

# 先锋中英双语学校

Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School

April 11, 2016

Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
75 Pleasant Street  
Malden, MA 02148

Dear Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education:

On behalf of the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (PVCICS) Board of Trustees, I am respectfully requesting you review the decision of Commissioner of Education Mitchell D. Chester to deny approval of an amendment to our charter. This amendment would allow an increase of maximum enrollment from 584 to 968 K-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. This increased headcount will enable PVCICS to build a high school similar in scale to the Sturgis Charter Public School in Hyannis, MA, which PVCICS is using as a model. These changes to our charter would be effective upon the approval of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

PVCICS is a successful K-11<sup>th</sup> grade program that serves over 430 students from roughly 25 communities spanning three counties in western Massachusetts. Most students are not ethnically Chinese, nor do they enter with any Chinese language background. At this time PVCICS principally admits students into Kindergarten, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. We are currently the only Chinese language and culture immersion program authorized to become fully articulated for grades K-12<sup>th</sup> in New England.

PVCICS has worked diligently to build on the school's success and has completed the following:

- The PVCICS Application for Renewal of a Public School Charter, approved on May 9, 2012
- Eight annual independent financial audits in years 2008 - 2015
- Purchase and extensive renovation of our facility at 317 Russell Street in Hadley
- Two Coordinated Program Reviews conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Program Quality Assurance Services
- Demonstrated academic success as measured by our DESE approved accountability plan
- Demonstrated success as measured by annual parent surveys
- Demonstrated success as measured by enrollment waitlists
- Demonstrated success by national recognition as a model Chinese immersion program
- A 38,400 sq/ft four story addition, using funding from the USDA – Rural Development has been built
- Ranking as a 'Level 1' school using the Massachusetts' Framework for District Accountability and Assistance
- Recognition by The Boston Business Journal as the #1 ranked high school in the Commonwealth based on performance in all three MCAS subject areas — English language arts, math and science.

PVCICS's educational program has been recognized both nationally and internationally. Our school was one of eight in the nation to receive a competitive U.S. Department of Education Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant award in 2008 for roughly 1.5 million dollars over five years to cover the cost to develop our K-12<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. Our proposal was ranked third in the nation out of 135 applications by a U.S. Department of Education application review team.

317 Russell Street, Hadley, MA 01035

Phone: 413-582-7040 Fax: 413-582-7068 Email: [info@pvcics.org](mailto:info@pvcics.org) Web: [www.pvcics.org](http://www.pvcics.org)

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PVCICS was the recipient of the 2015 Confucius Classrooms of the Year Award — presented to ten schools across the world for excellence in teaching and learning, curriculum, cultural richness, community engagement, and extracurricular activities. The Institute, also known as Hanban, was established in 2004 and provides resources for overseas Chinese language and cultural courses.

In 2012, Asia Society (New York), a leading pan-Asian educational institution, featured PVCICS in a new book entitled *Chinese Language Learning in the Early Grades*, a handbook of resources and best practices for Mandarin immersion. Ours was one of seven schools in the United States profiled in the book, and the only one in Massachusetts.

The PVCICS Board of Trustees requests this change as a logical expansion designed to meet local, state and national needs:

- A July 2010 survey of the parents and guardians of currently enrolled PVCICS students demonstrated a strong desire to have the option to continue in our Chinese language and culture school. The expansion of the high school will allow PVCICS to offer a robust high school program, like the Sturgis Charter Public School in Hyannis, Massachusetts.
- The Massachusetts Board of Education's Global Education Advisory Council has for multiple years recommended that Massachusetts expand its foreign language offerings, particular in critical need languages such as Chinese, as part of a statewide effort to infuse global education into grade K through 12 public education.
- In March 2012 an independent task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) published an independent task force report, *U.S. Education Reform and National Security*. They called upon governors to work with educators, leaders in industry, the military, and others to set "meaningful educational expectations in subjects vital to protecting national security", including foreign languages and cultures.
- On September 25, 2015 President Obama, during the first state visit to Washington by China's President Xi Jinping, announced a sweeping new nationwide initiative to see 1 million American students studying Mandarin by 2020.

In 2007, when the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (PVCICS) was granted a charter, there were roughly 15 public Chinese immersion programs in the United States. Today there are more than 150. Massachusetts – and the New England region – are behind the national curve in adopting language immersion programs. That point was highlighted in an April 4, 2016 Boston Globe article, , “In a global economy, Mass. lags in teaching foreign languages,” which described Massachusetts as “trapped in the past, with foreign language instruction typically starting in high school.”

Other states are moving aggressively to develop a bilingual work force to attract business investment from around the world. Locally, there is recruitment for bilingual Mandarin/English speaking employees for positions in Western MA. In a few years, local kids could have the skills to compete for these jobs!

The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School Board of Trustees voted to approve this request on January 7, 2016 at a meeting held in compliance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, s. 11A1/2. At that meeting, the Board of Trustees authorized me to submit this request on their behalf. We respectfully request the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve this request at its next meeting.

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A copy of the charter amendment request and Commissioner of Education Mitchell D. Chester's letter denying the request is attached along with letters of support from former U.S. Senator John F. Kerry, U.S. Congressman Richard E. Neal, U.S. Congressman James McGovern, and the Town of Hadley Board of Selectmen, which unanimously declared our school provides, "essential services, which complement those provided by other schools". The letters and an editorial from our local newspaper are included in Appendix D.

PVCICS will gladly work with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to make adjustments needed to obtain approval for this request, including modifying our region of service. The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School is an academic success, a viable organization, and is faithful to the terms of its charter. We hope you will strongly consider this request.

Sincerely,

Richard Alcorn  
Executive Director

cc.  
Commissioner of Education Mitchell D. Chester  
Director of Massachusetts Charter Schools  
Chair, PVCICS BOT

Enclosures:

High School Charter Amendment - FY2015 - FINAL

In a global economy, Massachusetts lags in teaching foreign languages, James Vaznis, Boston Globe, April 4, 2016

The Language of Business: Chinese Immersion Charter School Continues Growth Pattern, Kathleen Mitchell, BusinessWest.com, March 21, 2016

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Charter Amendment Request Cover Sheet  
All amendment requests (except board of trustee member approvals\*) must include a completed cover sheet.

## School Information

<b>School Name and Mailing Address</b>	PVCI Charter School 317 Russell Street Hadley, MA 01035
<b>Districts Chartered to Serve</b>	See districts served below.
<b>Name of School Leader</b>	Kathleen Wang
<b>Name of Board Chair</b>	Dr. Charles N. Bagley
<b>Contact telephone number</b> Indicate if <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School Leader or <input type="checkbox"/> Board Chair	(413) 582-7040
<b>Contact email address</b> Indicate if <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> School Leader or <input type="checkbox"/> Board Chair	info@pvcics.org

## Nature of Amendment Request

### Amendment to be Approved Board (check change(s) that are requested)

- ☐ District(s) specified in the school's charter
- ☒ Maximum enrollment
- ☐ Grades served
- ☐ Contractual relationship with an education management organization that is providing or planning to provide substantially all the school's educational services

### Amendment to be Approved by Commissioner (check change(s) that are requested)

- ☐ School name
- ☐ Mission
- ☐ Governance or leadership structure
- ☐ Educational programs, curriculum models, or whole-school change designs that are inconsistent with those specified in the school's charter
- ☐ Bylaws
- ☐ Memorandum of Understanding (Horace Mann)
- ☐ Schedule (e.g. length of school year, school week, or school day)
- ☐ Accountability Plan
- ☐ Enrollment policy and application
- ☐ Expulsion policy (within code of conduct)
- ☐ Location of facilities, if such change involves relocating or expanding to another municipality

\*See Charter Amendment Guidelines for information about board of trustees' membership.

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*Districts Served:* Agawam, Amherst, Amherst-Pelham (Amherst, Leverett, Pelham, Shutesbury), Belchertown, Chesterfield-Goshen (Chesterfield, Goshen), Chicopee, Conway, Deerfield, East Longmeadow, Easthampton, Frontier (Conway, Deerfield, Sunderland, Whately), Gill-Montague (Gill, Montague), Granby, Granville, Greenfield, Hadley, Hampden-Wilbraham (Hamden, Wilbraham), Hampshire (Chesterfield, Goshen, Southampton, Westhampton, Williamsburg), Hatfield, Hawlemont, Holyoke, Leverett, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Mohawk Trail (Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Plainfield, Shelburne), Northampton, Pelham, Pioneer Valley (Bernardston, Leyden, Northfield, Warwick), Shutesbury, South Hadley, Southampton, Springfield, Sunderland, West Springfield, Westfield, Westhampton, Whately, Williamsburg, Southwick-Tolland (Southwick, Tolland).

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