# Felix Commonwealth Virtual School Executive Summary

## *The executive summary was provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts virtual school applicant group.*

The Felix Commonwealth Virtual School (Felix School, or Felix) is a virtual school that combines a

competency-based digital learning platform with the option for students to learn in-person at community-based sites. We are driven by an unwavering belief that a competency-based foundation, flexible learning, and connected communities best serve students preparing for a changing world and unknown future. In collaboration with students and families, our mission is to unleash time, empowering students to learn at their own pace to achieve their full potential. Our vision: Learn anything, anytime, from anywhere. It’s about time.

We will closely partner with each student at their starting point to co-design goals, create accessible and flexible learning pathways, and guide them to acquiring the academic and social-emotional skills they need for success.

The optional in-person community hubs offer students the ability to join their peers and Success Coaches face-to-face. Following a scaled rollout plan, in-person support will expand over time across the Commonwealth. Local hub sites will be embedded within trusted, local community organizations like the Boys & Girls Club or the YMCA where students can learn during the day, surrounded by caring adults, without a caregiver needing to be present.

**Competency-Based Foundation:** At the Felix School, student learning is measured by a demonstrated proficiency in a subject rather than their age or expected grade level. When a student is ready to progress, they move on confident their future learning is built upon a solid foundation. This includes beginning their postsecondary journey as early as they are ready. Rich hands-on learning, internships, externships, apprenticeships, and access to college and university courses throughout high school ensure successful matriculation to continued education, if desired. In our competency-based learning environment, students will: Demonstrate mastery of core academic knowledge and skills (to grade level or beyond); Exhibit fluency in the application of core skills and knowledge across content; Learn in, contribute to, and be responsible for their communities; Develop ownership of their learning and time.

**Flexible, Adaptive Learning:** Our digital learning platform offers robust personalized education designed to meet the needs of a fast-changing world. Each student has learning pathways adapted to their mastery of the standards laid out in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Our digital learning experience gives students maximum direction over their time, providing flexibility and support to learn at the pace and place that best serves them. In one subject, a student might be moving ahead quicker than expected, while in another they may take more time to achieve mastery.

How does the Felix School keep track of all this personalization and pathways? We provide each student with multiple levels of instruction, support, assessment, and coaching, all aligned to the same powerful goal of helping a student achieve their goals for academics and life. Each student has a personalized learning plan that includes a unique path to graduation, tailored weekly schedule, and individualized pace plans for each course to help students stay on track. The flexible learning model is goal-driven, allowing for a much more tailored and targeted approach to IEP development, progress monitoring, and support identification.

**Connected Learning Communities:** While some students require less support to succeed, others desire the structure of a place to go and people to learn with. The Felix School surrounds the flexible learning model with connected communities of peers and trained adults committed to the holistic maturity of each student. Whether it is neighborhood projects or horizon-broadening electives, these learning communities are embedded within trusted, local community organizations like the Boys & Girls Club or the YMCA. In these spaces brimming with STEAM, athletics, and social opportunities, students are able to demonstrate mastery by applying and extending their knowledge gained in core academics. This part of the model serves as an important scaffold for students needing additional academic or skill support, wellness (nutrition, mental health, physical health), coaching, and connection. Multilingual learners, neurodiverse learners, or those just needing an in-person boost receive personalized help in an environment built for them to be seen and successful.

While creating community within the Felix School is vital, so is connecting with the broader communities surrounding the school. Massachusetts is filled with world-class institutions and businesses that Felix School students will someday join. While at the Felix School, students will prepare for their futures by participating in internships and mentorships brokered at the local level, including those opportunities that are virtual opportunities. Firsthand learning experiences at businesses, nonprofits, and other institutions will prepare students to join, lead, and grow organizations in Massachusetts and beyond.

**Our Guiding Values:** To create a learning experience capable of serving in this way, the Felix School must be a place of Joy, Thriving, Being Known, and Directing our Time.

*Directing our Time* because it is the most valuable commodity each is given. To mature, one must become a master of their whole self, especially over their time.

*Joy* because it ignites our intellectual curiosities and unlocks our academic potential. People choose to invest in the places that bring them joy, and school should be one of those places in a student’s life.

*Thriving* because everyone is built to see themselves at their best, to interrupt maladaptive habits, and to simultaneously experience and celebrate their own wins, power, and potential in real-time.

*Being Known* because we achieve our greatest when we are connected, seen, and understood. When someone is not present, their absence is noticed because they are needed.

##### Incorporating Values into Our School Design:

Motivated by these guiding values, we propose a school that not only espouses these principles but also brings them to life through its design and practices. At the core of this design is a digital learning platform that enables several key features:

1. **Time***.* You are in control of your time. You choose the schedule that works best for you. The core learning journey is delivered virtually, with a mix of synchronous and asynchronous options to create a flexible schedule. Learning Guides and Success Coaches support students in learning how to use their time and be in charge of their schedule. For many students, this will require scaffolding as students learn how to have more responsibility and agency with their time.
2. **Flexible Learning Locations**. Digital Campus and the option of in-person learning at hub sites across MA, including Boys & Girls Clubs and YMCAs. This empowers students to choose the setting, virtual or in-person or a combination, that works best for their life and learning needs.
3. **Adaptive, Competency-Based Learning**. Personalized learning plans will link to students’ individual goals, including a student’s IEP or ML plan where appropriate. When you know the content and are able to demonstrate skill, you move forward. This allows for the opportunity to do accelerated work (e.g. AP courses, college level credit, earn an associate degree at the end of high school). There are multiple ways to demonstrate your knowledge, not just tests and essays.
4. **Learning Guides + Success Coaches**. Gain support virtually and in-person from experts in their fields with a low adult to student ratio of 1:8. Teachers are your Learning Guides. Success Coaches provide holistic support on your learning journey.
5. **Joy, Thriving, and Being Known.** We foster intellectual curiosity. Learning should instill joy. If you’re not yet successful, keep working at it and you will be. We’ll support you.

**Experience and Expertise:** The Felix School design team is led by world-class educators who have extensive experience teaching and leading successful schools. They are working closely with the best in class digital content creators at ASU Prep and Khan Academy. These two groups are partnering with experienced leaders in youth development organizations with long-lasting ties to the communities we seek to serve, including in communities with high concentrations of poverty, multilingual learners, and special education students. With a deep passion for seeing every student in the Commonwealth have an opportunity to excel, this group has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to do the intentional work necessary in every home, street, and neighborhood. This initiative is closely connected with leaders who have demonstrated passion for ensuring the highest quality resources are available to all kids.