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“ . . . arguably the best known charter school in America.”

--Chester Finn, et. al., *Charter Schools in Action*, 2000.

Dear Commissioner Driscoll,

City on a Hill is at an important juncture in the history of our school. After seven years of successful start-up operation, the board, administration, and faculty are deeply engaged in making City on a Hill a sustainable organization with institutional mechanisms in place that ensure the perpetuity of our co-founders' vision. This year has been an inaugural experience that has allowed our newly appointed President, Dr. Steven C. Leonard, and the board, under my new leadership, to strengthen and clarify our governance capabilities. The result has been a year of brisk activity ably led by Dr. Leonard, a seasoned urban public school educator. In the short period of a year, our president has made visible strides in shaping the day to day work necessary to continue to deliver the excellent education parents and the public has come to expect from City on a Hill.

City on a Hill closes the achievement gap for urban students, in particular economically disadvantaged and minority populations. Every year since our inception, our biggest challenge is preparing our students to meet our graduation requirements within 4 years and to pass MCAS in 2 years. As most of our students enroll performing significantly behind academically, we are delighted to report that as of this writing, 100% of the class of 2003 have passed the English section of the MCAS and 98.6% of that same class have passed the Math test. We are confident that all students in the class of 2003 will pass both sections of MCAS by their graduation date in June of next year.

Our college preparation record continues to be stronger than ever for an open enrollment urban high school within the city of Boston. For the fifth consecutive year, 100% of City on a Hill graduates applied and were accepted to college. We graduated our largest class ever, 38 students, a 111% increase than the class of 2001. Our students are in demand by academically competitive colleges such as Bryn Mawr, Wellesley, Brandeis, Tufts, Smith, Morehouse and Boston College to name a few. We continue to build upon our formula for success as is evidenced by a 24% increase in retention for the class of 2003 representing fifty one juniors who are on track to graduate. We credit these gains to our dedicated and hardworking faculty, and in addition, to two initiatives created to address our attrition percentages - the summer program for course and competency credit, which extends the school year and the change to a block schedule, which increased time on instruction. Both initiatives are critical to helping our student population erase previous academic deficiencies.

*Lastly, we continue to invest deeply in the learning and professional development of our teachers, administrators, staff and teaching fellow novitiates. City on a Hill and Northeastern University School of Education have launched the Community Teacher Institute, a joint venture to fully realize the vision of our school based, immersion-in-practice teacher preparation program. Our partnership puts the heart and soul of the preparation of new professionals and the investment and development of veteran faculty in the service of high academic student achievement. **There is no greater need in urban schools than good teachers.** The national report, What Matters Most: Teaching For America's Future argues that "recruiting, preparing and retaining good teachers is the central strategy for improving our nation's schools." The Community Teachers Institute allows teacher novitiates and our faculty to deepen our school's capacity to get better at our work and to ensure that we are a learning organization for the adults as well as the students. The partnership with Northeastern has allowed us to increase the number of fellows in our program by 120%. Forty percent of our fellows are people of color – a gain that begins to address the need for a diverse faculty in urban high need districts.*

These past seven years, we have learned some important lessons that have contributed to how we think about structure and the challenges we will continue to face. What we now know is that achieving results with our students requires relentless focus on practice, diligent attention to curriculum and instruction, and whole-school scrutiny of specific performance data. We also know preparing all students to achieve results costs more than preparing some. The opportunity to contribute to real educational improvement has never been greater. We are committed, at City on a Hill, to doing what we have done best for seven years - closing the achievement gap. We have never been closer to realizing our mission than we are now. Our mission states: City on a Hill Public Charter School, a public high school in urban Boston, emphasizes academic achievement, citizenship, teacher leadership, and public accountability. We seek to graduate, responsible, resourceful, and respectful democratic citizens prepared to advance community, culture and commerce, and to compete in the 21st century. As my predecessor and our co-founder, Sarah Kass, wrote to you one year ago, and I recommit to here, we will build that city upon a hill, with the eyes of all people upon us.

Sincerely,



*Harry Spence
Board Chair*

1 August 2002

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CITY ON A HILL PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL is a public high school in urban Boston. We emphasize academic achievement, citizenship, teacher leadership, and public accountability. We seek to graduate responsible, resourceful, and respectful democratic citizens prepared to advance community, culture and commerce, and to compete in the 21st century.

MADE HISTORY. City On A Hill is the first public charter high school in Massachusetts to be accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges in December of 2001. We are also the first Massachusetts public charter high school founded and designed by teachers. In January 2000, the Massachusetts State Board of Education renewed City On A Hill's Charter for another 5 years.

STUDENTS. City On A Hill students are selected by lottery *without* regard to past performance in school; 80% are children of color; over 69% report qualifying for free and reduced lunch; more than 75% come to us reading below grade level; 20% are first generation Americans.

ACADEMICS. City On A Hill students study a rigorous academic program. *All* students read Shakespeare. *All* students write essays. *All* students speak in public. *All* students use technology. *All* students study high school mathematics. *All* students do laboratory sciences. *All* students study primary documents in history. *All* students learn to converse in a second language. *All* students learn to swim.

CITIZENSHIP. City On A Hill **students** learn habits of good citizenship: civility, participation, and engagement. They wear a simple uniform. They learn in a safe, respectful and intimate environment. They participate in weekly school Town Meetings--debating everything from school policy to national affairs. They perform community service at over 100 sites.

ACCOUNTABILITY. The community holds City On A Hill accountable for results. At City On A Hill there is no social promotion and a diploma means more. Students **earn** their diplomas because they can **write** a coherent essay, **read** world class literature with understanding, **deliver** a public speech, **analyze** important American documents, **complete and defend** an independent City Project, **apply** mathematical concepts, **perform** an independent science project, **converse** in Spanish, **use** technology for learning, and **swim**. Nearly 100 citizen jurors assessed students' progress toward achieving competency in various subjects.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS. City On A Hill is connected to the community. From our students' families, to the YMCA where we are housed, to our city's fine museums, our students learn from and have access to the best of Boston. We salute our partners: the YMCA, the Huntington Theater, Northeastern University, the Museum of Science, and the New England Aquarium. We thank the 100+ community organizations--including the Young Achievers Science & Math Pilot School, City Year, Boston Plan for Excellence, WGBH radio and Youth Advocacy Project--which host our students as community service learners.

THE COMMUNITY TEACHERS' INSTITUTE AT CITY ON A HILL trains and sustains urban public high school teachers. The Teachers' Institute offers **fellowships** to exceptional people interested in preparing to become teachers, and **diversifies the career paths** of veteran teachers, providing them opportunities to do research, to induct teacher novitiates, to publish, to travel and to further their education.

2001-2002 RESULTS

Graduates

38 students graduated in 2002, an **111%** increase in retention compared to the class of 2001.

100% of 2002 graduates were accepted to college and collectively earned over **50** admission offers to colleges throughout the country.

95% of our graduates *earned* their diploma because they demonstrated competence in reading, writing, mathematics, science, Spanish and swimming.

100% of our graduates completed an independent City Project. Our graduates participated in over **130** City on a Hill Town Meetings and contributed over **6000** hours of service to the greater Boston community.

Attendance

Average Daily Attendance was **90%**.
We maintained over **94%** enrollment for the year.

Test Scores

Our 9th graders gained an average of **14** months in Reading and **13** months in Math between October, 2001 and May, 2002.

9th graders testing well below grade level who were placed in our Intensive Language and Math (ILM) program transitional program gained **18** months in Reading and **16** months in Math between October, 2001 and May 2002.

(SAT)

Our seniors' combined math and verbal Mean Total SAT scores was **891**.

(MCAS)

For the fourth year in a row, more City On A Hill 10th graders passed the 2000 MCAS than all 15 non-exam public high schools in Boston:

	English	Math
City On A Hill	75%	71%
Boston Public Schools	60%	53%

Retention

City on a Hill's rising senior class, the class of 2003 has increased by 25%, to 51 seniors on track to graduate in June of 2003, the largest senior class to date in our seven year history.

Citizenship

In 2001-2002, City On A Hill students contributed more than 13,000 hours of service to over 100 organizations in Greater Boston.

Admissions

Enrollment increased from 65 students in 1995-96 to 212 students in 2001-2002.

City On A Hill maintained a waiting list of over 147 students for the 2001-02 school year.

Accountability

For the 7th year in a row, over 100 citizens reviewed students' year-end academic work.

Leadership

The Teachers' Institute at City On A Hill graduated its second cohort of five urban teachers in June of 2002. In the upcoming 2002-2003 academic year, City on a Hill and Northeastern University School of Education will launch the Community Teacher Institute, a joint venture to fully realize the vision of our school based, immersion-in-practice teacher preparation program The Teachers' Institute. The partnership will enable us to increase the number of teaching fellows in the program by 120% to 12.

THE FIFTH GRADUATING CLASS OF CITY ON A HILL

On June 5, 2002, at a ceremony at the New England Conservatory's Brown Hall, City On A Hill Public Charter School sent forth its Fifth graduating class.

- **100% of our graduates earned acceptance to college.**
- **95% of our graduates *earned* their diplomas because they demonstrated competence in reading, writing, mathematics, science, Spanish and swimming.**
- **100% of our graduates completed an independent City Project: researching a civic question of their own design, performing an internship at a related site, writing up and presenting their findings.**
- **Our graduates each participated in over 130 City On A Hill weekly Town Meetings.**
- **Our graduates contributed over 6000 hours of service to the work of the greater Boston community.**

Class of 2002 earned acceptance at . . .

Benjamin Franklin Institute
Boston College (2)
Bridgewater State College
Bunker Hill Community College (3)
Bryn Mawr
Curry College
Emmanuel College
Fisher College
Hampton University
Johnson and Wales College

Johnson State College
Lesley College
Massachusetts Bay Community College
Massachusetts College of Pharmacy
Massasoit Community College
Morehouse College
Morgan State
Mount Holyoke College
Newbury College
Northeastern University (5)

Regis College
Simmons College
Smith College (2)
Southeastern College
Springfield College
The College of New Rochelle (2)
University of Massachusetts-Amherst (3)
University of Massachusetts -Dartmouth
Utah Valley State
Virginia State College

--Citizen Scholar, Modupe Irerua excerpt of Graduation Speech

When I first began at City on a Hill, I was naïve. I didn't see what was directly in front of me, or may, I just didn't want to. Like the main character of the Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison, I was blind to many things that were going on around me at City on a Hill. Being in this closed mindset, I was quick to believe what other people said. I was vulnerable to the deceit and advice of other people who pretended to care about me. I was often lead astray. I mistakenly thought that being open minded was blindly accepting whatever people would give me without question. I trusted everyone because I believed that everyone thought the same way as me. I believed that everyone followed the same code of conduct.

As a senior, I know better. No specific event precipitated this change, It was gradual, like waking up from a sleep. A bright light was shined in my eye. That light was a harsh reality. I perceived that some people did not have my best interests at heart and were not true to their word. I hypothesized that this was because certain people had mediocre or low expectations of themselves. These were the people in whom I had put my trust, people who seemed to not even trust themselves enough to strive for excellence in everything they do.

It has taken me about three years to realize that it is not actually anyone else's responsibility to look out for me, it is my own. I know that I have to depend on myself and trust those who first trust themselves. I trust myself, because I know what it is that I want and I work my hardest to get it. However, just as I was naïve, I realize now that I was mistaken in blaming others for not taking what is really my own responsibility

STUDENT	CITY PROJECT QUESTION	COLLEGE CHOICE
RICKY BAKER	What is the impact of racial profiling in the African American Boston community?	Morehouse College
NED BEAUCHAMP	How does computer education benefit urban communities?	UMass - Amherst
MONICA CARVAJAL	What impact do changes in U.S. immigration policy have on Hispanic immigrants?	Fisher College
MICHELLE CLOUDEN	Why is a student with additional needs labeled in the disability category and is this label fair?	Benjamin Franklin Institute
ELIZABETH COURIER	What is the cultural significance of the cornrow hairstyle in the African American community of Boston today?	Northeastern University
DAVID DESSIN	Do males that participate in basketball academically excel over those who do not participate?	Morgan State University
RICHARD DOLAN	What is the impact of student physical education participation on school performance?	Mass Bay Community College
KARECIA DOPSON-LODGE	What is the role of land trusts in communities of color?	Bunker Hill Community College
PENODE DORISCA	Is music therapy? If so, what are the research findings?	The College of New Rochelle
OMAFUME EJOFODOMI	What kinds of messages do mainstream hip-hop artists send to teenagers regarding education?	Northeastern University
NELIA EROLD	How does fatherhood programs help teen dads prepare for parenting?	The College of New Rochelle
BOBBY GIST	Is rap's portrayal of women accurate?	Fisher College
KATHERINE GORIN	How does portion distortions contribute to the problem of obesity in the United States?	Mass College of Pharmacy
SHAWN GRIFFITHS	What is the maximum utilization of technology in public schools?	Bunker Hill Community College
MODUPE IRERUA	How will a peer mediation program in the COAH curriculum facilitate better communication between students and faculty?	Boston College
MACKENZIE JOSEPH	What are the most pressing health issues in communities of color?	Bunker Hill Community College
WILLE MYERS	Does mentoring the youth contribute to the growth of society?	Newbury College
NHI NGUYEN	How can educators bring Asian American Literature into the classroom?	Emmanuel College
SYNTHIA OLIVIER	Is there a need at COAH for a life training skills class that teaches teenagers healthy living habits and about sexuality, violence and drugs?	Massasoit Community College
EMILY PEDEN	What are the effects of early childhood education?	Utah Valley State

STUDENT	CITY PROJECT QUESTION	COLLEGE CHOICE
MELISSA PINCKNEY	How are teens portrayed in the media?	Southeastern College
JON BRIAN REID	Can endangered species be protected?	Mass College of Liberal Arts
SARAH RICE	How can public schools teach culturally relevant history?	Smith College
JOANNA ROBERTSON	What is the impact on Title IX on education?	Bryn Mawr
LURENA RODRIGUES	Is probation effective rehabilitation or punishment?	Lesley College
FATIMAH SADIQ	Have abused children who participate in governmental recovery programs productively benefited from them?	Virginia State University
LASHARI SALERY	What is the community stance on vivisection?	Hampton University
ALICIA SCOTT-GARRELL	Are urban youth influenced by the negative messages in rap music?	Northeastern University
KELNIAH SIMPSON	Is there a connection between environmental issues and the number of whale strandings in the United States?	Northeastern University
JESSICA ST. PIERRE	What are the effects of television violence on children?	Regis College
UNDREA STEELE	What are the psychological effects of children whose parents are substance abusers?	UMass - Amherst
ISRAEL VAZQUEZ	What is the impact of Technology in education?	UMass – Dartmouth
JASON WILLIAMS	How do poor fitness habits and an unhealthy diet affect Black communities in the inner city?	Northeastern University

SCHOOL PROGRAM

GRADE LEVELS SERVED. In 2001-2002, City On A Hill served 75 ninth graders, 50 tenth graders, 43 eleventh graders and 44 fourth year students, not all of whom were certified seniors; our total enrollment averaged 212 students.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND ADMISSIONS PROCESS. City On A Hill students are Boston residents who have passed the 8th grade. They are selected by lottery *without* regard to past performance in school.

During the early months of 2001, we visited middle schools all over Boston to interest students in City On A Hill. We also placed ads in community newspapers. To enter our lottery for 2001-2002, students had to be Boston residents in the 8th grade. Interested students had to attend an Admissions Session at City On A Hill where they could experience typical City On A Hill academic assignments and activities. In early March 2002, we drew our lottery for students entering in September 2002. Students whose names were pulled, had to submit 8th grade diplomas and proof of residence in order to claim their places. Students whose names were not among the first 100 pulled were put on the waiting list. The admissions process was the same as in previous years. 8th graders with siblings already enrolled at City On A Hill were given preference for enrollment.

*****City On A Hill is accepting 100 students for the 2002-2003 school year. All Boston students in the 8th grade and 9th grade in 2001-02 are eligible to apply. Interested students and/or parents should call City On A Hill at 617-262-9838, ext.130, for more information. Our lottery is drawn in the spring of each year for admission in September.***

CURRICULUM. City On A Hill students study a rigorous core curriculum, and must demonstrate competency in each course at each grade level in order to be promoted.

In four years of English, students gain proficiency in literary analysis, and written and spoken communication. They read contemporary fiction as well as world class literature; they read at least one Shakespeare play every year Every English class culminates in a significant writing assignment and speaking, writing competencies. In history, students learn world history in the first year, and then take an intensive two year American history course, where they work with primary documents, and do research papers, and make oral and written arguments on historical topics. In four years of math, students study an integrated algebra and geometry curriculum. They contend with probability and statistics, use spreadsheets, and practice reasoning through complex mathematical problems. In science, students study earth science, biology, and a year of chemistry, with labs at the Museum of Science. Students complete a “Design Your Own Planet” project at the end of the first year applying geologic principles. They expand this into “Design Your Own Ecosystem” project in biology, including genetics applications and other new content. At the end of their third year, students must complete an independent science experiment and write it up in scientific journal form. Students study three years of Spanish. Students take sports at the YMCA and must pass a swim test. Students study civics. All students participate in City On A Hill’s weekly Town Meeting. Every student must complete a successful community service learning assignment each winter, and a senior independent City Project for graduation. City On A Hill students also take electives—from judo to art history, Caribbean literature to mock trial.

STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO. In 2001-2002 there was a student/teacher ratio of 9.8:1. The average academic class size was 18 students.

SCHOOL CALENDAR AND HOURS OF OPERATION. City On A Hill followed the Boston Public Schools calendar, with the exception of the BPS professional development days. The school year commenced September 5, 2001 and ended June 14, 2002. The upcoming calendar year will start on September 4, 2002 and end June 13, 2003. The school day starts at 7:45 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. (3:00-3:30 Teachers are available for students) and at 3:30 extra curricular programs, making City On A Hill’s year **36% longer than the required 990 hours**. The school building is typically open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

2001-2002 STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Number of students enrolled	212 of 225
Gender	43% boys. 57% girls.
Race	78% Black 9% White 10% Hispanic. 02% Asian. 01% Native American.
Free lunch & Reduced lunch	69% reported.
IEP	4.5%
504 Accommodation	3%
Academic Support	12%
LEP	0
Average Daily Attendance	90%
Average Membership Rate	95%
Student Turnover Data	0 dropped out. 16 transferred. 0 were expelled
Accepted from Waiting List	16 students enrolled after the first day of school.

APPLICANT INFORMATION TO ENROLL FOR 2002-03

Number of applicants	247
Number of students admitted	100
Number of students on the waiting list	147

The 247 students who entered the lottery came from all over Boston:

Allston	1%
Boston	22%
Brighton	1%
Charlestown	1%
Dorchester	39%
East Boston	1%
Hyde Park	6%
Jamaica Plain	4%
Malden	1%
Mattapan	5%
Quincy	1%
Roslindale	4%
Roxbury	11%
South Boston	3%

level after summer school. English, Math and History have multiple competency requirements per course.

English

Before summer 44 students had English pending

English	Course Only	Competency Writing	Competency Reading
Level I	5	8	12
Level II	9	9	14
Level III	4	5	4
Level IV	3	0	0

After summer 28 were promoted to the next level

Math

Before summer 49 students had Math pending

Math	Course Only	Key Con.	Basic Skills	Proj. W/P	Presentation
Level I	5	9	5	6	14
Level II	4	5	N/A	4	10
Level III	3	9	N/A	5	7
Level IV	3	4	N/A	3	3

After summer 39 were promoted to the next level

History

Before summer 53 students had History pending

History	Course Only	Docu. Analysis	Research Paper
Level I	1	10	N/A
Level II	7	5	N/A
Level II & III	0	N/A	5
Level III	5	2	8
Level IV	2	N/A	N/A

After summer 33 were promoted to the next level

Science

Before summer 32 students had Science pending

Science	Course Only	Machine Competency	Final Exam
Physical Science	17	15	20
Biology	5	N/A	4
Chemistry	2	N/A	2
Physiology	0	N/A	0

After summer 24 were promoted to the next level

