

## **Bentley Academy Charter School**

Members of the Founding Group and Proposed Board of Trustees

*This document was originally prepared by the applicant group of the proposed Bentley Academy Charter School but modified for content by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.*

### *Founding group members*

The founding group is comprised of individuals with a diverse set of skills and backgrounds. Three members of the founding group (Patrick Schultz, Matt Spengler, and Sarah Toce) represent the original three partnering organizations, SPS, Blueprint, and Empower, respectively. Each has been involved in the development of the regulatory strategy, the educational plan for the restart (and thus the Horace Mann), securing necessary agreements (particularly with the Salem School Committee and the Salem Teachers Union), and the launch of operations at the Bentley restart.

The other founding group members are key staff at the Bentley Elementary School Restart operating in the 2014-15 school year: Justin Vernon, Head of School/Principal; Marlena Afonso, Head of Operations; Marquis Victor, Dean of Student Success; Shawn Berry, lead teacher; and Rebecca Lewis, lead teacher.

Marlena Afonso- Marlena most recently earned her Ed.M. from the Harvard Graduate school of Education in the School Leadership program. She has spent the past six years in education with positions ranging from classroom teacher, to special populations chair, to non-profit operations. She has valuable experience in both a traditional school and a charter school, to inform her involvement with the Bentley Restart and BACS. This year, as Head of Operations, she manages the school budget, coordinates the Math Fellows program, developed the school calendar, and developed in collaboration with teachers, all school policies. Additionally, Marlena speaks both Portuguese and Spanish, which assists in communication and relationship-building in the native languages of many BACS families.

Shawn Berry- Shawn was one of the first teachers hired for the Bentley Restart effort due to her outstanding results as a teacher and her connection to the Salem community. As a teacher at Salem Academy (a Commonwealth charter school in Salem) for eight years, Shawn assumed increasing responsibility for curricular development and student support. Shawn is a lead teacher at the Restart, mentoring less experienced teachers and driving professional development opportunities to meet staff needs.

Rebecca Lewis- Rebecca comes to the Bentley Restart after teaching at UP Academy (a highly successful turnaround school organization) in Boston and Lawrence. As a founding teacher at each of the UP schools she is familiar with the policies and practices of a highly successful start-up school and has been and will continue to be an invaluable teacher leader.

Patrick Schultz- Pat brings a number of strengths drawn from his experience as a teacher, department chair and assistant principal in Salem and Chelsea, as well as a director of school services at a Boston based non-profit. He is also a successful Salem restaurant owner and Salem School Committee member. He has a thorough understanding from inside a school, combined with his business acumen has been very helpful as Bentley navigated the first year of the SPS

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partnership.

Matthew Spengler- Matt has spent nearly 25 years in public education as a teacher, a principal, a school founder, assistant to a major superintendent, a consultant, the academic director at a non-profit CMO, and most recently as the founder of Blueprint Schools Network, a non-profit organization that partners with school districts to turn around their lowest performing schools. His broad experience was particularly helpful during the summer months as the Bentley restart was in development. His deep understanding of the inner workings of district processes has helped this fledgling partnership improve.

Sarah Toce- Sarah works for Empower Schools and was the lead project director for the Bentley Restart in 2014. She has worked in education-related organizations since 2006. As a lobbyist's assistant, researcher, and executive director of a statewide charter school association, she has a deep knowledge of policy and state law as it relates to education which will continue to be important in this groundbreaking partnership and regulatory environment. She recently earned her Ed.M. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education in the education policy and management.

Justin Vernon- Justin is a Salem resident who most recently brought a Boston Public School from level 3 to level 1 in just one year. As the founding Principal of Clap Innovation School, Justin not only understands the responsibilities of a start-up principal, but particularly those of a principal at an autonomous public school. He completed both the Harvard Graduate School of Education School Leadership program and Lynch Leadership Fellowship.

Marquis Victor- Marquis was the founding Dean of Student Success at the Clap Innovation School with Justin Vernon where he spearheaded the effort to create a school culture focused on high expectations and strong behavioral supports. He was also responsible for many of the community partnerships that helped Clap achieve Level 1 status. A north shore native, Marquis was named Student Athlete of the year in 2008 at Salem State University and maintains many of his connections in the community.

### *Founding board of trustees*

The board currently has 8 committed members, including a representative from the Salem School Committee and one from Empower Schools, and will grow over the course of the 2014-2015 school year to encompass up to 15 members by June of 2015. Current members are listed below:

Marie Stephania Baloney: The parent of a current Bentley Elementary student, Marie was upset to learn that her child had been placed at Bentley, a Level 4 school, when she moved from a neighboring district recently. With no other options, she met with Justin Vernon and Marlena Afonso and realized that the restart was the kind of school she wanted to be a part of. She

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volunteered her efforts on day one and is now a founding board member. Marie has a background in human resources, specifically working with individuals with disabilities. She brings skills, passion, and a parent's perspective to the board.

John Casey: Motivated by the knowledge that not all children have the same focus on college that he did as a student, John is dedicated to creating a school that changes this for Salem's most at-risk students. With a degree in business administration and experience at several human resources and operations positions in the banking, high tech and healthcare industries for the past twenty years, John brings a considerable amount of talent and expertise to the board. He is also a board member and treasurer of Salem Award Foundation, a local non-profit with a focus on human rights and social justice.

Angel Donahue-Rodriguez: As a third grader who did not speak any English, Angel understands the challenges facing BACS. Now, a graduate of Salem State, and working in Representative Parisella's office, he brings a wide range of skills to the board including a deep understanding of state law and carefully honed management skills. Angel is also currently pursuing an MBA degree.

Rachel Hunt: Rachel is currently a Salem School Committee member and will help ensure collaboration between the school and the district. Additionally, Rachel is the founder and was Head of School at Salem Academy, a high performing Commonwealth Charter School in Salem, until the summer of 2014. She brings a practical knowledge of school operations and educational philosophy to the board of trustees.

Ryan Lovell: Ryan is the Associate Director for Graduate Education at Endicott College and Coordinator of the Teaching Fellows Program. He brings experience with and commitment to increasing the quality of teacher candidates in MA through building collaborative partnerships between schools and colleges. Ryan is a former state coordinator for program approval at DESE and licensure director for Cambridge College.

Christine Sullivan: With her experience as CEO of the Enterprise Center at Salem State, Christine brings the business, strategy, and fundraising expertise to the board. A Salem resident, Christine began following the Bentley Elementary story in 2012 and was disappointed with the lack of bold action. Once the Salem School Committee voted to move forward with this path, Christine was re-engaged and is now committed to ensuring that BACS fulfills the needs of Salem's students.

Sarah Toce: (See bio in the founding group section)

Kristine Wilson: A 37 year veteran of Salem Public Schools, Kris brings an invaluable perspective to the board. She will be an asset as BACS further develops the relationship with SPS, and as it builds new relationships with other Salem organizations.