papers, online advertising through facebook and google, radio ads, ads on the local MBTA bus and subway lines and regular open houses for interested parents and fliers being distributed to local community centers. We have also followed targeted practices to reach to certain demographic groups. We reached out to our PAC chair to reach out to special education parents at other schools. A special education department personnel has been present during open houses to answer any special education related questions. Fliers are distributed to local libraries, social service agencies, community centers, etc.

In order to recruit more ELL students PCSS made recruitment materials available in multiple languages, advertised in bilingual newspapers and radios, visited local churches that conducts masses in multiple languages. Materials have also placed a local community centers that cater to immigrants, local ethnic food stores and churches with predominantly immigrant masses. We have also utilized our students with Spanish, Haitian and Brazilian background to reach out to their communities to recruit students.

PCSS is a school with very high expectations and with probably the longest school calendar in the state. Therefore we pay special attention to retention activities to ensure that ample support programs are provided. We will continue to implement the current recruitment and retention plan developed for the upper school. Information for recruitment activities regarding grade levels will be adjusted. Upon receiving the approval to add elementary grades to our current school we will revise our enrollment policy to reflect the new grade span.

PCSS retention activities mainly focused on a) improving parent communication to build stronger relationships and b) providing adequate support programs and welcoming school culture. Some of the retention activities utilized are:

NEWSLETTERS- Newsletters containing updates on activities and upcoming events have been and will continue to be passed out to students and parents.

STUDENT DATABASE- PCSS has a wonderful user friendly database system that is used by teachers, parents and students. All grades (test grades, assignments, homework, discipline and participation), the attendance and assignment descriptions are added to the database on a regular basis by the teachers.

COMMUNICATION & HOME VISITS- Teachers continuously contact parents for student issues (both positive and negative). PCSS teachers and administrators make home visits to the homes of the students whose parents have given the school the permission to visit. During this time parents, students and teachers are given an opportunity to meet in a more informal matter in which they get to know each other more and learn more about the school.

PEER MENTORING PROGRAM- Run by our counselor to help our students better adjust to school.

BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAMS- Assemblies and activities run by the counselor and dean of students.

TUTORING- After school and Saturday tutoring programs are available to all students free of charge.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES- Clubs, academic and athletic teams are available to all interested students.

This past year PCSS also run a pilot summer program for incoming seventh graders to minimize adjustment difficulties. We hope that this will positively affect student retention, lower the stress of adjusting to a high expectations school and enable us better serve our incoming class.

PCSS believes in providing access and support to all students. While we try to make recruitment a simple process that is accessible to all we also try to ensure access to the educational program and opportunities for current students. PCSS is committed to the success of all of its students. To that effect various intervention and support programs are available to all of our students free of charge. Programs intensify for students with high needs. When needed programs are tailored to fit our students with special challenges. Academic programs and opportunities are advertised to all students and constant communication with parents is prioritized. Communication happens in the prevailing languages upon family request.

Similarly, all of our extracurricular activities and athletic programs are open to all of our students with clear policies and timely announcements. Students can seek emotional or social support anytime they need.

The discipline policy is clearly stated and consistently implemented to prevent any misunderstandings. Moreover, the database provides constant information to the family regarding student behavior. When needed policies are adjusted to fit the need of students with special challenges. Moreover, the Dean of Students Office comes up with creative alternatives when regular discipline action plans do not work. The aim of the discipline system is to teach certain behaviors, skills and outcomes rather than being punitive. All the administrators have an open door policy and students feel comfortable approaching them. We have a safe and welcoming school culture where everyone is accepted for who they are. This is a testament to the quality of the culture and accessibility of the program.

Another way barriers to access are eliminated is thorough training of the staff members about the current law and specific needs of our students. Every year we start the year off with an extensive training provided by our special education, ELL, health, and counseling departments for the entire school. Follow-up training and information sessions are conducted throughout the year.

With the expansion to lower grades there will be some changes with these policies. Our recruitment and enrollment will include reaching out to places where elementary school parents utilize more. Our support programs will be adjusted with age appropriate strategies. More social emotional support will be provided at the elementary level. Our student support services will need to focus more on the fundamental skills and building of foundations for academic subjects. Our identification and testing procedures will be overhauled to reflect the need of lower grade students.

The student discipline policy will be redesigned with age appropriate strategies and consequences. Rules will be simplified. Procedures will be constantly modeled. The demerit and merit system will be transformed especially at the lower grades and gradually will build up to the current system as the grade levels increases.

With the expansion there will be additional efforts made to reach out to and engage more parents of elementary school students. Their involvement will crucial for access and success of the program. Communication efforts will be simplified and augmented. Parents will be made part of their children’s development through engagement at the school and at home.

With the expansion to elementary grades we will need to bring in more social and emotional support services, in addition to the academic support programs for the students and their parents.

* Explain trends and/or anomalies in attendance, retention, attrition, in-school suspension rates, out-of-school suspension rates, and if applicable, graduation and dropout data over the past four years. The Department performs a review using available student data in the aggregate, and by targeted subgroups, and grade cohorts using the [CHART tool](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/chart/) at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/chart/>. Schools should explain any unique circumstances related to published school data, and corrective actions taken to address challenges in any of these areas of school performance.

PCSS attendance data has over the years been better than the statewide averages and the median of sending districts. The PCSS average retention rate for the last four years has been lower than the statewide averages and the district median. The PCSS in-school suspension rates have been higher than the statewide averages and districts median. However, the PCSS rate has shown a sharp decline for the last two years. On the other hand out-of-school suspension rates have been declining steadily. The average is higher that the statewide average but lower than the median of sending districts. PCSS graduation rates have been consistently higher than the statewide averages or sending districts median. PCSS dropout rates have been lower than statewide averages and districts median or first quartile. The four-year attrition rate has been lower than the state average and slightly higher than the median. The attrition rate has been decreasing steadily with the most recent rate ended up being lower than both statewide average and districts median.

In terms of enrollment data the PCSS ELL population has been lower than the statewide average, median or comparison index on the CHART. PCSS has increased its efforts to recruit more ELL students as explained above. However, one should notice the high percentage of siblings in the incoming students that leave limited numbers of available seats. PCSS has been offering close to half of the available seats to siblings.

The first language not English number has substantially increased over the last three years. Numbers are currently higher than the statewide average and the median of district schools and the comparison index. PCSS has increased its recruitment efforts to the population who speaks a language other than English as described above. However, one difficulty that still remains (aside from siblings) is that self-reporting by parents is not carried out all the time. Some of the parents do not always indicate a different home language on the forms as they come from schools where students were tested for ELL services before.

The low income student numbers for PCSS are higher than the statewide average and comparison index based on the new economically disadvantaged index. PCSS student with disabilities population is lower than the statewide averages but higher than the comparison index. The numbers have been increasing over the last couple of years. The high percentage of siblings in the incoming seventh grade class limits the availability of seats for the lottery.

* Indicate, in a table, both the historical distribution of enrolled students in the present grade span, and the projected distribution of students by grade, including the primary entry points for new students, and the grades where backfilling will occur. The Department strongly encourages schools to promote new student access under the proposed expansion, and to explicitly indicate access for new students at as many grade levels as possible. The table should reflect the implementation timeline, projecting a five-year enrollment pattern, or more if necessary, to project the maximum enrollment and/or grade span requested.

***Historical Distribution of Enrolled Students***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Grade Levels | 7-11  | 7-12  | 7-12  | 7-12  | 7-12  |
| Total Students | 294 | 321 | 359 | 359 | 360 |

***Projected Enrollment for K-6***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
| Grade K | ***60*** | ***60*** | ***60*** | ***60*** | ***60*** |
| Grade 1 | ***60*** | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 |
| Grade 2 | ***60*** | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 |
| Grade 3 |   | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 |
| Grade 4 |   | ***60*** | 60 | 60 | 60 |
| Grade 5 |   |  ***60*** | 60 | 60 | 60 |
| Grade 6 |   |  | 60 | 60 | 60 |
| Total students | 180 | 360 | 420 | 420 | 420 |
| New cohort | K, 1 & 2 | K, 4 & 5 | K | K | K |

PCSS envisions full enrollment at the K-6 level in three years. Year 1 will begin with grades K, 1, and 2. In year two in addition to grade K we will also accept a new cohort of students in grades 4 & 5. In year three and on we will only accept grades K as a new cohort. Thereafter only a new cohort of K will be accepted to the school. This scenario reflects an ambitious growth plan to fully capitalize economies of scale with facility and other operational related expenses. While this scenario reflects the ideal conditions the enrollment pattern might change due to unexpected circumstances, especially facility related challenges. In such cases the entry grade levels might be altered. Similarly the number of students accepted might also be altered due to building or other unforeseen challenges.

With the addition of grades K-6 PCSS will become a K-12 institution. The backfilling requirement indicates that only grades K-5 needs to backfilled for K-12 schools (excluding seats in the last half of the grades offered). However, PCSS with the expansion will commit to backfill more grades that what is required by the law and will allow entry for grades K-9 through backfilling, therefore allowing an additional 4 grade levels more than what is required by law.

* Submit a draft enrollment policy and application for admission which reflects the proposed change to entry point(s) and backfilling of vacancies, as applicable. The Department strongly encourages schools to promote new student access under the proposed expansion, and to explicitly indicate access for new students at as many grade levels as possible. [If granted, the school must amend its enrollment policy and application for admission and receive Commissioner approval prior to implementation.]

Please see the appendix for a draft enrollment policy and application form.

**Compliance**

* [OPTIONAL] Schools may choose to summarize briefly within their request the school’s record of compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws and regulations over the past four years, both in reference to school and board operations. Indicate in the summary any corrective action taken in response to challenges, and the implementation of any safeguards to maintain compliance with all legal requirements. The summary should provide additional context to any recent circumstances in the school’s history involving these areas of the school’s performance, including charter conditions, probation, recent amendments, performance against CSPC as reported in site visit reports, or charter renewal.

PCSS had a stellar record of compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable laws. In 2012 PCSS charter was renewed with compliments for faithfulness to its charter, academic success and organizational viability. Moreover, PCSS has been designated by the DESE as a proven provider and opened a second school for Saugus and surrounding cities. Through various site visitors PCSS has been complimented for successfully turning the school described in the charter application into a reality. PCSS is faithful to its charter, committed to comply with all the applicable state and federal laws and provides a high quality educational program.

**Dissemination**

* [OPTIONAL] Schools may choose to summarize briefly within their request the school’s efforts to provide innovative models for replication and best practices to other public schools in the district where the charter school is located. The response may also include dissemination to other schools, districts, and organizations beyond the district of location. The summary should provide additional context to any recent circumstances in the school’s history involving these areas of the school’s performance, including past or present grant awards related to dissemination practices.

PCSS has always been open to inquiries by other parties who want to learn from its experience. PCSS sees it as imperative of its core philosophy of contribution to the education of our children that it responds enthusiastically to any request for sharing its best practices. PCSS will participate in conferences and workshops, especially concerning the areas that are core to its mission. It will collaborate with regional, national, and international organizations, such as those concerned with math, science, and technology education in high schools or with character education, leadership for youth, etc. PCSS will also strive to establish active lines of communication with the districts and public schools in its region to tackle shared issues and propagate its best practices.

We strive to better our school in any way possible and to help others in the process. Through participation at the Boston College’s Lynch Leadership Academy we interacted with various Boston area principals and shared best practices. The program also included visits to and from Boston area schools. Moreover, we were able to host the superintendent of Everett during one of our science events and also visited the superintendents of Everett and Peabody to share information and best practices used at our school. We hold open houses for all interested parents and community members. Moreover, we continuously strive to build stronger relations with our surrounding community members. We hosted events for the Mayors of Everett and Revere, for the Representatives of the Everett and Revere Chambers of Commerce, local DAs and judges, State Senators and Representatives to our school.

During 2013-14 school year PCSS applied to a dissemination grant with the NHCS and hosted visitors from the Maine Charter School Commission, Neighborhood House Charter School, Charter School Growth Fund, and Boston Foundation who wanted to observe the model PCSS has established. PCSS plans to work in partnership with NHCS not only for its elementary expansion, but also for a future NHCS high school expansion.

This year PCSS social studies department has been invited to present at the upcoming NCSS conference to share best practices. We have also developed a science professional development workshop to be shared with nearby schools.

In an effort to share best practices we are willing and have shared the following with local charter, local agencies and public schools: Extended learning time (the longer school day and longer school year concept); Our Discipline and Reward system, which was created to eliminate any unnecessary behavior problems and to encourage positive behavior; Our Student Database System is one of our most precious tools used by administrators and teachers; Home Visit Program; Data driven instruction and our unique assessment system.

**Student Performance**

* [OPTIONAL] The Department will review the school’s academic performance based on available MCAS data, including student subgroups. Schools should explain any unique circumstances related to published school data, and corrective actions taken to address challenges in any of these areas of school performance within their request. The Department typically reviews the most recent 3 or 4 years of student data, as available.

As the data will show PCSS has a stellar track record with MCAS performance. PCSS students perform at the top when it comes to MCAS scores or SGPs.

* [OPTIONAL] Schools may submit student performance data for other standardized assessments in English Language Arts and mathematics as additional evidence of academic student achievement. Please indicate and define the metric used in your submission. Schools are required to submit at least three years of data for all students and one or more targeted subgroups. Targeted subgroups may include, but are not limited to students with disabilities; students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch; and English language learners. If the number of students in one or more targeted subgroups is below the threshold of students required for reporting based on the metric, schools may include a high needs student subgroup where student data is aggregated into a ‘super’ subgroup of students with high needs adjusted for enrollment.

Another form of standardized assessment data used comes from the SAT. As indicated previously PCSS SAT participation rate is almost perfect thus providing data about all students. However, so far we have data on only three graduating classes, the classes of 2012, 2013 and 2014. The table below provides data for all students, as well as low income and high needs student subgroups. Comparison data for sending district averages and statewide averages are also provided.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SAT READING SCORES** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** |
| PCSS-All Students | 456 | 514 | 460 |
| Dist. Av. - All Students | 426 | 431 | 423 |
| State-All Students | 506 | 507 | 508 |
| *PCSS-Low Income* | *449* | *496* | *455* |
| *Dist. Av. - Low Income* | *420* | *420* | *414* |
| *State-Low Income* | *434* | *435* | *434* |
| PCSS-High Needs | 442 | 494 | 452 |
| Dist. Av. - High Needs | 417 | 417 | 412 |
| State-High Needs | 434 | 436 | 436 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SAT WRITING SCORES** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** |
| PCSS-All Students | 447 | 509 | 454 |
| Dist. Av. - All Students | 412 | 422 | 411 |
| State-All Students | 500 | 501 | 499 |
| *PCSS-Low Income* | *442* | *498* | *444* |
| *Dist. Av. - Low Income* | *407* | *409* | *401* |
| *State-Low Income* | *426* | *426* | *425* |
| PCSS-High Needs | 439 | 493 | 441 |
| Dist. Av. - High Needs | 403 | 407 | 399 |
| State-High Needs | 425 | 427 | 425 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SAT MATH SCORES** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** |
| PCSS-All Students | 484 | 566 | 523 |
| Dist. Av. - All Students | 445 | 453 | 442 |
| State-All Students | 524 | 522 | 523 |
| *PCSS-Low Income* | *498* | *554* | *507* |
| *Dist. Av. - Low Income* | *439* | *446* | *433* |
| *State-Low Income* | *458* | *457* | *456* |
| PCSS-High Needs | 494 | 547 | 505 |
| Dist. Av. - High Needs | 435 | 443 | 432 |
| State-High Needs | 455 | 456 | 455 |

PCSS SAT performance has always been higher than the sending district averages at all levels. During second year of assessment PCSS has also surpassed statewide averages for all three sections of the test. When looked at the low income and high needs subgroups PCSS not only surpassed sending districts but statewide averages too for all three years. PCSS subgroup performance has been stellar compared to state averages even with the first graduating class surpassing state averages with wide margins in all categories. The difference with math is spectacular reaching 97 points with low income subgroup for 2013 data.

**Program Delivery**

* [Grade Span Change Only] Describe any schedule changes anticipated with implementation of the new grade span, including length of school year, week, or day. Describe how the change in grade span will impact the mechanics of the educational program in terms of the daily and weekly organization of students and faculty.

In the elementary grades PCSS does not plan to change the length of the school year, week, or day. The extended learning time is an important component of our program and we plan to keep it intact for the lower grade levels. However, we anticipate some changes in terms of how the day will be structured for lower grades. We expect longer reading and mathematics blocks during the day compare to other subjects. At the lower grades (grades K-3) our students will stay with the same teacher for their core classes. We expect to introduce subject matter expertise and differentiation with grade 4. The final schedule of the classes will be finalized taking into account facility opportunities and feedback from Neighborhood House Charter School.

* [Grade Span Change Only] Provide an overview of **how** the current educational program, curriculum model, or whole school design, including curriculum and instruction, will be adapted to serve younger or older students, as applicable.

It is clearly evident that Elementary school students are naturally curious, which makes science an ideal and exciting subject for them to learn. Science allows students to explore their world and discover new, thought provoking things. Science is an active subject that contains activities that are hands-on and can be related to real- life.  This makes science well suited to active younger children. Science is an important part of the foundation for education for all children. At PCSS over the years we have worked hard for our H.S to study and enjoy science, but this was not easy for all students.  We firmly believe that we need to start by teaching them when they are in elementary school. To expect a high school student to understand the complexities of biology and chemistry if they were never given a foundation of science education at a younger age is challenging, it can be done, but one can only imagine the positive outcomes if students are exposed at a younger age.  With a solid knowledge of science, student will learn to think logically and to solve problems. This problem-solving skill, if learnt in the early years will enable students to solve problems. Knowledge in this subject will enable students to understand many other subjects a lot better.

If granted the expansion PCSS will work with Neighborhood House Charter School (NHCS) to develop a curriculum that will help to build the foundational blocks that will lead to academic success for students. PCSS hopes to instill the love and wonder of science into the students at a younger age. Students will learn to “think like scientists”. Real- life, hands on activities will help students to better grasp the content that they will be taught. Classrooms will be named after famous scientists that students will learn about throughout the year. Students will take part in field trips, presentations and activities that will help them to develop a love for questioning and exploring. The scientific method will be applied to as many different contents as possible. It will be instilled in the curriculum in a way in which with time it will become natural for students to feel confident in their studies and the area of sciences. We hope to create school-wide culture that will value reasoning, critical thinking skills and understanding. We will aim to implement a well- designed science program where students learn to question, describe, test, explain, and communicate. Our teachers will act as facilitators and life-long learners with strong content knowledge and training in science instruction. We firmly believe that strong elementary school science program will encourage our students natural tendencies to explore and learn, and develops language and mathematical skills through observations, manipulation and communication of data and discoveries during lessons where various subject areas are integrated. We are confident that our collaboration with NHCS and our experiences over the years will be a great combination for success!

The instructional model approach at the elementary level will be more nurturing. There will be a lot of intentional modeling of the content, behavior and skills. Focus will not only be on the mastery of building blocks but also on the development of skills and habits that will be instrumental for success in high school and college. Study skills, work ethics, teamwork, responsibility, etc. will be incorporated into the educational program. In early grades instructional modules will emphasis hands-on activities. Story telling, thematic study of concepts and other age appropriate strategies will be incorporated.

* [Grade Span Change Only] Briefly describe the process that is used to align curriculum to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. Include in your response the processes used to align curriculum to the 2011 Mathematics and English Language Arts curriculum frameworks incorporating the Common Core State Standards, and to incorporate the World-class Design and assessment English Language Development (WIDA ELD) standards into content area curricula as an example of prior effective implementation.

PCSS curriculum has been written and developed by PCSS teachers. The curriculum alignment of the curriculum to the 2011 Mathematics and English Language Arts curriculum frameworks incorporating the Common Core State Standards have been part of the ongoing curriculum development work by PCSS teachers. While teachers review their curriculum throughout the year to align it to the current standards the work is finalized during the end of year curriculum development institutes (traditionally the last two weeks of school has been reserved for curriculum development work where teachers work on their curriculums in teams in the afternoon; classes end at 1 pm during this process). PCSS teachers were also provided with professional development especially focusing on the shifts of the common core. Our Dean of Academics gathered and shared many resources with our teachers regarding common core and curriculum development. The finalized curricula have been reviewed by the Dean of Academics and Executive Director for completeness. A sample seventh grade ELA and Mathematics curriculum piece is included as a sample for alignment.

The incorporation of the World-class Design and assessment English Language Development (WIDA ELD) has been led through the work of our ELL Director. The process started through training provided to our teachers by our ELL Director. Through the trainings she provided information and samples of WIDA incorporation. She has also been available for consultation throughout this process. Then our teachers incorporated the WIDA standards into their curriculum through the curriculum development work. The curricula have been reviewed by the Director and the Dean of Academics after completion.

A WIDA curriculum integration template and a seventh grade ELA curriculum are provided as samples within the appendix.

* [Grade Span Change Only] Describe the process used to develop horizontally and vertically aligned curriculum for the new grade span and a timeline for curriculum development and implementation, if applicable, including the individuals involved.

PCSS has been traditionally developing its own curriculum through teacher feedback. The curriculum for new grade span will be developed in a similar fashion. However, this time the process will benefit from the expertise of another successful elementary charter school. To ensure a high quality elementary school program PCSS partnered with Neighborhood House Charter School (NHCS). The selection of NHCS as our partner for this project is not just based on the success of NHCS, but on the similarities of our schools and closeness of the mission and philosophy.

The Common Core State Standards and the NHCS curriculum will provide the seed to grow our own curriculum. We want to adapt NHCS’ Rich Structured Learning Experiences Model. Lessons will be designed to stimulate engagement and foster a love of learning. Meaningful and deep learning experiences will allow students to interact with the materials through hands on experimentation and integration of other subjects.

The development process will be thought as a scaffolding project for our current curriculum implemented at grades 7-12. Upon the approval of this amendment PCSS will form a K-6 task force and will start the curriculum work. The team will identify grade level benchmarks and expectations that will ensure a coherent K-12 curriculum. PCSS departments and grade teams will be asked to develop expectations for incoming students, to ensure coherence and rigor. The team in collaboration with NHCS will modify the curriculum to fit the mission. PCSS Dean of Academics and Executive Director will spearhead the project. Emily Pratt Davidson will be the contact person on the NHCS side. PCSS will adopt and modify NHCS curriculum materials. There will be monthly check-in meetings with NHCS. We hope to complete the process by end of June where we also do curriculum development work for upper grades (7-12). This will also ensure completeness of the K-12 curriculum.

* [Grade Span Change Only] Describe the process and procedures used to evaluate whether curriculum and instruction is effective and successfully implemented. Include in your response a brief summary of the assessment system implemented at the school, and any modifications if request is granted.

The effectiveness and implementation of the curriculum and instruction is evaluated through student outcomes and classroom visits. Student progress is continuously monitored through a comprehensive assessment system. Assessments are implemented to eliminate misunderstandings and to ensure that the goals of a lesson, a unit, or a class are being achieved successfully. Assessments also provide the basis for further instruction, thus allowing educators to prepare a better educational environment and educational activities.[[10]](#footnote-10) Moreover, assessments are used not only for assessing students, but also for assessing educators.

PCSS’ evaluation and assessment is conducted on an annual, quarterly, weekly, and daily basis in all curriculum areas. The frequency of these evaluation tools are based on each individual student’s progress. These assessments enable the faculty to identify each student’s individual strengths and weaknesses and to design and implement individualized programs for the students. Also, the assessments serve as opportunities for teachers and administrators to follow the overall progress of the school and to critique the program, adapt instructional approaches, and establish new goals and expectations to better serve the student population. The Dean of Academics has the primary responsibility in implementing and overseeing the assessment system.

***External Assessments:*** PCSS has been administering the MCAS for grades 7, 8, and 10 until this past year. For 2014-15 academic year PCSS decided to administer PARCC in grades 7, 8, 9, and 11 and MCAS in grade 10. PCSS will still administer MCAS for grade 8 and 10 science tests. The results of the PARCC and MCAS tests are useful in evaluating each student’s progress and our school’s progress and success in comparison to the districts we serve and to the state.

Moreover, PCSS administers an additional assessment (based on college readiness skills) to monitor each student’s progress from year to year. The College Board’s PSAT is administered for all students in grades 7-11. While providing a profile of college readiness, PSAT also enables teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses of their students through an analysis of aggregate test question performance and skills feedback.

PSAT and SAT test results also provide us with comparative state and national data. Students are encouraged to take AP and SAT II tests to get ready for college. Students are also encouraged to participate in regional, national, and international competitions and science fairs.

Newly enrolled students take a mathematics diagnostic test prior to start of the new school year. This data, along with the MCAS and other standardized test results (if available) from previous years and teacher prepared tests, are used to determine each student’s starting grade of study as well as the appropriate math and science levels in that grade.

Once enrolled in the school, each student completes a Home Language Survey. If the student indicates a native language other than English, a trained teacher tests the student to assess the need for ELL services. All students that qualify with ELL services are also tested throughout the year.

***Internal Assessments:*** PCSS uses an extensive assessment system to ensure the mastery of the curriculum and closely monitor student progress. Throughout the school year all middle and high school students take various tests in their grade levels.[[11]](#footnote-11) Two types of assessments, benchmarks and quarter finals, compose the backbone of the system.

Benchmarks are administered to all grades. They cover all topics and standards learned in a particular unit of study. The questions are prepared by teachers under the guidance of the Dean of Academics. The benchmarks are aligned with state standards and reflect the expectations of high stake tests when relevant.

Similarly, quarter finals are administered to all grades at the end of every quarter. They are cumulative and cover standards taught throughout the year. The questions are prepared by the Dean of Academics in collaboration with teachers. They are aligned with state standards and reflect the expectations of high stake tests when relevant. Moreover, PCSS administers MCAS (now PARCC too), SAT and AP practice tests for relevant grades in order to ensure progress towards mastery of state and college readiness standards.

The use of such internal assessments allows us to gain accurate information about student’s mastery of the subject matter. The results of these interim assessments as well as the available data from external assessments are analyzed thoroughly throughout the year. An analysis of the results are done with graphs and reports such as: Results with graphics, Student Progress Report that shows students’ cumulative scores, Item Remediation Analysis for each state standard, Item Analysis of each question, Learning Focus for each learning objective, etc.

This analysis allows teachers to get a more in depth explanation of the questions that students did not answer correctly and the standards that the questions covered. Teachers utilize the results of these assessments to modify their instruction (re-teach, remediate, groupings, extra support, etc). Results are also be utilized by the administration to target students for extra help and tutoring, and target faculty for additional support.

The quarter finals, practice tests, and (when available) external assessments analysis are discussed with the entire staff. Summary results are also shared with the entire school. The results and reports are also discussed at the department and grade level meetings. Moreover, individual debriefing sessions are held between administration and teachers to go over the results of the assessment and discuss possible action plans. The Dean of Academics closely follows the implementation of action plans and student progress from assessment to assessment.

Teacher prepared classwork, homework, quizzes, and written and oral exams within each subject are also part of the internal assessment system. Homework is graded both for mastery and effort. Quizzes are administered at the end of topics.

***Projects & Fairs:*** PCSS teachers use various project and performance based assessments in their classrooms. While some of these assessments are subject specific (e.g. debate for ELA), others are interdisciplinary in nature. Moreover, students also participate in two school-wide project fairs. All students take part in the annual school science fair. Students are assessed through a standards based rubric and this becomes part of their science grade. The rubric focuses on three areas: research, understanding of content and making connections. Through the science fair students have an opportunity to use the scientific method to investigate a question that interests them. The science fair not only benefits students through the hands-on study of science, but it also improves their presentation and communication skills.

All seniors prepare a senior project and present it at the senior project fair as part of their graduation requirement. A senior project has many benefits to our students, but the greatest benefit is the opportunity it presents to create student-led, independent learning and thinking and to encourage students to explore their personal areas of interest that otherwise might not be covered in the high school curriculum. Additional benefits include:

* Students develop a working, academic relationship with an adult advisor at the school.
* Students consider ways in which they can personally impact their community, empowering them to serve others and to give back to their community.
* Students gain academic research and writing skills.
* Students gain experience with public speaking and academic presentations.
* Students have the opportunity to practice articulating their ideas both orally and in writing to others and in drawing on the research and experience of others to support their ideas.
* Students produce a final product of which they can be proud.
* Students begin to explore areas of personal interest to help narrow down a field of interest as they get ready to select a college major.

This rich data on student outcome drives our curriculum evaluation and instruction. Results are continuously monitored by the Dean of Academics and discussed by the administrative team. The results provide feedback on areas of improvement. Results are continuously evaluated in the larger context of college readiness. Teacher teams also provide information on the effectiveness of the curriculum on the end of year goals and college readiness. Grade level meetings are the primary mechanism to monitor student progress in relation to the school’s curriculum. These meetings, therefore, focus on student performance. Once the Dean of Academics collects, analyzes, and distributes assessment data, teachers further analyze data, identify students in need of support, and implement curricular and instructional changes. Teachers then prepare interventions to address the areas of weakness. They may modify their lessons, re-teach, or group students according to need. Students are offered the opportunity to attend after school and/or Saturday Academy based on assessment results. During that time, students receive help on their identified weaknesses and benefit from small group instruction or individual tutoring.

Feedback on the curriculum and instruction is also provided through classroom visits and observations done by the Dean of Academics and Executive Director. The Dean or the Executive Director provide timely feedback and also document their observations to obtain data on effective instruction and curriculum implementation. The observations are compared to the weekly lesson plans received from the teachers. Teachers also receive feedback on their lesson plans.

Aside from the visits by their supervisors teachers also receive visits from their colleagues (peer observations) and from the student support services and ELL departments. Most of these visits are targeted and documented for further discussion.

With the expansion to lower grades PCSS plans to keep the focus on data to ensure effective instruction and implementation of the curriculum. While the assessments for the lower grades will be modified to ensure age appropriate material and techniques the overall goal and procedures will stay the same. Student progress will be closely monitored and teacher analysis of results will continue to be an important part of the assessment system. Especially in lower grades the emphasis will be placed on projects and performance based assessments. All students will also be tested using several metrics to ensure that foundations are effectively learned and retained. Students will be tested on site words, listening comprehension, oral math. Test such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) will be used with the lower grades. We will rely on the NHCS to develop the initial age appropriate assessment tools and strategies.

* [Grade Span Change Only] Provide an outline of the curriculum scope and sequence that will be used in the new grade levels, including the content and skills to be taught in the core content areas at each new grade level, if applicable.

The curriculum scope and sequence will be based on the lessons learned at Neighborhood House Charter School. When the amendment is approved PCSS will start adopting and modifying NHCS scope and sequence and curriculum materials. Through the work of the K-6 task force, the scope and sequence will be finalized based on the feedback from NHCS. For samples please see the 1st grade curriculum used at NHCS included in the appendix section.

***ELA Curriculum****:* The goals for the reading program will be to instill in each child a love of reading and the ability to comprehend a variety of written texts. The program will guide students through the processes of learning to read and reading to learn. At each grade level, there will be a comprehensive curriculum that stresses reading skills and strategies that students need to acquire to become successful lifelong readers. Literacy/Language Arts is the process through which a learner independently applies the appropriate strategies to read, write, listen, speak, and think in order to gain or communicate meaning. The language arts program will promote reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking as critical tools in lifelong reading. Student progress and success will be monitored regularly using a combination of internal, standard and informal assessments. NHCS will help us to ensure that this is done in an effective manner.

The development of this process stems from balanced, explicit, and diagnostic instruction that will be student-centered and will take place within a meaningful context. At PCSS we will aim students to develop competency through the guided use of a variety of genres. The integration of literacy skills across curriculum disciplines will foster the growth of student competencies. PCSS will use an educational approach that will (a) acknowledge and foster children’s academic, emotional, social, and physical development, (b) a curriculum that builds a solid foundation in reading, writing, math, and science, creating a basis for successful lifelong learning, (c) a community that creates partnerships with parents and families, and (d) a learning environment that is teacher-directed, child-centered, structured, and well balanced.

A balanced approach to reading is most effective in acquiring all necessary skills to develop a lifelong love of reading. Using fine literature, students will systematically and explicitly be taught phonemic awareness, phonics, word knowledge, comprehension skills and strategies, inquiry skills, and the art of the writing process. Students will be introduced to a wide variety of genres, which will deepen their understanding of various themes.

Students will learn to write, revise, edit, and publish to become better writers in a variety of genres. They will also be expected to practice their skills with Daily Oral Language, a structured program that teaches mechanics, grammar, and usage skills. Teachers in all subject areas will work to incorporate common reading and writing practices into their lessons on a continual basis, and as a regular part of project based learning, they will provide students with practice in expressing their ideas through writing. In Science, English, Social Studies, and Mathematics, students communicate their ideas through informal and formal writing and consider how to effectively express their ideas to an audience. This may occur through a monologue developed in Performing Arts and English, a creative writing assignment linking English and Science, or a Mathematics portfolio in which students must communicate their problem solving process, strategies, and questions to readers. At each grade level, teachers will work on creating and using common writing goals, expectations, and teaching tools to support student learning as students develop their ability to express themselves effectively through writing.

***Mathematics Curriculum:*** PCSS will implement a rigorous mathematics curriculum that will prepare students for the high level mathematics classes in upper grades. PCSS teachers will make mathematics challenging but also relevant. Students will collect, organize, and interpret real-world data. Real-life connection will make mathematics more interesting and motivating for students.

Some of the significant mathematics teaching strategies that will be used in the elementary grades will be:

Using Real Objects: Using real objects during the class to connect the lesson with real life and motivate students in class.

Telling Stories: Michael S. Schiro explains the benefits of storytelling in mathematics by stating “Oral storytelling transforms the abstract, objective and deductive mathematics . . . into a subject surrounded by imagination, myth, and subjective meanings and feelings. It allows teachers to personalize mathematics and connect it with their own creative powers and fantasy life.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

Using Manipulatives: Manipulatives such as unifix cubes, base ten blocks, pattern blocks, Cuisenaire rods, money, tongue depressors, and so forth make the learning process interesting and fun, so students are motivated to learn. Furthermore, the more senses that students use during the teaching-learning process, the more efficient the conceptual learning. In fact, that knowledge will be more meaningful and stable if it is based on the learners’ own experiences.

The upper elementary grades mathematics curriculum will also emphasize inquiry, conceptual understanding of mathematics concepts and cooperative learning. In addition, the curriculum will also emphasize verbal and written communication of reasoning and problem solving strategies through projects such as presentations and problems of the week.

***Science Curriculum:*** PCSS curriculum will engage students in scientific enterprises, conceptual learning, inquiries, investigations, and analyses as they actively participate in exploration of the natural world. In this process, students will develop critical thinking skills and the ability to construct their own ideas. They will raise intellectual questions about their observations. As students explore nature with real materials, while highlighting the academic process of scientific inquiry, they will become familiar with scientific inquiry and the nature of science.

In addition to exposure to a rigorous science curriculum students will engage in science through interdisciplinary projects, participation in school science fair, and teams across subjects. Following the tradition of science events at the upper school, elementary school students will be exposed to events and activities that will raise their curiosity and excitement about sciences. While our teachers will take the leading role in developing age appropriate demonstrations and experiments, they will also benefit from our current high school students who are taking advanced science classes. Guest speakers and scientists will be invited to school regularly.

The goal of the science program will also be to engage students in inquiry and project based science learning that will emphasize critical thinking so that students will “think like real scientists”. As the students build their knowledge of Life Science, Earth Science and Physical Science through a curriculum that will address the MA state frameworks and a curriculum that will help to prepare students for the rigor of high school science. They will apply their understandings by developing hypotheses and designing experiments to test their ideas so that when they get to our high school they will be ready for high level science classes.

* Briefly describe the supports provided to meet the academic needs of all students, including but not limited to students with disabilities, and English language learners. **Indicate how the strategies may need to evolve during implementation of the proposed expansion.**

We believe that each child has a natural curiosity and love of learning and that each child has a unique intelligence, level of capability, and learning style. The education provided at PCSS has been helping students to develop their essential skills and ethical values, as well as to learn how to use their ultimate potential to achieve their goals. PCSS is committed to raising psychologically healthy and moral individuals with good character. Recognizing that educational success can be realized only when the student/teacher/parent triad is in harmony, PCSS maintains a successful partnership among this triad that enables our youth to reach their highest potential—intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. One of our missions is to raise young adults who know how to learn and know that education is a lifelong process.

PCSS believes that all students can be educated with appropriate teaching/learning strategies and scaffolding. Our educational philosophy is to utilize effective strategies that will differentiate the instruction for different learning styles (visual, auditory, and tactile-kinesthetic). Students are also supported through various in school and after school intervention and tutoring programs

*Strategies to Help Visual Learners*

1. Use outlines, tables, diagrams, charts, pictures, films, graphs, flashcards, head projector transparencies, and so on.

2. Highlight important ideas and concepts, and use variety of colors.

3. Sit them at the front of the classroom so they can see.

4. Use images, analogies, and metaphors.

5. Use personal anecdotes.

6. Use humor, cartoons, or jokes.

7. Use multimedia such as computers, videos, video games, and filmstrips.

8. Provide handouts or let students take their own notes.

9. Use stories and illustrations.

*Strategies to Help Auditory Learners*

1. Use verbal discussions during the lesson.

2. Use verbal analogies and storytelling for demonstration.

3. Provide verbal explanations for diagrams, charts, graphs as well as classroom tasks, tests, and homework assignments.

4. Use small-group activities to discuss material and prepare for tests.

5. Use appropriate tone of voice, pitch, speed, and other nuances.

6. Read directions aloud.

7. Let students make presentations.

8. Use direct instruction model.

9. Brainstorm ideas aloud with students before beginning a reading or writing assignment.

*Strategies to Help Tactile-Kinesthetic Learners*

1. Give frequent breaks.

2. Use bright colors to highlight reading material.

3. Use manipulative and concrete materials.

4. Use hands-on activities.

5. Let students use typewriters or word processors.

6. Use act-out and role-playing activities.

7. Use educational tools such as microscopes, calculators, and so on.

8. Use computer-interactive activities.

9. Encourage students to make their own make lists, outlines, graphs, flash cards, and concept maps.

***Special Education Support:***

PCSS believes that improving educational results for children with disabilities is essential to ensuring equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. Special education programs and services at PCSS are provided in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations, as well as the individualized education program (IEP). The school does not discriminate in admission based on a student’s disability.

PCSS’ primary approach to special education is to offer students with disabilities access to the general curriculum through a system of supports and accommodations within the general education classroom setting. To the maximum extent appropriate, PCSS educates students with disabilities in regular classrooms with non-disabled students. The IEP Team, as needed, develops teaching strategies and classroom modifications and strategies. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students with disabilities from the regular educational environment will occur only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. PCSS will continue to use this inclusion approach in the elementary school.

PCSS provides students with disabilities an equal opportunity with students in the regular education program to participate in and, where appropriate, receive credit for, non-academic, extracurricular, and ancillary programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities receive the same notices concerning school-sponsored programs, activities, and services as other students. Such programs, services, and activities include, but are not limited to, art and music, counseling services, health services, transportation, recess and physical education, field trips and other recreational activities, and school-sponsored clubs or groups.

The PCSS IEP Team consists of the Special Education Coordinator, Director of the school (or his/her designee), teachers, and parents of the student and outside evaluators as needed. A student suspected of having a disability is referred in writing to the special education teacher/coordinator for an individual evaluation and determination of eligibility for special education programs and services. Referrals may be made by any professional staff member of the school. Such referrals (a) state the reasons for the referral and include any test results, records, or reports upon which the referral is based, if any; (b) describe any attempts to remediate the student’s performance prior to the referral, including any supplementary aids or support services provided for this purpose, if any, and (c) describe the extent of parental contact or involvement prior to the referral. A copy of such referral, along with the procedural safeguards notice described in federal and state law are sent to the student’s parents in five days. The notice required by 603 CMR 28.04(1)(a) meets all of the content requirements set forth in M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, and in federal law, (b) seeks the consent of a parent for the evaluation to occur, and (c) provide the parents with the opportunity to express any concerns or provide information on the student's skills or abilities. Parents have the right to be involved in meetings that discuss the identification, evaluation, IEP development, and educational placement of their children. The school gives written notice to the parents at least five school days before the IEP Team meeting.

The IEP contains annual goals in each area of need as well as the objectives required for the student to reach each goal. The IEP states what special education and related services PCSS will provide and when and where those services will be provided. Initial evaluations, re-evaluations, and revisions of the IEP and the procedures relating thereto are the responsibility of the special education coordinator. The IEP Team reviews the IEP and the progress of each eligible student at least twice a year. Additionally, every three years, or sooner if necessary, the school will, with parental consent, conduct a full re-evaluation consistent with the requirements of federal law. The IEP process is centered on these three key points:

* The involvement and progress of each child with a disability in the general curriculum, including the addressing of the student’s unique needs that are tied to the disability,
* The involvement of parents, students, special educators, and general educators in meeting the individualized educational needs of students with disabilities,
* The critical need to prepare students with disabilities for independence and employment and other post-school activities.

To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated in regular classrooms with non-disabled students. The IEP Team, as needed, develops teaching strategies and classroom modifications and strategies. Written documentation of recommended interventions and their effects are recorded and shared with the parents/guardians. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students with disabilities from the regular educational environment occur only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Quarterly progress reports regarding each student and the IEP, as well as copies of all report cards, are sent to the student’s parents. Parents are informed of these policies in the parent-student handbook, the school website, newsletter, and in meetings with individual parents with their child.

PCSS also teaches students their civil rights and invite adult human service agency representatives to speak to student groups about provided services and eligibility requirements.

*Assessment:* The IEP developed by the team may determine that some students with disabilities cannot participate in regular state assessments. In these instances, the State Alternate Assessment will be administered as required by law. If the IEP Team determines that none of the various assessments administered by PCSS are appropriate for a given student with disabilities, PCSS may create individualized assessment instruments based on the goals and objectives of a child’s IEP and a thorough task analysis. (Among the assessment instruments that may be used are the Social Skills Rating System for social studies; the Adaptive Behavior Scale for adaptive behavior; Life Skills Instruction for All Students with Special Needs for life skills.) Ongoing assessment and review of the IEP identify specific areas of weakness for all students. These areas are addressed through additional individual and group instruction, tutorials, parent/community volunteers, student interns, and peer teaching where appropriate.

PCSS contracts with appropriately certified or licensed companies/individuals[[13]](#footnote-13) to provide the special education programs and services as indicated on each student's IEP. The counselor will provide all required counseling services to special needs students. PCSS-II will hire staff as needed to meet the needs of its special education students.

Teachers are regularly trained to understand their responsibilities in implementing IEPs and better serve students with disabilities. Training starts with a student support guideline presentation given at the beginning of the school year to teachers to clearly outline expectations. An introduction to child find process, RTI responsibilities, IEPs, related laws, and teacher responsibilities are provided through this training. Throughout school year teachers are provided with support from the special education department on differentiated instruction and strategies to be used in the classroom.

Teachers are given student support cards at the beginning of the school year and after annual meetings/evaluations as needed. Teachers are expected to read each student’s IEP and refer to the student support cards. This allows the teacher to be knowledgeable about the student’s IEP goals, understand student’s learning challenges, and learn about the modifications needed in curriculum, instruction and assessment. Teachers also participate in IEP meetings as needed.

*Program Review:* To ensure the effectiveness of the special education program, the special education department completes a self-evaluation on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. The purpose is to review the effectiveness of the academic programs for special education students as well as the special education programs effectiveness. These evaluations among other things include Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), record review for compliance, collaboration with regular education teachers in monthly department, staff and grade chair meetings, review of quarter midterm and final scores, special education progress reports, classroom observations, results of standardized testing and state assessments, and program evaluation.

***ELL Support:***

PCSS is committed to serve its English Language Learners (ELL) population and works diligently to recruit and retain ELL. All teachers at PCSS are supportive, creating a warm classroom environment where the English language is not interference, but rather becomes a part of the students’ normal functioning in the academic learning process. PCSS supports and accommodates ELL by providing sheltered English immersion classes and state recommended number of hours of pull out ESL instruction. Annual ACCESS and MCAS scores are used to measure student success. This model will continue at the elementary school, but of course will be adjusted for student needs.

Teachers are notified about which students are ELL and how to accommodate them on student information cards. The SEI classrooms are observed by the ELL coordinator, and feedback is given to the teachers. Observations focus on methods of instruction, materials, teaching interaction and student response.

Professional development is also delivered by the ELL coordinator to support teachers in improving instructional practice and student achievement. Teacher training starts with an introduction to ELL, teacher responsibilities, and related law at the beginning of the school year. Throughout the school year ELL coordinator supports teachers individually but also conducts whole staff training sessions. ELL coordinator regularly interacts with teachers through department level, grade level, and staff meetings.

The ESL curriculum at PCSS is based on the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) standards. In addition, it is designated to provide students with at least the minimum number of state suggested hours of direct ESL instruction and the opportunity to participate fully in the academic goals and mission of PCSS.

PCSS identifies Limited English Proficient (LEP) students through a Home Language Survey (HLS). After receiving the HLS there is a preliminary evaluation of the student’s academic history. The academic history is assessed using the academic records from within or outside the United States, course grades in relation to the students grade level, if they indicate the lack of progress is due to limited English acquisitions and information on everyday classroom performance.

If, based on the answers to the Home Language Survey and the review of the academic history it is determined that the student is of foreign birth or ancestry and comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken, the student is be given the ACCESS Placement Test by the ELL coordinator. The score is used to determine the initial tier placement for English language assessment and assist in determining the student’s initial English language proficiency (ELP) level. Multiple sources in addition to the ACCESS test are used to make decisions for the education plans of students.

In addition, teachers may refer a student to the ELL coordinator. Based on the test results, students receive pull out ESL instruction and sheltered English immersion content classes. Parents are informed within thirty days of enrollment of their child’s participation in the ELL program, and they are also informed when the ELL schedule changes or when the child is considered to be FLEP. In addition, ELL students are provided with the same opportunities as other students and they participate in sports, clubs, and after school academy at PCSS.

PCSS educates LEP students by providing English Language Development (ELD) instruction and the New WIDA in the quantities recommended by the DESE and through language immersion in content classes. PCSS also provides directly, or makes referrals to, appropriate support services that may be needed by LEP students to achieve and maintain a satisfactory level of academic performance. Such services may include individual counseling, after-school English immersion programs, one-on-one tutoring, ESL mentorship, home visits, and parental counseling. Teachers are notified about which students are LEPs and how to accommodate them through student information cards. The ELL coordinator observes the SEI classrooms and gives feedback to the teachers. The ELL coordinator also delivers professional development sessions to support teachers in improving instructional practices and student achievement.

PCSS ensures that LEP students are not excluded from curricular and extracurricular activities based on their inability to speak and understand the language of instruction and that LEP students are not assigned to special education because of their lack of English proficiency. Teaching students to understand content is (and should be) the central focus and ultimate goal of any subject, especially in science and mathematics. In mathematics, for example, "the best teaching practices are those that assess what students understand in a range of mathematical problem settings and then develop those understandings to their mathematical end points.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

It is important to keep in mind that "many of the difficulties experienced by under-prepared students cannot be attributed only to, or explained by, the second language use but must be understood in terms of a broader socio-cultural perspective.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Differences in academic performance result from the level of preparedness and the quality of the student’s prior education. In order to meet the needs of every student, the educational program for each student will be designed with the language proficiency level in mind.

The ELL coordinator and teachers meet on a regular basis during grade level meetings to plan strategically for the needs of their students. The ELL coordinator trains teachers to meet the needs of LEP students and communicate with students designated as LEP students. The ELL coordinator also trains and assigns tutors to help LEP students reinforce their English language skills in the school’s after-school program. The ELL coordinator collaborates with the special education coordinator to meet the needs of LEP special education students, who receive ESL services in accordance with their IEPs. Teachers may participate in ESL courses and professional development through the district, local universities, and online resources.

The ELD instruction is provided by a licensed ELL teacher. ELD classes are structured to encourage active engagement of ELL students. The lessons include: language objectives based on the WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment) English Language Development Standards; content objectives based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks; frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion between teacher and students and among students; grade appropriate supplementary materials; pictures and visuals; and instruction linking academic concepts to students’ prior learning. Students effectively engage in the general curriculum of the school. We provide many opportunities for students to practice and apply new language and demonstrate their mastery of English.

PCSS follows a plan of structured English language transitional immersion. LEP students receive the same academic content as non-LEP students do. All instruction is in English; however, the level of English used for instruction is modified for any LEP student, if necessary. After-school hours are used for more intensive English language instruction for LEP students (as well as for other individualized support for students with different needs). The ELL coordinator administers the after-school English immersion program.

A quality sheltered content instruction is instrumental in providing support to LEP students. Some of the strategies that are used by our teachers include:

* Providing frequent opportunities for students to use the language, especially in small groups or pairs.
* Providing specific purposes for reading (read for specific information, read for main idea, read for vocabulary)
* Providing an overview of the reading assignment with key vocabulary defined
* Providing scaffolding (modeling, guided practice, and independent practice)
* Making both the content and the language objectives explicit
* Wait time - teachers will give students ample time to process what has been said, and then formulate a response
* Linking new material to background knowledge and past learning (discussing what students already know)
* Creating context by previewing new material
* Supplementary materials - graphic organizers, note outlines where they can listen and fill in the blanks during class, pictures, visuals, etc.
* Using anchor charts – charts with new words that are kept on the wall for students to refer to during class or charts of information that students already know
* Feedback on language areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as well as on content.
* Explicit vocabulary instruction
* Activities that require all the language skills (Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening)
* Lesson plans with language goals as well as content goals
* Explicit explanations of background information needed to fully understand a concept
* Explicit explanation of idiomatic language and classroom expressions
* Frequent checks for deep understanding, not just asking, "Do you understand or Are there any questions."
* Asking students to answer in full sentences.

Students with an “A-“ grade or better in ELA courses are asked to participate in the education of LEP students via the Mentorship Program. These students help LEP students during tutoring sessions as well as throughout the day. They are encouraged to communicate with LEP students as much as possible to create an English-speaking friendly environment to speed the integration of LEP students in the school as well as practice what they learn in their English immersion program.

PCSS also evaluates each LEP student’s performance in academic content areas to measure the student’s progress in core subjects. If an LEP student fails to show appropriate progress in these academic areas and in teacher assessment of classroom work, modifications to the instructional program may be made for individual students. In addition, PCSS looks at disaggregated data for LEP students as a group to evaluate the progress these students are making in the acquisition of the English language and in core subjects. This data provides information as to whether broader program modifications are necessary and/or additional professional development needs to be provided to our teaching staff.

Parents whose English proficiency is limited receive notices and information from the school in their native language so that PCSS is able to encourage the participation of all parents, regardless of their home language, in the PCSS community. Teachers will be aware of diverse languages and cultures in their classrooms so that they may help the literacy development of their students and be better able to select those instructional activities that promote learning. Teachers are encouraged to "engage in the interactions with their students in ways that would be culturally and linguistically congruent.”[[16]](#footnote-16) "Ultimately, teacher attitude and behavior is vital to helping LEP students succeed,” argues Gil Valdez.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Program evaluation plays a crucial role in the quality of the program provided. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the ELL program, the ELL Coordinator analyzes student progress, ESL curriculum and instruction, SEI instruction, professional development, and communication with content teachers, administrators, and families.

While focusing on student progress the self-evaluation checks the following items:

* Students are progressing in all four-language areas.
* Students are appropriately grouped by grade and ELP level.
* Students receive the state recommended number of ESL pull out classes.
* Students receive SEI instruction in all content classes.
* Extra support is available to students after school.
* Students show evidence of assimilating into the culture.
* Parents are made aware of students’ participation in and progress in ESL.

While focusing on the curriculum and instruction portion, self-evaluation checks whether:

* Curriculum is appropriate for ELL students based on grade and level.
* Teacher has lesson plans based on WIDA standards.
* Teacher has effective student centered lessons including explicit instructions, sufficient student talk time, adjusting for different learning styles, checking for understanding, reviewing concepts, and closure.
* Content teachers have received support and professional development for SEI.
* ELL director communicates with content teachers about student progress.
* Students take the ACCESS as required by the state.

With the expansion we expect the level of services to increase in the development of foundational skills. Similarly the identification of students at the entry level will be crucial therefore there will be a great focus on the child find process for the elementary grades. More guidance, direction and coping skills will need to be reinforced at the lower grades compared to the services provided at the higher grades. Proficiency in the literacy, writing and numeracy skills will be crucial for the success of all students including students with disabilities and ELL students. A focus on life skills will also be added to the curriculum for the lower grades. With the expansion of grade levels student support services and ELL departments will also enlarge as need for services increase.

**Culture and Family Engagement**

* Briefly describe the strategies used to create a safe school environment, and to address the physical, social, emotional, and health needs of your students. **Indicate how the strategies may need to evolve during implementation of the proposed expansion.**

PCSS provides a safe and welcoming school environment. Safety has been one of the reasons why so many parents show interest in PCSS. The safety of our students starts by ensuring a school culture that promotes respect and acceptance. Through the work of the Dean of Students department and School Adjustment Counselor high behavioral expectations are conveyed to our students. Bullying Intervention and Prevention programs ensure bullying is addressed before it even starts. Through assemblies and character education program students are educated on acceptable behaviors and conflict resolution.

Our school safety committee, composed of teachers and administrators, meet regularly to go over safety concerns. The committee reviews the building conditions, safety procedures and makes recommendations. Monthly fire drills and yearly lock downs are conducted to be ready for unfortunate events. We arrange yearly visits from the Fire and Police departments to ensure effective collaboration.

Our School Adjustment Counselor provides social and emotional support to our students. Moreover, several community health organizations are invited to school as need for intervention arises. School physical education classes and athletic program provides an opportunity to our students for a healthy lifestyle. Life choices and consequences are reviewed through health classes.

Our school nurse provides on-site health care services that comply with diagnostic testing requirements. She supervises the disbursement of medication, treats students who are ill, treats students who are injured, and trains faculty and staff in first aid. The nurse is also responsible for all record keeping and correspondence related to these responsibilities. She does Anaphylaxis and EPI-pen training every year and develops and updates action plans. We also work with the appropriate local health department and other appropriate organizations to provide health education on topics such as personal hygiene, smoking, drug and alcohol abuse.

With the expansion to the lower grade PCSS will increase and modify safety procedures to ensure that age appropriate techniques are implemented. School visitation policy and campus safety will also be reviewed. With the addition of younger grades training on basic health skills will be an area of focus. An emphasis will be placed on training and readiness for allergic reactions. With the increase in student numbers our counseling department will grow as student needs rise.

* Briefly describe how the school develops strong working relationships with families/guardians in order to support students’ academic progress and social and emotional well-being. **Indicate how the strategies may need to evolve during implementation of the proposed expansion.**

As mentioned, parental support has been vital to the success of our program. We believe that high student attendance will be a result of high family involvement in the school’s programs. PCSS keeps parents engaged through several activities. This starts with keeping parents up to date with the progress of their children and keeping the lines of communication open. Teachers communicate with parents through various ways throughout the school year. Parents are provided with eight (interim and final) report cards. Moreover, an interactive, password-protected, web-based school database system provides parents access to their children’s records. Parents are able to monitor attendance, grades, and class averages, discipline, assessments through the use of this system.

Parents are encouraged to come to school for conferences to seek help and guidance on academic, social and emotional issues. Students who are at risk of failing are especially monitored and parents are invited for individual conferences with the Dean of Academics each quarter to develop and monitor action plans. Similar meetings happen for parents of students with social emotional issues with the School Adjustment Counselor and Dean of Students department.

Secondly, PCSS organizes various celebratory and informative events to bring parents to campus. One of PCSS’ unique features is the home visit program. We have been conducting home visits, especially with parents and guardians who have lower levels of communication with school and teachers because of their work schedules. Usually low-income families work longer hours in hourly wage jobs, which may prevent them from attending school activities and teacher meetings. Home visits contribute to building a community, learning about the student, learning about the family, increasing parental involvement, and providing parents with additional means of interacting with their child’s school.[[18]](#footnote-18)

While building on these programs PCSS will expand its efforts to engage its parents with the addition of the elementary school grades. Some sample goals of these programs will be as follows: (a) Ask parents to have their children describe (in detail, daily) what they did in school; (b) Give an assignment that requires children to ask their parents questions; (c) Ask parents to watch a specific television program with their children and discuss it afterward; (d) Suggest ways for parents to include their children in any of their own educationally enriching activities; (e) Suggest games or group activities related to the children’s schoolwork that can be played by either parent and child or by child and siblings; (f) Suggest how parents can use home materials and activities to stimulate their children’s interest in reading, math and other subjects. Parents will be encouraged to volunteer for our DEAR program, trips and other school events. Open house sessions will be used as a way to bring parents together to discuss any changes that might take place throughout the year. Teachers will be asked to send home weekly/monthly newsletters that will keep the parents up to date on what has been going on in the classroom. More events will be arranged to bring students and family members together. Trainings for parents will be arranged on multiple issues pertaining to child development and parental skills.

**Capacity**

* Describe how the staff will implement the request effectively and evaluate its success. Indicate the individuals involved throughout the process of implementation, and the systems in place for decision-making and communication among all members of the school community.

As soon as the approval is granted by the DESE we will form a K-6 task force for the implementation phase. We will be working with Neighborhood House Charter School throughout this process to ensure effective and successful implementation for a high quality elementary school. Along the road of implementation we will evaluate our success through benchmarks established. The ultimate success of implementation will come with the student outcomes and parent interest to our new elementary campus.

The major amendment process is spearheaded by our CEO, Barish Icin and Executive Director, Sanela Jonuz. They have been working with Kate Scott and Emily Pratt Davidson from the NHCS. During the preparation we visited additional successful charter schools to observe and receive feedback including North Star Academy Charter School of Newark (a nationally recognized Uncommon School).

After the approval is granted we will involve more individuals for the planning and preparation phase that will lay down the work for school opening. The group will continue to meet during the implementation phase to ensure a successful first year and monitor progress. Ms. Sanela Jonuz, who has a background in elementary education, will lead the work for planning and implementation phase. We also plan to hire an administrative assistant to help Ms. Jonuz and follow-up day to day work for the elementary campus. Other staff members that will be part of the process will include our CFO, Chief Development Officer, Dean of Academics, Department Heads (ELA, math, science, and history), Special Education Director, and ELL Director. While the majority of the people involved will provide feedback and consultation there will be a smaller inner group that will follow up the work to ensure effective implementation (mainly our CEO, ED, CFO and CDO). While we plan to meet weekly, inner group monthly meetings will continue for the larger K-6 task force. While the action plan will be discussed during the meetings milestones for key implementation items will derive the evaluation. We will prepare a dashboard to monitor and evaluate the success of the implementation that will specify milestones for academics, operations, staffing, facility and finances.

Our partner, the NHCS, will be involved during this process. While we will greatly benefit from the materials they will provide Ms. Emily Pratt Davidson will be part of our K-6 task force. She will be instrumental not only in providing feedback but also with helping us evaluate the success of the implementation.

The larger PCSS community has already been involved in the process leading up to the amendment application. Our parents, who have continuously been urging us to open an elementary school, attended information sessions at the school, wrote letters and collected signatures. They provided us valuable feedback through this process. We will continue to seek input from our parents with information sessions after the approval of the amendment.

Our teachers are excited about the opportunity to start educating Pioneers when they are little as indicated in some sample letters included in the appendix. They have also been urging us to accept students in lower grades to be able to prevent achievement gaps that are built over the elementary school grades. Our teachers will continue to provide feedback when the amendment is approved. Grade and department meetings (PCSS holds alternating teacher meetings in Wednesdays) will be utilized from time to time to seek feedback from our teachers. Their input will be especially useful for the curriculum work to ensure a complete K-12 curriculum.

* Provide an action plan for implementation. Describe the proposed strategies that will lead to a successful implementation of the proposed changes. Include: a timeline, action(s) to be taken, designated point person, and start date and projected completion date.

We are committed to ensure a successful implementation of the proposed grade expansion. Our Board of Trustees and staff is anxious to start working on the expansion plans and have been waiting for this opportunity for the last couple of years. Our Board has proved itself by successfully starting and governing our current school and successfully opening a second school (PCSS-II) to establish the PCSS Network. The resources available at our current school, the experience we have had so far and the partnership with the Neighborhood House Charter School will be valuable parts of this process.

While we would like to begin the expansion of the school during 2016-2017 school year, we realize that this depends on the approval of this amendment. Therefore, instead of specific years, we use the following system. Year 1 refers to the calendar year in which classes start (fall of 2016); i.e. June, Year 1 refers to the June before classes start; October, Year 1 refers to the October after classes start. Year 0 refers to the calendar year before classes start

(2015-2016 school year).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Actions** | **Point Person** | **Start Date** | **End date** |
| **Student Recruitment and Admission:** |  |  |  |
| Organize student recruitment activities and advertisements. | ED | November, Year 0 | March, Year 1 |
| Organize open houses and information sessions | ED | November, Year 0 | March, Year 1 |
| Conduct admissions lottery & establish wait-list | CFO | March, Year 1 | March, Year 1 |
| Inform families, confirm acceptances, request student records | Administrative Assistant | March, Year 1 | June, Year 1 |
| Design and send out informational materials to parents of admitted students | Administrative Assistant | June, Year 1 | August, Year 1 |
| Organize orientation meetings with parents | ED | June, Year 1 | August, Year 1 |
| **Facility** |  |  |  |
| Finalize school facility | CEO | March, Year 1 | June, Year 1 |
| Negotiate and sign lease | CEO | March, Year 1 | June, Year 1 |
| Prepare the facility for instruction | CFO | March, Year 1 | August, Year 1 |
| Purchase equipment and furniture for offices and classrooms | CFO | March, Year 1 | August, Year 1 |
| **Operational** |  |  |  |
| Finalize student/parent handbook | ED | July, Year 1 | July, Year 1 |
| Contract janitorial services | CFO | June, Year 1 | July, Year 1 |
| **Financial Management** |  |  |  |
| Prepare school budget | CFO | June, Year 0 | March, Year 1 |
| Integrate new school finances with existing business office | CFO | March, Year 1 | June, Year 1 |
| **Community** |  |  |  |
| Expand parent-teacher organization to include elementary school | ED | August, Year 1 | September, Year 1 |
| Train staff on home-visit protocol | ED | August, Year 1 | August, Year 1 |
| **Personnel** |  |  |  |
| Recruit staff | CEO | March, Year 1 | June, Year 1 |
| Staff orientation and training | ED | August, Year 1 | August, Year 1 |
| **Curriculum** |  |  |  |
| Develop scope, goals and standards for each department | ED & Dean of Academics | March, Year 1 | June, Year 1 |
| Finalize the curriculum | ED & Dean of Academics | June, Year 1 | June, Year 1 |
| Develop or purchase assessment system and curriculum materials | Dean of Academics & CFO | March, Year 1 | July, Year 1 |
| **Health and Safety** |  |  |  |
| Acquire student medical records | School Nurse | March, Year 1 | June, Year 1 |
| Purchase medical supplies | CFO | June, Year 1 | August, Year 1 |
| **Special Education & ELL** |  |  |  |
| Receive student records and identify special education and ELL students | Special Education Coordinator & ELL Coordinator | March, Year 1 | July, Year 1 |
| Perform assessments and identify special education & ELL students | Special Education Coordinator & ELL Coordinator | August, Year 1 | September, Year 1 |
| Develop IEPs | Special Education Coordinator | August, Year 1 | September, Year 1 |
| Contract providers based on student needs | Special Education Coordinator | June, Year 1 | September, Year 1 |
| Purchase specific texts and materials | CFO | June, Year 1 | September, Year 1 |
| **Transportation** |  |  |  |
| Determine transportation needs | CFO | March, Year 1 | June, Year 1 |
| Arrange transportation services | CFO | June, Year 1 | June, Year 1 |
| **Food Services** |  |  |  |
| Identify free/reduced price meal students | CFO | June, Year 1 | August, Year 1 |
| Accept proposals, select vendor, sign contract | CFO | June, Year 1 | July, Year 1 |
| **Governance** |  |  |  |
| Approve and submit the amendment | CFO & BoT | June, Year 0 | August, Year 0 |
| Formalize subcommittees as needed for the elementary school | BoT | March, Year 1 | March, Year 1 |
| Monitor implementation  | BoT | March, Year 1 | August, Year 2 |

* Provide a complete staffing chart and detailed narrative staffing plan to support the planning and implementation of the proposed increase in enrollment and/or grade span.

The K-6 expansion will build on the existing PCSS and utilize our current resources initially for planning and implementation purposes. Once the amendment is approved we will proceed hiring new staff members. With facility options available we will be operating two campuses when we reach to K-12 status. Ideally we will have separate K-8 and 9-12 campuses (depending on the circumstances different grade configurations may be considered for the campuses). When the process completed we will have a director for each campus. Initially our current ED will spearhead the process of establishing our elementary grades. As enrollment increases we will divide the duties among the directors. A lot of the initial support services (counseling, health, custodial etc) will be provided by our current staff initially. As enrollment increases we will hire new support personnel for the second campus. An administrative assistant will be hired as soon as the amendment is approved to assist the ED and follow up day to day clerical issues during the planning phase to enable ED to focus on important issues. The network office will provide additional support to the new campus.

The enrollment schedule envisions full enrollment for grades K-6 in three years. We expect to hire 30 teachers (11 of them during the first year) and a 13 paraprofessionals (9 during the first year for grades K-2). The number includes anticipated enlargement of the special education and ELL departments. As enrollment increases responsibilities of the Dean of Students and Dean of Academics will also be divided among the campuses with the addition of new deans.

Recruitment Projection for K-6 during the First Three Years

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | 1st year | 2nd year | 3rd year |
| Student population | 180 | 360 | 420 |
| Director | 0.5 | 1 | 1 |
| Administrative Asst. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Dean of Academics | 0.5 | 1 | 1 |
| Dean of Students | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Classroom Teachers | 10 | 23 | 28 |
| SpEd Teacher | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| ELL Teacher | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Paraprofessional | 9 | 15 | 17 |
| Nurse | 0.5 | 1 | 1 |
| Counselor | 0.5 | 1 | 1 |
| Custodian | 0.5 | 1 | 1 |

\*0.5 FTE indicates sharing of our current staff with the additional grades. 1 FTE indicates new hires for the second campus.

* If the school contracts with an EMO, describe how the EMO will support the planning and implementation of the proposed amendment.

Not applicable

**Governance**

* [OPTIONAL] Schools may choose to summarize briefly within their request board activities that demonstrate effective governance, including compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and examples of corrective action in response to identified challenges. The summary may include specific achievements over the most recent charter term; analyses of stakeholder satisfaction surveys; board and school leadership evaluations; board of trustees’ self-evaluation; and strategic planning. The summary should provide additional context to any recent circumstances in the school’s history involving these areas of the school’s performance, including charter conditions, probation, recent amendments, performance against CSPC as reported in site visit reports, or charter renewal.

During the last eight years the Board has successfully prepared sound budgets, monitored school’s finances, conducted long-term and strategic planning, ensured compliance with applicable laws and evaluated the overall program. The PCSS Board of Trustees has played a significant role in starting, developing, guiding, and supervising a very successful charter school that focuses on math and science education. PCSS has been recognized for its strength when it comes to the academic program by the DESE during charter renewal process and by the Governor for MCAS performance (PCSS is a 2011 Governor’s Commendation School). More recently the PCSS Board of Trustees was recognized as a proven provider and entrusted with the responsibility to open a second school. The Board has been instrumental in the successful opening and operation of the PCSS-II in 2013.

Under their leadership PCSS designed policies, procedures, and systems to ensure progress and accountability. Under the guidance of the Board of Trustees PCSS improved its performance every single year. They played a key role not only in keeping the school academically strong but also focusing continuously on the success of the science program. At various meetings Board members questioned and guided the administration to improve the science program to engage students. The DESE recognized the leadership of the Board through various accountability visits/reports and commented “The PCSS board of trustees is dedicated to school’s mission and provides oversight of the school’s academic programs, performance, and financial conditions.” Moreover, the renewal inspection team found that “The board understood the mission and were dedicated to continued progress in the school’s mathematics, science, and character education; to rigorous academic expectations, to family contact, and to preparing students for college”.

The financial well-being of the school and adequate facility options have also been on the Board’s agenda. Through implementing a monthly reporting procedure Board members closely followed the cash flow of the school and expenditure levels. The Board played a key role in securing the current facility and continues the search of additional space.

The School has been operating under annual surpluses since FY09. During this time period independent financial audits have been free of findings. The school also demonstrated its ability to fund its operation with no reliance on private fundraising. Moreover, “The board’s policy manual is comprehensive, and the board has in place a procedure for changing a policy or initiating a new policy”. Board members have clear priorities for PCSS that especially focus on academic performance.

The PCSS Board of Trustees ensure that the school is managed effectively. To that effect “PCSS had established and maintained clear and well understood systems for decision-making and communication at the school.” The school has also created a collaborative administrative team. While school leaders have clearly defined roles, they work together to make curriculum, program, budget, personnel, and other important decisions.

* Describe how the board of trustees will implement the request effectively and evaluate its success. Provide details of the board’s role in planning, and monitoring progress of the expansion.

The PCSS Board of Trustees (BoT) has been governing a very successful charter school and recently completed the challenge of opening a new school in Saugus. They are now ready to take the challenge of expanding the flagship school to serve lower grades. This is a long term dream they have had and that they have been trying to make a reality. The Board has been involved in the planning process of this amendment application. Through meetings members provided feedback. Moreover, our chair, Mr. Dogan has also been involved with certain sections of the application. The K-6 has been an ongoing project of the Board.

The Board will continue to monitor the progress during the implementation phase. The Board will rely on the expertise it developed over the years through the successful governance of PCSS Network. They have been governing a successful high performing charter school that is faithful to its charter, financially sound, and organizationally viable. They have gone through an extensive renewal process with flying colors. Recently, as a proven provider, they have obtained the approval to open a second school for Saugus and completed the first year of operation successfully. The Board will use its experiences and resources to implement the K-6 expansion successfully.

To ensure the quality of the network and consistency of practices the Board will regularly evaluate the implementation and success of the K-6 expansion through the CEO. A dashboard with milestones will be established to monitor and evaluate progress. With the opening of the new elementary campus the Board will focus (as it does with the upper school) among other things on student performance on internal and external assessments, financial reports showing projected and actual expenditures as well as the cash flow, annual independent audits, student recruitment, retention and attrition, and staff recruitment and retention.

* Provide approved board minutes for the twelve months prior to the submission of this amendment request on August 1. (If the school has submitted any of the requested board minutes previously to the Department, please submit only the minutes that have not yet been collected by the Department.)

Please see the Appendix for approved Board meeting minutes.

**Finance**

* [OPTIONAL] Schools may choose to summarize briefly within their request board activities that demonstrate effective financial management, as well as compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The summary may include information regarding real estate acquisition, loan agreements and debt repayment, and fundraising, as applicable. The summary should provide additional context to any recent circumstances in the school’s history involving these areas of the school’s performance.

PCSS has also been a financial success story. We have been able to provide a high quality education without relying on fundraising (PCSS is 100% sustainable through tuition revenue). The school has been operating with surpluses and has a sizable contingency funds that can be spent on projects or during unfortunate events. The cash flow of PCSS has been equally impressive and enables the school to support operations and academic programs. PCSS has been able to stay financially sound through effective management of resources and a disciplined approach to expenditures, while providing support for its programs.

PCSS has had a very sound and successful financial model to date. At PCSS, the Board sets the goals for fiscal planning annually and reviews the results on a monthly basis. The CFO goes over the financial reports at the monthly board meetings to clarify any questions or issues that are raised. The CFO and CEO set up and maintain the school’s financial systems by scrupulously following PCSS Fiscal Policies and Procedures. The CFO generates monthly standard financial reports which include forecasts of revenues and expenses for the remaining months and the actual variances to the approved annual budget. PCSS has been in compliance with applicable laws and regulations and its independent financial audits have been free of material findings.

* The Department will review the school’s financial history, including the [Financial Dashboard](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/dashboard/) at [http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/dashboard/,](http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/dashboard/) as part of the amendment request. Schools should explain any unique circumstances related to published school data, and corrective actions taken to address challenges in any of these areas of school performance within their request.

As the Financial Dashboard indicates PCSS is financially very sound.

* Describe the financial resources that are necessary to implement the school’s expansion, including the projected sources of revenue that will ensure the fiscal viability of the school and the successful implementation of the proposed change(s). Describe contingency planning for potential challenges in cash flow or budget shortfalls due to lower than anticipated student enrollment or other financial challenges in the early years of expansion, include specific strategies.

Pioneer Charter School of Science has a balanced budget with sufficient resources allocated for necessary programs. The primary source of revenue is per-student tuition disbursement from the local districts. These tuition payments are necessary and sufficient to finance the school’s expansion. Although not as critical, we would expect to receive certain federal grants and entitlements such as Title I, Title II-A, and IDEA. Another part of the revenues is the transportation reimbursement. In our financial planning, we are giving ourselves enough flexibility to accommodate the delayed reimbursement mechanism for transportation services.

In case of potential challenges in cash flow or budget shortfalls PCSS has enough surplus to weather the storm and finance the shortfall through its resources. PCSS has 1,527,000 in unrestricted net assets, which can cover approximately 117-student shortfall at 13,000 tuition rate per student. Moreover, PCSS has a line of credit that can also be utilized in cases of contingency.

* Provide financial projections performed in planning for the proposed expansion. Financial projections should reflect both immediate and long-term considerations that the board and school leadership have identified in implementation of the proposed amendment. Provide a detailed narrative explaining the financial forecasts, and the underlying assumptions.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **FY16** | **FY17** | **FY18** |
| **Ordinary Income/Expense** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | **Income** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **4001 · Tuition** | 2,340,000 | 4,680,000 | 5,460,000 |
|  |  |  | **4003 · Federal SPED** | 30,000 | 50,000 | 60,000 |
|  |  |  | **4005 · Federal - Title I per student** | 45,000 | 85,000 | 113,000 |
|  |  |  | **4006 · Teacher Quality Grant** | 5,000 | 5,000 | 7,000 |
|  |  |  | **4012 · Program Fees** | 10,000 | 15,000 | 20,000 |
|  |  |  | **4014 · Transportation Reimbursement** | 25,000 | 40,000 | 55,000 |
|  |  | **Total Income** |  |  | **2,455,000** | **4,875,000** | **5,715,000** |
|  | **Gross Profit** |  |  |  | **2,455,000** | **4,875,000** | **5,715,000** |
|  |  | **Expense** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **Salaries** |  |  | **1,007,500** | **2,078,760** | **2,479,273** |
|  |  |  | **6100 · General & Administrative** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | **6131 · Network Expense** | 90,000 | 171,000 | 189,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6103 · Accounting Fee** | 12,000 | 15,000 | 18,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6104 · Legal Fees** | 20,000 | 30,000 | 35,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6105 · Payroll Service** | 15,000 | 25,000 | 30,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6121 · Other Professional Services** | 15,000 | 30,000 | 36,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6106 · Computer Software Expense** | 12,000 | 20,000 | 23,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6107 · Office Supplies and Materials** | 13,000 | 20,000 | 25,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6108 · Prof. Devlpmt for Admin-Board** | 10,000 | 20,000 | 28,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6109 · Dues ,Subscriptions and License** | 6,193 | 11,306 | 14,483 |
|  |  |  |  | **6111 · Advertisement & Recruitment** | 25,000 | 30,000 | 45,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6112 · Travel Expenses For Staff/Board** | 2,500 | 10,000 | 15,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6113 · Bank Charges** | 1,500 | 1,500 | 1,500 |
|  |  |  |  | **6114 · Computer Hardware Expense** | 5,000 | 15,000 | 20,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6115 · Network Upgrade & Repair** | 22,000 | 30,000 | 35,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6117 · Postage and Delivery** | 3,150 | 6,480 | 7,350 |
|  |  |  |  | **6118 · Printing & Reproduction** | 3,000 | 10,000 | 15,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6119 · Outreach** | 3,000 | 15,000 | 25,000 |
|  |  |  | **Total 6100 · General & Administrative** | 258,343 | 460,286 | 562,333 |
|  |  |  | **6200 · Instructional Services** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | **6204 · Technology and Computer Suppl.** | 45,000 | 75,000 | 85,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6205 · Instructional Supplies** | 77,540 | 145,000 | 163,500 |
|  |  |  |  | **6206 · Testing&Assessment** | 10,000 | 18,000 | 25,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6208 · Dues, Licenses, & Subscriptions** | 4,500 | 9,000 | 15,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6209 · Professional Dev.Inst.** | 10,000 | 20,000 | 35,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6210 · SPED Outside Consulting** | 23,780 | 48,000 | 80,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6211 · Instructional Software** | 12,000 | 20,000 | 30,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6213 · Substitute teachers** | 5,000 | 10,000 | 12,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6214 · Salaries Bonus** | 25,000 | 50,000 | 70,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6215 · Tuition Reimbursement** | 5,000 | 25,000 | 35,000 |
|  |  |  | **Total 6200 · Instructional Services** | 217,820 | 420,000 | 550,500 |
|  |  |  | **6300 · Other Student Services.** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | **6302 · Health Services** | 15,000 | 12,000 | 12,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6303 · Student Transportation** | 118,800 | 178,200 | 237,600 |
|  |  |  |  | **6305 · Other Student/School EXPENSES** | 15,300 | 30,600 | 35,700 |
|  |  |  |  | **6306 · Atheletic Service** | 15,000 | 25,000 | 35,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6307 · Field Trips** | 15,000 | 20,000 | 25,000 |
|  |  |  | **Total 6300 · Other Student Services.** | 179,100 | 265,800 | 345,300 |
|  |  |  | **6400 · Operation and Maint.of Plant** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | **6402 · Utilities** | 32,700 | 59,700 | 75,700 |
|  |  |  |  | **6413 · Plant Maintenance** | 64,000 | 106,500 | 111,500 |
|  |  |  |  | **6421 · Rent/Lease of Bldgs & Grounds** | 300,000 | 540,000 | 660,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6422 · Rent/Lease of Equipment** | 14,500 | 29,000 | 31,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6423 · Renovation/Construction** | 35,000 | 45,000 | 50,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6430 · Equipment & Furniture** | 115,000 | 180,000 | 70,000 |
|  |  |  | **6400 · Operation and Maint.of Plant** | 597,200 | 1,020,200 | 1,063,200 |
|  |  |  | **6500 · Fixed Charges** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | **6501 · Payroll Taxes** | 40,000 | 60,000 | 59,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6510 · Benefits** | 100,000 | 217,000 | 263,000 |
|  |  |  |  | **6525 · Insurance** | 15,000 | 20,000 | 25,000 |
|  |  |  | **Total 6500 · Fixed Charges** | 155,000 | 297,000 | 347,000 |
|  |  | **Total Expense** |  | 2,414,963 | 4,542,046 | 5,347,606 |
| **Net Ordinary Income** |  |  | 40,037 | 332,954 | 367,394 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **40,037** | **332,954** | **367,394** |

Notes:

Budget only shows figures for the K-6 expansion, it does not include numbers from the current 7-12 school.

Tuition was calculated conservatively, assuming that tuition rate will remain 13,000 per student over three years.

Administration includes all administrative expenses including but not limited to legal expenses, supplies, technology for admin, and network payment for services provided.

Operations includes all operational and facility expenses including rent.

The expense figures are calculated based on the expenses incurred at the recently opened PCSS-II with the exception of facility expenses. As a newly opened school PCSS-II figures provide a guideline about the expenses to be incurred for a brand new school. The numbers are adjusted for the student levels of the K-6.

Salary assumptions:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|   |  Rate  |
| Director |  $80,000.00  |
| Administrative Asst. |  $35,000.00  |
| Dean of Academics |  $75,000.00  |
| Dean of Students |  $55,000.00  |
| Classroom Teachers |  $41,000.00  |
| SpEd Teacher |  $45,000.00  |
| ELL Teacher |  $45,000.00  |
| Paraprofessional |  $30,000.00  |
| Nurse |  $55,000.00  |
| Counselor |  $50,000.00  |
| Custodian |  $35,000.00  |

2% salary raise is assumed for both year 2 and year 3.

* Describe the facility that will be used to meet the school’s needs and how it is accessible to individuals with physical disabilities and able to accommodate all students, and if modifications will be required. Indicate if the current facility will accommodate the expansion, or if additional space and/or renovations will be required.

PCSS has been working with Burgess Properties to identify a viable school facility for the expansion. Two options are identified for the expansion project. The first one is a two story building located on 9 Plymouth Street Everett. The building is about 55,000 square foot and has ample amount of parking space. The second option is located on 801 Broadway (or 20 Gledhill Ave) Everett. This property consists of two separate buildings, a church building and a parish center. Both options will require modifications to serve as school buildings.

We intend to work with Charter School Development Corporation (CSDC), a Maryland based non-profit organization that helps charter schools with their facility issues, in the acquisition and modification of the building. PCSS has successfully worked in partnership with CSDC for its permanent facility in Saugus (a brand new building that is partially financed through MassDevelopment). We have reached out to representatives of both buildings and consulted CSDC regarding both options. The facility will be acquired in a similar way where CSDC will be the owner of the building and lease the facility to PCSS. We currently work on a deal that will reflect the gradual expansion. We expect the rent to be about 15% to 17% of tuition revenue initially and go down to 10% levels when full enrollment is reached.

As soon as we receive our approval we will finalize the talks and make our offer for the properties mentioned above through CSDC. Plans for both facilities will meet the needs of the school and will be accessible to individuals with physical disabilities.

We will consider a third option as a contingency in the case of any unforeseen challenges or delays. When PCSS-II was approved we had difficulty in preparing a facility for the opening of the school on time and had to start at a temporary location, 548 Broadway Everett, owned by the city of Everett. This is an empty school building (more than 300,000 square foot) that has been vacant for a while. PCSS prepared part of the first floor (about 23,000 square foot) for instruction with enough classroom and office space. This will be a temporary contingency option that can be entertained in case of a facility challenge.

* Describe how transportation services are provided to all eligible students, and if modifications will be required. Please note: charter schools must notify the district(s) providing transportation no later than February 1st prior to the start of the school year of all transportation needs, including any changes resulting from the granting of an amendment.

The current transportation services will be extended to the elementary school. Buses will be provided for Chelsea and Revere residents. Students in Everett walk to school and Everett school district does not provide transportation services.

##### APPENDICES A-H of PCSS’ request were submitted in pdf format and unable to be converted. All documents listed below are available upon request.

STATE SENATOR SAL DIDOMENICO’S SUPPORT LETTER

EVERETT COUNCILMAN FRED CAPONE’S SUPPORT LETTER

NHCS SUPPORT LETTER

SAMPLE TEACHERS, PARENTS & COMMUNITY SUPPORT LETTERS

DRAFT ENROLLMENT POLICY

WIDA CURRICULUM INTEGRATION TEMPLATE

SAMPLE PCSS ELA 7TH GRADE CURRICULUM

SAMPLE NHCS 1ST GRADE CURRICULUM MATERIAL

APPROVED BOARD MINUTES

**PCSS response to follow up questions from the Department**

The Department requested the following information after the amendment interview:

* A proforma budget that reflects not just the 360 student increase but the full annual enrollment over the period of expansion [three years];
* An updated staffing chart that includes a narrative that describes the flexibilility in staffing to meet student needs (special education and ESL programming) and a narrative explaining when new positions will be performed by current staff vs. newly hired staff, e.g. director and dean of academics roles; and
* Additional information regarding K-6 planning that was shared verbally during the interview

The school’s response follows on pages 56 through 91.

**Updates to K-6 Amendment Request Budget & Staffing Chart**

***Budget Updates:***

Attached is a three-year budget projection for Pioneer Charter School of Science (PCSS) that consolidates grades K-6 and 7-12. On top of previously submitted projections, which reflected all capital purchases, salaries, start-up expenses and all other operating expenses for elementary expansion, we have added projections (in addition to adjustments to the K-6 budget as described below) for our currently active school that serves grades 7-12. In these projections we made the following assumptions:

* Per pupil tuition will average at $13,000 yearly including facilities payment;
* Per pupil tuition will remain the same with no increase;
* The enrollment structure for FY17, FY18 and FY19 will be grades K-2 & 7-12, K-5 & 7-12 and K-12 respectively;
* Enrollment for FY17, FY18 and FY19 will be 540, 720 and 780 students respectively, where 360 students every year is for the flagship school’s enrollment for grades 7-12;
* Please refer to submitted staffing schedule for hiring and salary assumptions.

Besides the fact that for all three years PCSS will have a projected surplus, it can also use its available accumulated unrestricted cash that is nearly $1.5 million. If in these years PCSS decides to do extra capital improvements, hire more staff, decide to make a large capital purchase or will have other unexpected expenses, it has enough resources to go forward with the projects.

***Staffing Updates:***

Below you will find an updated staffing chart for our expansion. For the first year of the expansion we have increase both ELL and special education teachers by one teacher each. We have also decided to have a full time nurse as opposed to utilizing our current nurse half time. The budget numbers attached are updated for the changes described.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1st year | 2nd year | 3rd year |
| Student population | 180 | 360 | 420 |
| Director | 0.5 | 1 | 1 |
| Administrative Asst. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Dean of Academics | 0.5 | 1 | 1 |
| Dean of Students | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Classroom Teachers | 10 | 23 | 28 |
| SpEd Teacher | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| ELL Teacher | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Paraprofessional | 9 | 15 | 17 |
| Nurse | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Counselor | 0.5 | 1 | 1 |
| Custodian | 0.5 | 1 | 1 |

0.5 FTEs on the chart above indicate the use of personnel from the upper school (PCSS Everett 7-12) during the expansion process. Individuals serving these positions at our Everett building will take on additional roles during the transition and first year of the expansion. As explained before the reason for this decision is not financial. It is based on experience with replication and discussions with other charter schools that expanded. We would like to set the culture straight from day one with the involvement of key personnel from our flagship school. We do have the flexibility (financial resources necessary) to hire full time employees for the positions indicated above. While it is not included in the budget numbers presented (budget has only projected revenue from state), PCSS in Everett has $1.5 million saved for the K-6 expansion and other capital projects. The budget numbers represent a school that is 100% self-sustaining with income from state. However, if needed, we can comfortably exceed the projected expenditure numbers and finance the growth through the surplus saved over the years.

The Director position is listed as 0.5 FTE for the first year representing the involvement of the PCSS Everett Executive Director (ED) in the transition and implementation of the expansion. While she will continue her title as the ED of the whole school (K-6 expansion and current 7-12 school), she will put an emphasis on managing the first year of the expansion with the help of other administrators. We do intend to hire a full time building director that will work under her with the second year of the expansion.

0.5 FTE for the Dean of Academics position similar to the explanation above represents the involvement of our current Dean of Academics with the implementation of the expansion. With the second year of the expansion we will hire a full time Dean of Academics that will be working under the supervision of the ED. We intend to have a full time Dean of Students starting with the first year of the implementation.

0.5 FTE for counselor indicates our intention to utilize our current Adjustment Counselor during the transition and implementation of the expansion similar to other positions described above. She will be instrumental in designing the character education program, emotional support services and ensuring a connection with the upper school for peer mentoring programs. With the second year of implementation we will have a full time adjustment counselor.

Custodian assignment is similar. PCSS Everett has already additional personnel in the custodial department. One of them will be assigned to the new building on a half-time basis.

Our network office will also be involved in the transition and implementation of the expansion. Our CEO will oversee the whole process and report to the Board of Trustees on the progress of the expansion. Our CDO and CFO will focus on the logistics and operations of the expansion.

Our current PCSS special education director (also part of the previously described K-6 Task Force) will take on the role of overseeing the development of the student support services at the lower grades. She will eventually oversee both the K-6 expansion and 7-12 as the director of the student support services. The number of teachers and aids under the student support department will increase steadily with the expansion. The director of student support services at PCSS-II will provide consulting services (due to his previous elementary experience) during this process (he was also involved as a consultant at the beginning of both PCSS and PCSS-II before coming on board full time previous year).

PCSS Everett ELL Director will also be involved in the transition and implementation of the expansion project. While currently she oversees one person under her department, with the expansion she will oversee an ELL department with 3 teachers.

We also have the flexibility to assign some of the upper school personnel to the elementary grades on a part-time basis as needed. Staff members that do not have a full load at the upper school could be utilized with the lower grades for support.

Moreover, we intend to grow our network office with this expansion project. The updated and consolidated budget numbers projects an addition of an executive level position for the first year, an executive and two lower level positions the second year, and an executive and a lower level position for the third year.

The operating surpluses projected with the budget and the accumulated surplus ($1.5 million) that was not included in the budget provides us the flexibility to ensure that K-6 expansion will be a success and PCSS and PCSS-II will continue to operate successfully. To be specific, if we see the need, we have the resources to hire additional administrators either for the expansion or the flagship school. We are able to increase the number of the special education, ELL teachers, support personnel or paraprofessionals from the numbers provided above at the staffing chart. Moreover, the surplus could also be used, if needed, to finance additional resources (operational or academic) and/or unanticipated facility expenses. We have provided a solid budget based on our experience at the flagship school, replication process and discussions with other charter school leaders. We would like to reiterate that we have the resources needed to finance any drastic change needed to ensure a healthy expansion.

**K-12 Budget**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | K-12 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **FY16** | **FY17** | **FY18** |
|  | **Ordinary Income/Expense** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **Income** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | **4001 · Tuition** | 7,020,000  | 9,360,000  | 10,140,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **4003 · Federal SPED** | 102,000  | 122,000  | 142,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **4005 · Federal - Title I per student** | 150,000  | 190,000  | 218,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **4006 · Teacher Quality Grant** | 10,000  | 10,000  | 12,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **4012 · Program Fees** | 35,000  | 40,000  | 45,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **4014 · Transportation Reimbursement** | 75,000  | 90,000  | 105,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **4090 · Network Reimbursement** | 180,000  | 162,000  | 144,000  |
|  |  |  | **Total Income** |  | **7,572,000**  | **9,974,000**  | **10,806,000**  |
|  |  | **Gross Profit** |  |  | **7,572,000**  | **9,974,000**  | **10,806,000**  |
|  |  |  | **Expense** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | **Salaries** |  | **4,198,892**  | **5,460,030**  | **5,928,169**  |
|  |  |  |  | **6100 · General & Administrative** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6103 · Accounting Fee** | 29,000  | 32,000  | 35,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6104 · Legal Fees** | 40,000  | 30,000  | 35,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6105 · Payroll Service** | 45,000  | 53,000  | 58,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6121 · Other Professional Services** | 65,000  | 80,000  | 86,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6106 · Computer Software Expense** | 32,000  | 40,000  | 40,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6107 · Office Supplies and Materials** | 28,000  | 33,000  | 40,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6108 · Prof. Devlpmt for Admin-Board** | 40,000  | 50,000  | 58,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6109 · Dues ,Subscriptions and License** | 19,193  | 24,306  | 27,483  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6111 · Advertisement & Recruitment** | 50,000  | 55,000  | 70,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6112 · Travel Expenses For Staff/Board** | 12,500  | 20,000  | 25,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6113 · Bank Charges** | 3,500  | 3,500  | 3,500  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6114 · Computer Hardware Expense** | 10,000  | 20,000  | 20,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6115 · Network Upgrade & Repair** | 32,000  | 40,000  | 45,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6117 · Postage and Delivery** | 12,150  | 16,480  | 19,350  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6118 · Printing & Reproduction** | 8,000  | 15,000  | 20,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6119 · Outreach** | 13,000  | 25,000  | 35,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **Total 6100 · General & Administrative** | 439,343  | 537,286  | 617,333  |
|  |  |  |  | **6200 · Instructional Services** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6204 · Technology and Computer Suppl.** | 70,000  | 100,000  | 100,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6205 · Instructional Supplies** | 143,540  | 212,800  | 233,100  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6206 · Testing&Assessment** | 20,000  | 28,000  | 35,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6208 · Dues, Licenses, & Subscriptions** | 11,500  | 16,000  | 22,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6209 · Professional Dev.Inst.** | 20,000  | 30,000  | 45,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6210 · SPED Outside Consulting** | 54,980  | 84,000  | 117,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6211 · Instructional Software** | 17,000  | 35,000  | 35,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6213 · Substitute teachers** | 12,000  | 17,000  | 19,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6214 · Salaries Bonus** | 105,000  | 130,000  | 150,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6215 · Tuition Reimbursement** | 30,000  | 52,000  | 60,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **Total 6200 · Instructional Services** | 484,020  | 704,800  | 816,100  |
|  |  |  |  | **6300 · Other Student Services.** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6302 · Health Services** | 27,000  | 24,000  | 24,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6303 · Student Transportation** | 267,300  | 326,700  | 386,100  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6305 · Other Student/School EXPENSES** | 35,300  | 50,600  | 55,700  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6306 · Atheletic Service** | 65,000  | 75,000  | 85,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6307 · Field Trips** | 30,000  | 35,000  | 40,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **Total 6300 · Other Student Services.** | 424,600  | 511,300  | 590,800  |
|  |  |  |  | **6400 · Operation and Maint.of Plant** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6402 · Utilities** | 158,800  | 93,100  | 111,300  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6413 · Plant Maintenance** | 152,000  | 194,500  | 199,500  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6421 · Rent/Lease of Bldgs & Grounds** | 633,871  | 883,888  | 1,014,204  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6422 · Rent/Lease of Equipment** | 36,500  | 51,000  | 53,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6423 · Renovation/Construction** | 55,000  | 85,000  | 55,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6430 · Equipment & Furniture** | 150,000  | 225,000  | 105,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **6400 · Operation and Maint.of Plant** | 1,186,171  | 1,657,488  | 1,668,004  |
|  |  |  |  | **6500 · Fixed Charges** |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6501 · Payroll Taxes** | 106,000  | 126,000  | 125,000  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6510 · Benefits** | 471,500  | 603,500  | 664,500  |
|  |  |  |  |  | **6525 · Insurance** | 35,000  | 35,000  | 40,000  |
|  |  |  |  | **Total 6500 · Fixed Charges** | 612,500  | 764,500  | 829,500  |
|  |  |  | **Total Expense** |  | 7,345,527  | 9,635,404  | 10,449,906  |
|  | **Net Ordinary Income** |  | 226,473  | 338,596  | 356,094  |
| **Net Income** |  |  |  |  | **226,473**  | **338,596**  | **356,094**  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

***PCSS Elementary Grades Expansion Planning***

***(Post Decision)***

The expansion to K-6 has been one of PCSS’ early dreams. We have been applying for the elementary grades for quite a while now. Each time we have improved our application and revised our thinking about the whole process. We believe that the timing is right and we are ready to take on this challenge. Over the years, we have been making strategic decisions that have enabled us to have the resources needed to start an elementary school. We budgeted conservatively and put aside the financial resources needed for this expansion.[[19]](#footnote-19) We have forged a positive relationship with the city. We have established a good reputation that will make the student recruitment easier. Below you will find strengths identified and action plans designed to tackle this challenging task.

*ELEMENTARY EXPERIENCE*

PCSS has about a dozen staff members with elementary background, experience, and/or certification.[[20]](#footnote-20) The list includes our ED, Student Support Services Director and ELL Coordinator. Moreover, the list includes specialization in mathematics, science, language arts, humanities and special education. We intend to tap into this wealth of knowledge during the development and implementation phase.

While PCSS has a successful program for grades 7-12 we have been collaborating with successful K-5 programs in thinking about our elementary school expansion. Over the years we have visited Neighborhood House Charter School in Dorchester (through Kate Scott & Emily Pratt Davidson) North Star Academy in Newark (through Julye Williams), Lawrence Family Development Charter School in Lawrence (through Ralph Carrero), and Codman Academy Charter School in Dorchester (through Thabiti Brown). While we intend to visit additional successful elementary schools upon approval of our amendment (e.g. Brooke and Community networks) we will be partnering formally with the NHCS in the development and implementation phase of our K-6 expansion. We also plan to rely heavily (and informally) on Codman Academy’s experience with expanding to lower grades.

Our relationship with NHCS started in December 2013. Our involvement included site visits (to NHCS and to PCSS), meetings, conference calls, check-ins etc. NHCS acted as a thought partner during the application process and provided us with support, guidance and sample documents as needed. Our relationship will take more of a formal role upon approval of our amendment request. We have planned to work together in designing our curriculum, assessments, scheduling, staffing models, student support systems, developing strong school culture, and professional development planning. We envision sharing and fine tuning many documents, follow up site visits, and monthly meetings and weekly check ins during the planning period following February 23rd BESE meeting. The relationship will continue during the first year of operations through school visits, classroom observations and meetings/calls. The focus during the first year will be on teacher development and professional development among other things.

We intend to benefit from the experiences of many successful MA elementary charter schools during this process. Leaders of these schools that we have been in contact over the years all showed interest in sharing resources and providing feedback. The collaborative approach of the charter school sector in the Commonwealth will be an asset to us during the development and implementation of our elementary school.

While we are cognizant of the fact that elementary school is a completely different undertaking we would like to reiterate our track record in developing a highly successful 7-12 school. Both our middle and high school programs are strong. While different, we believe we have the resources and determination to make the elementary program a success too.

*K-6 TASK FORCE*

The heavy lifting of the development and implementation will be carried out through a K-6 Task Force. While there will be an inner core group that will supervise and follow up all developments, the task force will include multiple people as needed for the tasks to be accomplished. Our Everett Executive Director (ED), assisted by our Chief Executive Officer (CEO), will spearhead the project. The core group will consist of our CEO, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), PCSS ED, PCSS Student Support Services Director (SSSD). The larger K-6 Task Force will include following additional staff members: Chief Development Officer (CDO), PCSS Dean of Academics (DOA), PCSS Dean of Students (DOS), PCSS ELL Director, PCSS Adjustment Counselor and PCSS Department Heads. A sample meeting schedule and agenda for the planning period is provided below. You will notice that it is organized around two themes: academics (curriculum, assessment, scheduling, etc.) and culture (code of conduct, procedures, routines, support systems, expectations, etc.). While the list below illustrates the work of the K-6 task force for major items, the rest of this document provides narrative for additional actions and topics.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Date*** | ***Event/Who*** | ***Agenda*** |
| February 12-15, 2016 | Commissioner's Recommendation | Reach out to NHCS to start formalizing the relationship. Start working on facility. |
| 23-Feb-16 | BESE Approval |   |
| 24-Feb-16 | First K-6 Meeting with all members | To do list, list of tasks, distribution of responsibilities, timeline, benchmarks |
| First week of March |   | Formalize the relationship with NHCS & start receiving materials |
| 2-Mar-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Academic (Core Team[[21]](#footnote-21), DOA, ELL Dir., Department Heads) | Curriculum review, action plan |
| Second week of March | Team Members | Arrange site visit (NHCS and other high performing MA elementary charter school if needed) |
| 9-Mar-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Culture (Core Team, DOS, CDO, Adjustment Counselor) | Student code of conduct and student handbook review, daily routines and procedures (breakfast, recess, lunch, transition, etc) |
| 16-Mar-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Academic (Core Team, DOA, ELL Dir., Department Heads) | Review of curriculum materials, departments’ feedback |
| 23-Mar-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Culture (Core Team, DOS, CDO, Adjustment Counselor) | Review sample student codes of conduct from partners (NHCS, Codman, etc), rewards & consequences and other structures |
| 30-Mar-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Academic (Core Team, DOA, ELL Dir., Department Heads) | Review curriculum adoption progress, alignment with PCSS expectations, end of year goals |
| 1-Apr-16 | All team members | Review of progress, identify issues, and check benchmarks - extended discussion (PD Day) |
| 6-Apr-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Culture (Core Team, DOS, CDO, Adjustment Counselor) | Finalize student code of conduct & discipline structure, overview tools and age appropriate techniques to be recommended  |
| Second week of April | Team Members | Arrange site visit (high performing MA elementary charter school) |
| 13-Apr-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Academic (Core Team, DOA, ELL Dir., Department Heads) | Finalize curriculum expectations for K-2 |
| 27-Apr-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Culture (Core Team, DOS, CDO, Adjustment Counselor) | Policy and procedures for morning assembly, attendance, release |
| 4-May-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Academic (Core Team, DOA, ELL Dir., Department Heads) | Scope & sequence for K-2 curriculum |
| 6-May-16 | All team members | Review of progress, identify issues, and check benchmarks - extended discussion (PD Day) |
| 11-May-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Culture (Core Team, DOS, CDO, Adjustment Counselor) | Policy and procedures for lunch, recess, transition, classroom expectations, extracurricular activities |
| 18-May-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Academic (Core Team, DOA, ELL Dir., Department Heads) | Assessment tools, grade level benchmarks |
| 25-May-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Culture (Core Team, DOS, CDO, Adjustment Counselor) | Finalize student handbook |
| 1-Jun-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Academic (Core Team, DOA, ELL Dir., Department Heads) | Finalize assessment tools and procedures, scope and sequence, grade level expectations |
| 3-Jun-16 | All team members | Review of progress, identify issues, and check benchmarks - extended discussion (PD Day) |
| 8-Jun-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Academic (Core Team, DOA, ELL Dir., Department Heads) | Overview daily, weekly and quarterly schedules, progression of courses, support programs |
| 15-Jun-16 | K-6 Task Force Meeting / Academic (Core Team, DOA, ELL Dir., Department Heads) | Finalize schedule and support programs |
| 22-Jun-16 | All team members | Review of progress, identify issues, and check benchmarks - extended discussion (PD Day) |
| June 6-22, 2016 (Curriculum Development Institute) | All | (Early release schedule for curriculum development) Incorporate K-2 and discuss ideas/themes for K-6 in general |

*CURRICULUM*

The development of curriculum is important for our K-6 expansion and it will follow the process we utilized to write our 7-12 curriculum. The curricular materials from NHCS (and other institutions we will contact during this process) and the MA curriculum framework will provide the seed to develop our own curriculum. With the common core integration our upper school has been heavily using EngageNY resources as part of the instructional resources for ELA and mathematics. With the development of the new model curriculum units by DESE we plan to rely on these two resources while we focus on the integration and revisions of the materials provided to fit the program at our school. Our core K-6 task force as well as our Dean of Academics and Department Heads will take on the curriculum development process. Meetings will take place every other week. The focus will be on reviewing, modifying and adopting available materials for K-2. A two-week window (K-6 task force focuses on academics every other week) will give us enough time to produce results without putting too much on everyone’s plate. The process will be finalized in collaboration with NHCS (through Emily Pratt Davidson or her designee) to ensure the final product is age appropriate and effective. Curriculum resources utilized and lessons learned at NHCS will minimize time spent on figuring out the best available products.

Our student support services and ELL directors will play an important part during this process. Not only they will provide valuable feedback during the development of the curriculum, they will also reach out to their counterparts at NHCS and other schools to consult and adopt materials. Our Special Education Director has elementary background that will be useful in the development process.

While reviewing and adopting the curricular material our K-6 task force will focus on the integration of our model into the units of study. Our math and science focus will be balanced with a strong foundation in language arts skills. High expectations and common core readiness will be infused throughout the curriculum. Our student support services personnel will insure that accommodations are part of the curricular materials.

Scope and sequencing will be adopted based on the lessons learned at NHCS and Codman Academy. Our K-6 program will also be an extended learning time program, utilizing the same structure from the flagship school. The longer school year and longer school day will provide us a safety cushion during the first year implementation of our K-2 scope and sequence.

We plan to finalize the K-2 curriculum, resources and mapping by the end of the 2015-16 school year. While meetings throughout the year will ensure a timely development process, our end of year curriculum development process will be the culminating event. About 2 weeks of early release days are reserved for curriculum development. The work for this year will incorporate the development of the K-6 materials. While the curriculum and mapping for grades K-2 will be finalized during our curriculum development institute, themes and ideas for K-6 curriculum will also be part of the agenda.

The development of the curricular materials for 3-6 will happen in following years and benefit from the experiences of the K-2 process. During the first year of the school a task force, composed of the ED, DOA, Department Heads, Student Support Services & ELL Directors, will work to develop the curriculum for grades 3, 4, and 5. This time lead teachers from grades K-2 will be part of the task force too. The yearlong process will be finalized with the end of year curriculum development institute described above. The process will be repeated for grade 6 the following year.

*ASSESSMENT*

Assessment is an important tool that provides feedback for curriculum’s effectiveness. Assessment strategies will be developed under the supervision of the Dean of Academics through the materials and feedback provided by NHCS. In K-2 assessment will be composed of a lot of classroom based performance activities. In addition, school wide assessment activities will be adopted with the help of the NHCS. Curricular resources (EngageNY and others) will be useful in the development of relevant assessment tools.

In K-2 focus will be on measuring the development of foundational skills. In English the emphasis will be on phonics & reading, grammar, spelling, and writing. In mathematics the emphasis will be on numbers, geometry, addition & subtraction. Since the PCSS assessment system in the upper grades has been developed in collaboration with teachers over the years the early work will lay down the structure, foundation and resources for the K-2 assessment system for the 2016-17 school year. Throughout the 2016-17 school year the work will continue under the supervision of the Dean of Academics in collaboration with student support services and lead teachers. With the second half of the 2016-17 school year we will start laying the foundations for next year’s assessments for grades 3, 4, and 5. The process will be repeated for grade 6 the following year.

*CULTURE & ROUTINES*

We will start developing student code of conduct, student expectations, and daily routines as part of the development work that will be done through the K-6 task force. In addition to our core group, the Dean of Students Department will provide input in adopting materials to better fit our expectations. We have visited several highly performing elementary schools during the planning process over the years. The NHCS student demographics, educational philosophy and expectations have been one of the closest to what we had in mind. While we rely a lot on NHCS’ feedback and materials, we will adopt the procedures to better align the elementary program with upper grade expectations. We will also benefit from discussions that will take place with Codman Academy in anticipating difficulties encountered in adopting elementary grade level expectations while thinking about alignment with higher grade level expectations. The work that will be done every other week by the K-6 task force will be finalized and codified in a student/parent handbook by the end of the 2015-16 school year.

While certain expectations and procedures are general, some are in part driven by physical surroundings (facility challenges). Therefore, our CDO will work closely with the K-6 team to ensure facility challenges are mitigated to ensure an efficient school culture.

*FACILITY & LOGISTICS*

Facility has been one of the biggest challenges for MA charter schools. Therefore we have amassed resources needed to tackle the facility and logistics issues. As outlined in the amendment application our plan is to start in a temporary facility (the same location we used for PCSS-II during the first year of the school) during the first year while we acquire and build the permanent facility through Charter School Development Corporation (the same non-profit that built our Saugus facility).

We have done all the necessary fixes to the temporary facility back then when we utilized the space for PCSS-II. Since then space has been utilized for several afterschool programs (including elementary grades). We anticipate some cleaning and minor alterations will be needed to make the space more suitable and appealing for lower grades. We believe we have enough time (more than 5 months) to complete the work.

In the meantime, as soon as we receive the approval of our K-6 amendment, we will follow up on finalizing the permanent site. The project will be spearheaded by our CDO with the involvement of Burgess Properties and CSDC. The same team has managed our Saugus building project.

Our back office, under the leadership of our CFO, has the human and financial resources to ensure that logistics are taken care of for a smooth opening of grades K-2 for 2016-17 school year. As shown with the budget numbers provided with this submission PCSS has resources necessary to acquire classroom materials needed before the start of the school year (and any expected tuition income). We believe we have enough time to complete all the necessary procurement before August 2016. Our CFO has the experience of starting a school from scratch (in terms of school supplies) as he managed the opening of PCSS-II.

*HIRING*

We usually start the staff recruitment around February/March for the next school year. Since PCSS has been at full capacity for a while the new staff hiring will focus on the elementary expansion as soon as we receive the approval of our K-6 amendment application. PCSS-II has completed the major expansion and will only be growing to grade 12 next year minimizing the need to recruit for that location. Our leadership team (CFO, ED, and CFO) has been through this process with the opening of PCSS-II and believe have enough time to complete all hiring before the start of the next school year.

We anticipate the process to be even smoother this year since we will be recruiting for grade levels and subjects where there is no teacher shortage. Moreover, over the years PCSS has been adding new positions and staff members despite reaching full capacity. We have added a full time testing coordinator, administrative assistant and an additional Dean of Students in addition to increases in regular education and special education teachers. As mentioned previously, some of our current staff members have elementary school background or experience that might come useful with the addition of grades K-2.

The experience we had with PCSS-II and the conversations we had with Codman Academy led us to believe that our core PCSS staff should be involved with the start of the elementary school. This will set the expectations and the culture from the beginning. Therefore, despite having the necessary resources to hire new leaders, we intend to utilize PCSS staff during the first year of the school. The staff chart and narrative provides further details on this.

*ENROLLMENT*

As explained in the application there is high demand for an elementary school in the region. K-6 population has been growing rapidly in the region. The only charter school that serves the region in elementary grades has a huge wait list. Moreover, PCSS has established itself as a successful school in the region.

We believe we have enough time and resources to recruit potential students before March 15 submission. Our plan is to start recruiting (conditionally) aggressively for K-2 as soon as we receive the Commissioner’s recommendation (around February 12-15). Our current recruiting campaign is ongoing for our upper grades to assist with the name recognition and raising awareness about PCSS.

We expect a sizable sibling enrollment for the first year. The school’s reputation and word of mouth through our parents will also attract many more applicants. However, we also have a recruitment team (composed of staff members and alumni) ready to knock on the doors as soon as we receive the Commissioner’s recommendation. As mentioned previously we also have enough resources to weather any unexpected drop in student enrollment due to large amount of surplus saved for an elementary school expansion.

**BOARD MEETINGS – K-6 Agenda Items**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Board Meeting Date*** | ***Agenda*** |
| March 4, 2016 | K-6 task force formation and progress, student recruitment, engage NHCS |
| April 1, 2016 | Review progress of K-6 task force, staff recruitment, and facility updates |
| May 6, 2016 | Review progress of K-6 task force, staff recruitment, facility updates, update policies as needed |
| June TBD | Review progress of K-6 task force, staff recruitment, facility updates, finalize policy updates as needed |

**CURRENT STAFF MEMBERS WITH ELEMENTARY BACKGROUND/EXPERIENCE**

GB (current Student Support Services Director): PreK-8 moderate disabilities certified

TW (current ELL Director): ESL PreK-6 certified

SJ (current Executive Director): Elementary Ed 1-6 certified, MEd in Elementary Ed

KD (current psychology/support teacher): Lesley MEd in Elementary Ed & Creative Arts

AD (current social studies teacher): Previous elementary experience

EG (current science/biology teacher): Previous elementary experience

MM (current social studies teacher): Previous elementary experience

KO (current ELA teacher): Previous elementary experience

JO (Student Support Services Director): Previous elementary experience

JA (current special education teacher): BA in elementary ed and minor in mathematics; elementary ed certified, middle school mathematics certified

CA (current ELA teacher): Previous elementary experience

BC (current support personnel): Previous elementary experience

KO (current ELA teachers): Previous elementary experience

***BEHAVIOR SYSTEM***

We see student misbehavior as a great teachable moment. The behavior system is intended to be a learning tool, rather than a punishment, for not only for the student but also the parents. Our upper school has a clear behavior system that uses a merit and demerit (point) system. Expectations and procedures will need to be adjusted for the lower school and especially for grades K-3.

In K-3 we will rely more on strategies that are easy for students to relate too. A lot of modeling and storytelling will be used to teach desirable behaviors and talk about undesirable behaviors. A color-coded rating system or mood charts, etc. could be used to measure the level of the classroom compared to expectations. Starting with grade 4 we intend to start utilizing a modified version of our point system. This will also make the transition to the upper school easier. Major offenses will be dealt immediately and through the Dean of Students department. The point system serves as learning and monitoring system for expected behaviors and helps to correct the small infractions.

Teachers will utilize a reminder system similar to the one already used in the upper school before issuing consequences or points when relevant. Following is a tiered system adopted from NHCS as a guideline for grades K-3 mainly.

Students begin each block with a clean slate. The student will be given the opportunity to make things better in any block period 4 times using the steps outlined below. If a student is given a 5th reminder that student will receive a
Behavior Notice.

* If a student doesn’t follow the values or the rules the teacher will give a reminder.
	+ The reminder should be
		- As private as feasibly possible
		- Clear
		- Neutral
	+ The reminder can be
		- Visual cue
			* Look the student in the eye
			* Hold up 1 finger to show for the 1sts reminder, 2 for the 2nd, etc
			* Use a writing gesture for “This is writing workshop; get to work.”
		- Or verbal cue
			* “That’s one.”
	+ The reminder can include logical consequences when applicable (i.e. “I noticed you were talking during silent reading. This is your 2nd reminder. Please move your seat to….”)
		- Logical consequences are
			* Relevant
				+ directly related to the misbehavior
			* Realistic
				+ something the child can reasonably be expected to do and that the teacher can manage
			* Respectful
				+ communicated kindly and focused on the misbehavior, not on the child’s character or personality
* Students will have 3 opportunities to make things better (3 reminders)
* When a 4th reminder is given student will be directed to the reflection chair
* At the reflection chair the student will take the time to reset and regroup
* The student will either reintegrates into the class or be directed to reintegrate by the teacher
	+ Once the student reintegrates the teacher will circulate as quickly as possible to the student and quietly and privately praises the reintegration. (i.e. “I’m noticing you’re doing much better. I love how you took care of what you needed. We needed you back.”)
* Teachers will use 1 of 2 systems to track reminders
	+ A checklist with student names and a tally for each reminder given

or

* + A color chart with clothespins with student names written on them
* If a 5th reminder is needed the teacher will complete a Behavior Notice.
* If you need to process a behavior with a student and you don’t have time they will tell the student you will process later
* The teacher will notify DOS department via the student database system regarding all Behavior Notice forms

**Reminders**

Teachers will respond with language that is firm, direct and respectful. The word reminder is neutral, respectful and will alert students to their misbehavior.

* Teachers will use the word “reminder” to redirect student behavior
* The word “reminder” is a signal to the student to make better choices.
* Reminders will be used for small infractions (calling out, work avoidance, peer conflict)
* Reminders should not impede the flow of the classroom
* Whenever possible teachers will use visual cues as a reminder (look directly at the student and hold up 1 finger for the 1st reminder)

**Egregious Behavior**

Any student exhibiting unsafe, harmful or overly disrespectful behavior will receive an automatic Behavior Notice.

Procedure below will be followed if the behavior warrants removing the student from class.

* The teacher will contact the DOS department to escort the student from the class.
	+ The DOS department will address the issue with the student. The DOS will do the following:
		- Will remind the student of PCSS values, expectations or rules.
		- Will clearly and firmly tell the student that s/he cannot behave this way
		- Will ask the student what s/he needs right now
		- Will pull up the behavior notice on the computer while the student is there
		- Will ask student to recount what happened
		- Will fill in the notification details with the student present. (Teacher will read before the end of the day and revise as needed)
		- Will remind student that at the PCSS we make things better
		- Will make a plan with student to make things better
		- Will fill in the ‘This school addressed this situation by’ with details of how the situation was addressed while the student is there
		- Will include the student plan in this section
		- The classroom teacher will check folder and add her/his comments
		- The classroom teacher will print form and send it home with the student
		- The classroom teacher will call the parent.

**Reflection Chair**

The purpose of the reflection chair will be to provide students with a space and an activity where they will reset their thinking in order to reintegrate back to the class in a more productive manner.

* Each class will have a designated space strategically located to support students in actively resetting their behavior
* Student will have access to a controlled choice of activities to ‘reset’ their behavior
* The activities will include a mindset switch task (sorting, stacking), a reflective task (coloring, writing) or a movement task (chair push-ups, shoulder shrugs)
* The ‘reset’ kit will be prepared by the DOS department and provided to the classroom teacher
* The classroom teacher will either ask the student to complete a specific activity in the kit or the student can choose
	+ “I know you do best when you are physical. I would like you to do 10 chair pushups then rejoin the class.”

**Positive Reinforcement**

Positive reinforcement for individuals will happen throughout the day in the form of praise or recognition.

* Positive recognition will be systematically communicated to parents
	+ The teacher will send a photo of the student doing great work with a brief note
	+ Have the student call a parent to tell them something good then hop on the phone to reinforce
* Class-wide reinforcement plans will always be options and at the discretion of each teacher. All class reward plans will be expected to meet the following criteria:
	+ Simple and consistent (the student should easily be able to explain to someone else what is earned and why)
	+ Not individualized: the plan will reinforce whole class victories that support getting along or working together
	+ The final reward should not be too big (bring in a toy from home to use during free time, extra recess, etc.)

PCSS utilizes the student database as a communication tool between the school and parent for many topics including student behavior. The database point system and teacher feedback provide a tool for parents to monitor their children behavior at school. However, at lower grades we are looking for a different method to keep the communication active between the school and home since point system will not be utilized until grade 4. One system we are currently considering is ClassDojo. ClassDojo will be utilized as a school-wide behavior management tool to promote positive behavior and an engaging atmosphere that is conducive to student learning and scholarship. This communication/behavior management program will keep parents/guardians informed about their child’s behavior during the school day by allowing teachers to provide them with real-time data from the classroom through a mobile phone application and an online platform. Parents will be able to access real-time behavior reports for their child. School administrators, teachers, and parents will also be able to communicate in real-time regarding student behavior through the Class Dojo messaging feature. Moreover, ClassDojo has proved to be an engaging platform for students in lower grades.

We will make every effort to avoid suspension as a consequence for grades K-3. In an unfortunate event that a suspension is unavoidable due to serious violations of PCSS code of conduct we will schedule a meeting with the Director or her designee and the parent in the morning the student is scheduled to return to school. Procedural guidelines to follow in case of a suspension have been explained clearly and in detail in our upper school handbook.

Every teacher will put into place extra support plans when student behavior may compromise the safety of others. For example:

* Throwing, hitting or kicking at others
* Running around the room in an unsafe manner
* Pushing furniture, materials or personal items
* Anger outbursts

Teacher will attempt to contain the student in an area of the room away from other students. If necessary, other students can be taken out of the room temporarily. The DOS department will be called to intervene.

Teacher will use a calm voice while asking the child to “take my hand” or “stand by me” or “tell me what you need.” The DOS department will be the one to remove the child to assure everyone’s safety.

All teachers with students who have chronic behavior issues or who demonstrate anger outbursts or aggression toward anyone in class will keep a behavior log. Parents will be contacted daily regarding the behaviors. A behavior contract can be considered when chronic issues interfere with the child’s learning or the learning in the classroom and other interventions have not worked. The DOS department will prepare the contract in such cases.

For classrooms with potential runners, the teacher will be in a location between the “runner” and the door at all times.

***Transition:***

Each class will transition to the play area or cafeteria in a single-file line, with quiet voices and line hands (hugs and bubbles, hands in pockets, etc.). Teachers will provide specific direction in terms of how students will transition onto the common space.

***Parent Communication in Lower Grades:***

Student backpacks and folders will be checked every day. Teachers will ensure that this takes place on a consistent basis. Each classroom will develop a system for how they handle returned work. Communication from the office to parents will be recorded in the classroom and returned to the office. This will ensure that the office has all forms in a timely manner.

The office team will make every effort to send notes home only on Wednesdays (every Wednesday school will mail a packet home—a.k.a. Wednesday folder). Teachers will also place the materials they would like to mail home in the Wednesday folder.

***CLASS MEETINGS & CHARACTER EDUCATION***

Students and teachers will actively participate in weekly class meetings. Class meetings will be implemented to create a school wide culture that is socially, emotionally, and academically conducive for student learning and scholarship. Class meetings will target specific student abilities, such as:

* Social skills: solving problems for mutual benefit, working with others, responding appropriately, articulating one’s thoughts in a societal acceptable manner, acknowledging others rights, and respect for others’ opinions.
* Personal development: giving and receiving compliments, disagreeing in an agreeable way, and asking clarifying questions.
* Assuming responsibility: students will take ownership for their actions by becoming involved in the process of understanding and questioning rules, guidelines, limits, and consequences.
* Social responsibility skills: valuing others’ inputs, showing empathy, respecting others, cooperative decision-making, and carrying out plans related to group goals.

Class meetings will be a weekly opportunity for teachers and students to engage in discussions about how to implement conflict resolution strategies to avoid conflicts that may lead to bullying.

PCSS will establish a school culture of learning and scholarship through character education lessons and activities that address moral, ethical, and academic issues within their school community. Teachers will implement the pillars of character education in their lesson plans. Students will be taught the ten pillars of character education: Respect, Citizenship, Perseverance, Caring, Trustworthiness, Courage, Responsibility, Honesty, Compassion, and Fairness. These pillars will help students develop strong character and foster positive decision-making skills. Each month, students will learn about a different character education pillar, and relate this learning with the creation of school norms that promote scholarship. Through these lessons, teachers and students will develop a school culture in which bullying is not acceptable or tolerated. As an additional resource we are also looking into KEYSTONE (K-5)[[22]](#footnote-22) for character education program.

***DAILY SCHEDULE***

Below you will find the sample schedules for grades K-2. Literacy and mathematics are scheduled in blocks to allow teachers to utilize centers during instruction and attend the needs of students with different ability levels. The schedule is rich with enrichment activities. Playwork will allow students to develop social and non-academic skills needed to be successful in upper grades. Each day will start and end with a whole class circle. After school programs will be available to interested parents on four days of the week. On Wednesday there are no afterschool activities due to staff meetings.

We expect to implement an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the each academic subject. Science themed projects will be emphasized.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Kindergarten** | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** |
| 7:30 - 8:00 | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast |
| 8:00 - 8:15 | Morning Circle | Morning Circle | Morning Circle | Morning Circle | Morning Circle |
| 8:20 - 9:05 | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math |
| 9:05 - 9:50 | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math |
| 9:50 - 10:05 | Snack time | Snack time | Snack time | Snack time | Snack time |
| 10:10 - 10:55 | Read Aloud & Writing | Read Aloud & Writing | Read Aloud & Writing | Read Aloud & Writing | Read Aloud & Writing |
| 11:00 - 11:45 | Playworks | Art/Music | Playworks | Art/Music | Fun Friday |
| 11:50 - 12:45 | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess |
| 12:50 - 1:35 | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy |
| 1:35 - 2:20 | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy |
| 2:25 - 3:20 | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies |
| 3:20 - 3:35 | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up |
| 3:35 - 4:30 | After School Program | After School Program |   | After School Program | After School Program |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1st Grade** | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** |
| 7:30 - 8:00 | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast |
| 8:00 - 8:15 | Morning Circle | Morning Circle | Morning Circle | Morning Circle | Morning Circle |
| 8:20 - 9:05 | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math |
| 9:05 - 9:50 | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math |
| 9:50 - 10:05 | Snack time | Snack time | Snack time | Snack time | Snack time |
| 10:10 - 10:55 | Read Aloud & Writing | Read Aloud & Writing | Read Aloud & Writing | Read Aloud & Writing | Read Aloud & Writing |
| 11:00 - 11:45 | Art/Music | Playworks | Art/Music | Playworks | Fun Friday |
| 11:50 - 12:45 | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess |
| 12:50 - 1:35 | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy |
| 1:35 - 2:20 | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy |
| 2:25 - 3:20 | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies |
| 3:20 - 3:35 | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up |
| 3:35 - 4:30 | After School Program | After School Program |   | After School Program | After School Program |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2nd Grade** | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** |
| 7:30 - 8:00 | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast | Arrival & Breakfast |
| 8:00 - 8:15 | Morning Circle | Morning Circle | Morning Circle | Morning Circle | Morning Circle |
| 8:20 - 9:05 | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math |
| 9:05 - 9:50 | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math |
| 9:50 - 10:05 | Snack time | Snack time | Snack time | Snack time | Snack time |
| 10:10 - 10:55 | Art/Music | Playworks | Art/Music | Playworks | Fun Friday |
| 11:00 - 11:45 | DEAR | Writing | DEAR | Writing | DEAR |
| 11:50 - 12:45 | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess | Lunch & Recess |
| 12:50 - 1:35 | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy |
| 1:35 - 2:20 | Literacy | Math | Literacy | Math | Literacy |
| 2:25 - 3:20 | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies | Science/Social Studies |
| 3:20 - 3:35 | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up | Closing circle/Pack Up |
| 3:35 - 4:30 | After School Program | After School Program |   | After School Program | After School Program |

***ASSESSMENT***

PCSS has been implementing several school wide assessments to ensure students are progressing towards end of year goals. As an external assessment upper school has been using the PSAT. We have been looking for similar external assessments for the proposed lower school. One assessment we are considering is the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) exams in grades 3 and up, and MAP for Primary Grades (MPG) in grades K-2[[23]](#footnote-23).

The assessment system will also include benchmark exams, performance based assessments, monthly writing assessments, and PARCC assessment simulation tests beginning in grade 3. We have been considering several different resources for assessment and instruction. We have looked at aimsweb, Accelerated Reader, enVisionMATH, My Math, Accelerated Math among others.

For literacy benchmark and formative assessment program K-2 we plan to use the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System to measure reading level in grades K-2, the DOLCH sight word assessment in grades K-2, a listening comprehension assessment in grades K-1, the PPVT in grades K-2. In mathematics in addition to above resources we have considered ECAM (Early Childhood Assessment in Mathematics) for grades K-2. However, based on our experience with different platform and resources at the upper school we might develop our own internal assessments for mathematics.

***CURRICULUM***

We believe that the early years of school are critical to future academic success. Children in the primary grades learn to read, express their thoughts through writing and critical thinking, and work with numbers and mathematical operations.

While children in the primary grades are learning to read, write, and compute – children in grades four and five apply these basic skills as they read to learn, write to communicate, use numbers to solve problems, and think critically in all areas of the curriculum.

**Language Arts (Reading, Listening, Writing, Speaking)**

In grades K-3, children are developing their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Since these skills are interrelated, they are developed in an integrated format. During these critical years of language development, children grow from being pretend or role-play readers in kindergarten to reading novels in third grade. Children develop their ability to read and comprehend printed text through a structured program incorporating phonics instruction, listening to and reading literature and nonfiction texts, discussing and writing about what they have read, and using specific strategies to expand their vocabulary and increase the fluency of their reading.

Written language develops in much the same way, with kindergarten children starting the year “writing” stories using pictures, while third graders are composing paragraphs, fictional stories, letters, and research reports. Children follow a writing process that begins with the planning process, followed by the first draft, student and teacher revision and editing, and, finally, “publication” in a final, corrected format. Children learn the rules of English grammar and spelling. Additionally, formal handwriting instruction is provided to develop this critical skill.

While children in kindergarten through third grade are learning how to read and write, children in grades four and five are reading and writing to learn. Children in fourth and fifth grades are expected to be reading independently at school and at home. Formal reading instruction is provided to strengthen their ability to not only understand what they have read, but to be able to discuss what they have read orally and in writing. A wide variety of literature and nonfiction texts are introduced with the goals of broadening children’s horizons and expanding their understanding of themselves and others. Children also begin utilizing the resources of the school library and technology tools to research topics of interest, to complete class assignments, and to find books to read for enjoyment.

The writing process used in the primary grades is also used in grades four and five. Children are asked to write specific types of stories and reports, as well as address different audiences. Again, emphasis is placed on learning the rules of English grammar, expanding written vocabulary through the spelling program, and further refining handwriting skills.

Language Arts skills will be covered by grade:

**Kindergarten:**

* Phonics
* Handling books
* Choral reading
* Listening to literature, nonfiction, music, poetry
* Nursery rhymes, fairy tales, fables
* Social listening
* Constructing visual images while listening
* Oral communication skills
* Role play
* Following and giving directions
* Paraphrasing and summarizing
* Organizing ideas
* Experience stories
* Introduction to persuasive, expository, and narrative writing
* Relating events and experiences using complete sentences
* Listening for correct speech habits and word usage
* Beginning writing process
* Manuscript handwriting

**First Grade:**

* Using table of contents
* Reading
	+ Phonetic analysis
	+ Structural analysis
	+ Establishing sight vocabulary
* Listening to literature, nonfiction, music, poetry
* Creating stories and poems
* Telling favorite stories
* Organizing ideas and impressions
* Enunciation and pronunciation
* Presenting information orally, in sequence and with clarity
* Book reports and critiques
* Persuasive, Expository, and Narrative writing
* Discussion skills: taking part in group discussion
* Beginning dictionary skills: alphabetizing
* Beginning spelling
* Beginning grammar: nouns, verbs, adjectives
* Introduction to punctuation and capitalization
* Manuscript handwriting

**Second Grade:**

* Reading silently for purpose
* Use and meaning of punctuation marks in reading and writing
* Story development: beginning, middle, end
* Presenting information orally
* Simple book reviews
* Listening skills
* Organizing ideas and impressions
* Alphabetizing through second letter of a word
* Using dictionary guide words
* Vocabulary development
* Ways to study spelling
* Refining manuscript handwriting
* Introduce cursive handwriting
* Writing independently in manuscript form
* Narration, description, letters, poetry
* Increasing skill in handling books: table of contents, and index

Third Grade:

* Silent and oral reading
* Listening skills
* Summarizing information
* Listening to literature and nonfiction texts
* Critical reading
* Short stories, non-fiction, chapter books, poetry, plays
* Decoding nonfiction texts
* Methods of decoding words
* Ways to study spelling
* Homophones, synonyms, antonyms
* Prefixes and suffixes
* Increasing dictionary skills
* Cursive handwriting
* Using graphic organizers for writing
* Writing letters and informal notes
* Written and oral book reports
* Creative writing
* Developing skills in locating information
* Increasing indexing skills
* Writing process
* Paragraph structure
* Poetry
* Narrative and opinion writing
* Biography and autobiography
* Literary elements
* Literacy comprehension skills

**Fourth Grade:**

* Silent and oral reading
* Listening skills
* Summarizing information
* Listening to literature
* Critical reading
* Short stories, nonfiction, chapter books, poetry, plays
* Methods of word attack
* Ways to study spelling
* Increasing dictionary skills
* Cursive handwriting
* Simple outlining
* Writing letters and informal notes
* Written and oral book reports
* Creative writing
* Developing skills in locating information
* Increasing indexing skills
* Utilizing parts of a newspaper

**Fifth Grade:**

* Read fiction and nonfiction text
* Comprehension
* Accuracy
* Fluency
* Expanding Vocabulary
* Interpret figurative language - metaphor, simile, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, idiom, personification
* Understand author’s point of view
* Cite text evidence to explain what the text says
* Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions
* Summarize written text or oral presentations
* Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations
* Research and report on topic
* Present individual and group presentations
* Engage in collaborative discussions
* Critical Listening
* Write 5 paragraph essays, stories, reports, etc.
* Type 2 pages of content in one sitting
* Write informative / explanatory text to examine a topic and convey ideas & information clearly
* Write opinion pieces providing reasons to support your opinion
* Write narratives with an awareness of style and audience

**Mathematics**

There is an increasing need for children to be literate in the language of mathematics. “Math literacy” includes the ability to compute accurately and efficiently, to use the tools of mathematics (calculators and computers, for example), to use logic and reasoning in solving complex problems, and to understand and communicate the mathematics concepts and principles that are the basis of this academic discipline. The elementary mathematics program will be designed to guide children in developing the ability to use arithmetic skills accurately, while gaining understanding of more complex mathematical concepts.

The mathematics skills covered by grade will be as follows:

**Kindergarten:**

* Counting to 100
* One-to-one relationship
* Concepts of more, less than, same
* Sequence of events
* Correspondence of quantities
* Ordinal-cardinal relationship
* Number-numeral relationship
* Recognition of basic sets
* Beginning of addition and subtraction
* Estimation
* Elementary geometry (shapes)
* Measurement
* Calendar
* Basic problem-solving strategies
* Basic chart and graph concepts

**First Grade:**

* Counting and writing to 100
* Counting by 5's to 40
* Simple number patterns
* Beginning ordinal numbers
* Using 10 as a basic unit
* Simple properties of zero
* Simple properties of sets
* Addition and subtraction facts to 20
* Number-line use
* Place value and numeration
* Concepts of quantity and size
* Concepts of equality and inequality
* Concepts of ordinal and cardinal numbers
* Estimation
* Geometric patterns and figures
* Basic measurement
* Recognizing time: clock and calendar
* Value of penny, nickel, dime
* Solving simple word problems
* Basic chart and graph concepts
* Using 1/2 and 1/4 appropriately

**Second Grade:**

* Counting, reading, writing to 1,000
* Counting by 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's, and 10's
* Zero as a place holder
* Using sets and number facts
* Addition and subtraction facts to 20 and regrouping
* Place value through 1000's
* Addition and Subtraction up to three digits with and without regrouping
* Common customary and metric measures of time,weight, length, volume, shape,
* Telling time
* Handling money (coins)
* Problem solving
* Charts and graphs

**Third Grade:**

* Place value
* Comparing and ordering numbers
* Rounding numbers to the nearest ten and hundred
* Reading and writing numbers
* Fraction equivalency
* Estimating sums and differences
* Addition and subtraction facts to 4 places
* Multiplication and division facts to 144
* 1- and 2-digit multiplication problems up to 12
* 2- and 3-digit dividend, 1-digit divisor problems up to 12
* Patterning
* Writing and evaluation expressions
* Finding area and perimeter
* Geometric concepts
* Customary and metric measurement
* Elapsed Time
* Problem-solving methods
* Analyze and create charts and graphs

**Fourth Grade:**

* Reading and writing numbers
* Roman numerals to C
* Prime numbers less than 100
* Prime factoring
* Numeration systems
* Subsets
* Decimal and fraction equivalents
* Addition and subtraction facts to 7 places
* Multiplication and division facts to 144
* 1-, 2-, and 3-digit multiplication problems
* 2- and 3-digit dividend, 1-digit divisor problems
* Nonnumeric and Numeric Patterns
* Input/Output Charts
* Meaning of mixed numbers
* Finding simple averages
* Geometric concepts
* Customary and metric measurement
* Time to the second
* Problem-solving methods
* Charts and graphs

**Fifth Grade:**

* Place value millions through thousandths
* Multiply, divide, add, & subtract whole numbers fluently - multi-digit problems, remainders, etc.
* Factors, powers, exponents
* Multiply, divide, add, & subtract decimals
* Order of operations
* Patterns and grid coordinates
* Converting fractions & decimals
* Greatest Common Factor / Least Common Multiple
* Multiply, divide, add & subtract fractions & mixed numbers
* Convert customary units of measurement
* Convert metric units of measurement
* Identify & classify 2-D & 3-D figures
* Volume of composite figures

**Science**

The elementary science program will use hands-on experimentation and text materials to teach children how to analyze and investigate problems and questions, develop their knowledge of science, and foster their curiosity about the natural world. Units of study address the areas of physical, earth, and life sciences.

Good personal health habits and safety will be fostered throughout all grade levels. The health program will be integrated into the elementary science curriculum and will be designed to address the developmental needs of children. Major health topics will include: mental and social health, human growth and development, personal health, safety and first aid, physical fitness, drugs and alcohol, disease, and environmental and community health.

The following science skills covered by grade:

**Kindergarten:**

* Observation of everyday, familiar things
* Common animals and plants
* Interrelationships of animals and plants
* Classification of living things
* The sun: our principal source of energy
* Weather and seasons
* Temperature
* Senses
* Earth, sky, moon, stars, planets
* Magnets
* Three stages of matter
* How to be a scientist
* Scientific method
* Sink and float
* Motion
* Pollution and Recycling
* Beginning experimentation
* Personal hygiene
* Germs

**First Grade:**

* Grouping and classification
* Living and nonliving things
* Animals
* Pets
* Plant and animal habitats
* Seeds, bulbs, plants, flowers
* Weather and seasons
* Day and night
* Solids, liquids, gases
* Air and water
* Magnets
* Temperature
* Rocks and soil
* Sun, moon, stars, planets
* Simple machines
* Beginning experimentation
* Scientific method and scientific inquiry

**Second Grade:**

* Scientific method and scientific inquiry
* Science tools
* Science safety
* Properties and states of matter
* Energy (Electricity, Magnets, Force and Motion)
* Rocks and soil
* Water Cycle
* Weather
* Humans and environmental health
* Conservation
* Renewable and nonrenewable resources
* Plants and animals
* Ecosystems
* Food chain
* Habitats and homes
* Life cycles
* Solar System

**Third Grade:**

* Three states of matter
* Chemical reaction
* Soil and rocks
* Human body
* Structure of plants
* Environment of the local region
* Biological organization
* Classification systems
* Structure of plants
* Seeds
* Ecosystems
* Balance of nature
* Earth and its history
* Oceans and the hydrosphere
* Recycling
* Personal hygiene
* Leaders in healthcare
* Germs
* My plate
* Scientific method and scientific inquiry

**Fourth Grade:**

* Weather's influences
* Structure of plants
* Environment of the local region
* Biological organization
* Classification systems
* The insect world
* The reptilian world
* Plants and animals of the past
* Structure of plants
* Seeds
* Ecosystems
* Balance of nature
* Human body
* Weather instruments
* Climate
* Cause of seasons
* Earth and its history
* Oceans and the hydrosphere
* Air and water pollution
* Magnets and electricity
* Light and color
* Solar system and the universe
* Living in space
* Scientific method and scientific inquiry

**Fifth Grade:**

* Ecosystems
* Predator / prey relationships
* Threatened / endangered / extinct
* Components of the water cycle
* How are theories developed
* Impact of the sun on life on earth
* Life cycles of different organisms
* Explain the concept of the cell as the basic building block of life
* Explain why animal production is dependent on animal production
* Describe how water can be changed from one state to another by adding or removing heat
* How mass of an object resists change of motion
* How energy can be transferred from one form to another
* Magnets and electricity produce related forces
* Characteristics of sound as it is transmitted through different materials
* Use of tools and technology to help them do things
* Understand that a subsystem is a part of a bigger system
* Describe how technologies are combined
* Consequences of technology use
* How waste is properly recycled
* How community concerns support or limit technological advances
* How use of technology has changed
* The design process and how it can be performed and repeated
* Invention & innovation are ways to turn ideas into real things
* Human use of a product or system creates positive or negative results
* Technology is used to repair or replace human body parts
* The use of symbols, measurements, and drawings promote clear communication
* Why a transportation system may lose efficiency or fail
* The importance of guidelines when planning a community
* Landforms are a result of a combination of constructive and destructive forces
* The usefulness of Earth’s physical resources to humans
* Differentiate between weather & climate
* Provide evidence that Earth revolves around the sun in a year’s time & rotates on its axis approx. 24hrs

**Social Studies**

The elementary social studies program will use inquiry to build upon children’s growing awareness and interest in the world around them. Content is organized through a “widening horizons” approach. The program will begin with a study of self, friends, and family, and expands to a study of neighborhood, community, state, region, nation, and world. The general emphasis throughout the curriculum will be on history, geography, civics and government, culture, and economics.

Skill development will be elementary social studies is multidisciplinary. There will be attention to skills typically associated with social studies (reading maps, graphs, etc.), as well as those from areas not directly associated with social studies, such as reading and language arts.

The Social Studies skills covered by grade will be as follows:

**Kindergarten:**

* Meanings of holidays, traditions, and customs
* Understanding and appreciating other cultures
* Individual's role in family, home, school, and community
* Relationship of the individual to the group
* Work and jobs
* Safety rules and symbols
* Basic human needs
* Self-respect and self-awareness
* Awareness of others
* Location of home and school
* Geography - introduction to maps and landforms
* Past and present
* Farm

**First Grade:**

* Holidays, traditions, and customs
* Our American Heritage
* Different cultures at different times
* Family, school, neighborhood, community
* Neighborhood helpers
* Jobs and careers
* Social skills and responsibilities
* Basic geography terms
* Making and reading a simple neighborhood map
* Folklore

**Second Grade**:

* Holidays and festivals
* Patriotic celebrations
* Communities in other lands: past and present
* Family and family history
* Families around the world
* Neighborhoods
* Community services and helpers
* Shelters, stores, and food
* Citizenship and social responsibility
* Interdependence of people
* Basic geography: oceans, continents
* Map skills

**Third Grade:**

* Map Skills
* North American geography, past and current culture, and leaders
* European geography, past and current culture, and leaders
* Latin American geography, past and current culture, and leaders
* Asian geography, past and current culture, and leaders
* African geography, past and current culture, and leaders
* Types of community life
* History and development of the local state
* Relation of the state to its region, nation, and the world
* World cultures
* Reasons for our laws
* Regions of the world
* Continents
* Time zones
* Earth's resources
* Climatic regions of the world
* Map skills: longitude, latitude, scale
* Using a globe

**Fourth Grade:**

* Types of community life
* History and development of the local state
* Relation of the state to its region, nation, and the world
* Colonial life in Massachusetts
* Pioneer life in Massachusetts
* Wars and Massachusetts’s involvement
* Native Americans in Massachusetts and the bordering states
* Various cultural groups in Massachusetts
* World cultures
* Reasons for our laws
* Voting Process
* Map skills: longitude, latitude, scale
* Using a globe
* Massachusetts transportation
* Massachusetts’s symbols
* Describe various jobs available in Massachusetts
* Discuss pros and cons of each job
* Discuss impact on Massachusetts’s economy

**Fifth Grade:**

* Exploration and discovery
* Establishment of settlements in the New World
* Colonial life in America
* Pioneer life in America
* Revolutionary War in America
* Westward movement in America
* Industrial and cultural growth
* Democracy's principles and documents
* Life in the U. S. and its possessions
* Geography of the U. S.
* Natural resources of the U. S.
* Map and globe skills
* State & National symbols & holidays
* Leadership and cooperation
* Describe the responsibilities & powers of the three branches of government
* Describe how laws are made
* Career planning and training
* Scarcity
* Meeting wants and needs
* Goods and services and distribution
* Economic Systems
* Pricing, distribution and choices
* International trade and multinational corporations
* Discuss different forms of business ownership
* Spending, saving, and assets
* Entrepreneurship
* Budgeting and personal schedule
* Compare / contrast characteristics of the social, political, cultural and economic groups in the world
* Illustrate concepts & knowledge of documents, artifacts, & places critical to the world
1. Excel Academy Charter School – Chelsea serves Chelsea residents but has only grades 5-8, restricting options available to area parents for lower grades. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The survey can be accessed at http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014141.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://vitalsigns.changetheequation.org/tcpdf/vitalsigns/newsletter.php?statename=Massachusetts [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://vitalsigns.changetheequation.org/#ma-Massachusetts-Challenging Content [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://vitalsigns.changetheequation.org/tcpdf/vitalsigns/newsletter.php?statename=Massachusetts [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ACT, Inc., Catching Up To College and Career Readiness, Austin, 2012, page 1. http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/CatchingUpToCCR.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. An ACT policy report by Dougherty argues that “the harder it is to get off-track students on track in the upper grades, the more important it is to get them on track in the early grades.” Students who were off track by eighth grade has only 6% chance in reading, 3% chance in in science, and 3% chance in in mathematics of reaching the college readiness benchmark by grade twelfth in higher poverty schools (numbers are not that high in general either reaching to only 10, 6%, and 3% respectively). Dougherty, Chrys, *College and Career Readiness: The Importance of Early Learning*, ACT Research & Policy, February 2013, page 2. http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/CatchingUp-Part3.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Participation rate is calculated as the ratio of number of test takers over the number of seniors based on 2013-14 DESE data. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Sawchuk, S. (2011) More Districts Sending Teachers Into Students’ Homes. *Education Week*, [http://www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org/). Aguilera, D. (2010) When Are You Coming to My House? *Educational Leadership, Volume: 67 Number: 5.* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Earl, L. (2003). *Assessment As Learning: Using Classroom Assessment To Maximize Student Learning.* Thousand Oaks: CA. Corwin Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
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12. Schiro M. S. Oral Story Telling & Teaching Mathematics. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. We intend to continue using services of the Communicative Health Services as we expand our program. We currently have very good working relationship with our providers. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. W. G. Secada and D. A. Carey (1990). “Teaching Mathematics with Understanding to Limited English Proficient Students.” *Urban Diversity Series,* 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. D. Miller, J. Bradbury, and K. Pedley. “Academic Performance of First and Second Language Students: Disadvantages and Under-Preparedness.” *South African Journal of Science 94(3)*, 103-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. O. Lee and S. H. Fradd (1996). “Literacy Skills in Science Learning among Linguistically Diverse Students.” *Science Education 80(6),* 651-671. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Gil Valdez. North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/cntareas/math/vald3tr.htm>. Dr. Valdez is Deputy Director, NCREL, and Director of the North Central Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Consortium. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Sawchuk, S. (2011) More Districts Sending Teachers Into Students’ Homes. *Education Week*, [http://www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org/). Aguilera, D. (2010) When Are You Coming to My House? *Educational Leadership, Volume: 67 Number: 5.* [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Please note that we have also presented a plan that shows we can self sustain the expansion with the tuition income coming from the new grade levels. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The list is shared at the end of the document. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. As described above core team refers to CEO, ED, CFO, and SSSD. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Developed by flippen education [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Prepared by NWEA [↑](#footnote-ref-23)