

Barbara Rivera Regional Community Action Charter School  
Commonwealth Charter Prospectus

Submitted by the Barbara Rivera Regional Community Action  
Charter School Founding Group  
August 2, 2010

## Table of Contents

	Page
<b>1. Information Sheet</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Certification Statement</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Public Statement</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5. Mission</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6. Vision</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>7. Description of Community to be Served</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>8. Educational Philosophy</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>9. Curriculum and Instruction</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>10. Assessment System</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>11. School Characteristics</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>12. Special Student Populations and Student Services</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>13. Capacity</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>14. Governance Structure</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>15. Statements of Commitment and Resumes of Founding Group</b>	

## Commonwealth Charter Applicant Information Sheet

*This form must be attached to the letter of intent, prospectus, and final application. Please type information.*

**Name of Proposed Charter School:** Barbara Rivera Regional Community Action Charter School

**School Address (if known):** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Location (City/Town REQUIRED):** Springfield

**Primary Contact Person:** Michael Denney

**Address:** 2383 Main Street

**City:** Springfield      **State:** MA      **Zip:** 01107

**Daytime Tel:** (413) 747-0090      **Fax:** (413)

**Email:** [mdenney@newnorthcc.org](mailto:mdenney@newnorthcc.org)

**1. The proposed school will open in the fall of school year: 2011**

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	6-8	120
Second Year	6-9	160
Third Year	6-10	200
Fourth Year	K-3, 6-12	320
Fifth Year	K-12	520

**2. Grade span at full enrollment:** \_\_\_\_\_ K-12 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Total student enrollment when fully expanded:** \_\_\_\_\_ 520 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Age at entry for kindergarten, if applicable:** \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Will this school be a regional charter school?**  Yes    No

**If yes, list the school districts (including regional school districts) in the proposed region.** Please only list districts that are included in Appendix B. (Use additional sheets if necessary.)

Springfield \_\_\_\_\_

Holyoke \_\_\_\_\_

Chicopee \_\_\_\_\_

**If no, please specify the district's population as reported in the most recent United States census estimate for the community the school intends to serve:** \_\_\_\_\_. *The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall not approve a new Commonwealth charter school in any community with a population of less than 30,000 as determined by the most recent United States census estimate [available at: <http://www.census.gov/>], unless it is a regional charter school. (MGL c. 71 § 89(i)(1)).*

**6. For all proposed charter schools, list the districts that are contiguous with the proposed school's district or region.** Please only list districts that are included in Appendix B. (Use additional sheets if necessary.)

Springfield	_____	_____
Holyoke	_____	_____
Chicopee	_____	_____

**7. Is the proposed school to be located in a district where overall student performance on the MCAS is in the lowest 10 percent, as designated in Appendix B?**  Yes  No

**8. Will the proposed school be located in a district or districts in which the 9 percent net school spending cap is, or could be, exceeded by 2010-11 applications?**  Yes  No

**9. Is the applicant group currently the board of trustees of an existing charter school?**  Yes  No

**10. Is the applicant group/board of trustees intending to create a network of schools?**  Yes  No

**11. If the applicant group/board of trustees is intending to create a network of schools, how many applications is the group submitting in the 2010-11 application cycle?** \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Do members of the applicant group currently operate or are they employed by a private or parochial school?**  Yes  No

## Commonwealth Charter School Certification Statement

Proposed Charter School Name: Barbara Rivera Regional Community Action School

Proposed School Location (City/Town): Springfield

I hereby certify that the information submitted in this prospectus/application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and that this prospectus/application has been or is being sent to the superintendent of each of the districts from which we expect to draw students and from any contiguous districts. Further, I understand that, if awarded a charter, the proposed school shall be open to all students on a space available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or academic achievement. I further understand that the information submitted in this prospectus/application serves as an initial application for start-up assistance funding under the federal Charter Schools Program grant. This is a true statement, made under the penalties of perjury.

Signature of

Authorized Person: \_\_\_\_\_ See Original \_\_\_\_\_ Date: August 4, 2010

*(Please label the copy that has original signatures.)*

Print/Type Name: Michael Denney, Executive Director

Address: New North Citizens' Council, 2383 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01107

Daytime Phone: 413-747-0090 Fax: 413-737-2321

## Executive Summary

**Mission** The Barbara Rivera Regional Community Action Charter School prepares Springfield, Holyoke and Chicopee students K-12 to perform at high level of academic excellence and to succeed in college by overcoming the language and cultural barriers that marginalize them both at school and their chosen communities. Through a rigorous curriculum, extended academic time, civic engagement and our extended network of partnerships with supportive service providers, we ensure a higher quality of life for students, their families and our community.

**Need** We propose to serve children that disproportionately make up a large percentage of the regions Special Needs populations and are at the greatest risk of dropping out by the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. There is an extensive overlap between these children and ELL students. ELL student populations are largely made up of Latinos and other ethnic minorities living under the federal poverty guidelines.

Springfield and Holyoke have consistently been two of the lowest performing school districts in the state. Also, Latinos are under achieving in Chicopee when compared to other race and ethnic groups. In all three districts, Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) which charts a school district's progress toward achieving minimum levels of improvement on MCAS results has also been substandard among our target populations.

**Educational Program** Our curriculum will be structured around 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Frameworks and in accordance with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and will incorporate many best practices used at other successful charter schools. . It is designed to challenge students to do their best academically regardless of their language proficiency, special education status, or the academic level at which they enter the school. Our rigorous core academic program provides more time. Frequent evaluations will ensure that teachers and families know exactly where each student stands in relation to our rigorous standards and what each student needs to do to make progress. They will ensure that group instruction, lesson planning, and student support can be adjusted in direct response to their results. Our teachers must be willing to do whatever it takes for our students to succeed in college and to engage in their communities as active democratic citizens.

**Our Background** Our founding group is made up of professionals from a varied list of disciplines with an extensive background in working with our target population. Our respective successes in providing services to the selected community include projects in early education and care, adult education, afterschool/wrap around services, summer camps, job placement, housing, and teen services. Each member's work would be much more impactful if it were integrated into an educational setting.

**Public Statement**

“The Barbara Rivera Regional Community Action Charter School will use a rigorous curriculum, extended academic time and a varied list of supportive services to prepare students of traditionally marginalized groups to succeed in college and beyond. We will instill the value of education in K-12 students as the vehicle to escape poverty and the greatest tool for combating discrimination in the quest for justice and freedom. Located in the North End neighborhood of Springfield, we are affiliated with New North Citizens’ Council, Inc.”

## **Charter School Mission, Vision, and Description of the Community to be Served**

### **A. Mission Statement**

The Barbara Rivera Regional Community Action Charter School prepares Springfield, Holyoke and Chicopee students K-12 to perform at high level of academic excellence and to succeed in college by overcoming the language and cultural barriers that marginalize them both at school and their chosen communities. Through a rigorous curriculum, extended academic time, civic engagement and our extended network of partnerships with supportive service providers, we ensure a higher quality of life for students, their families and our community.

### **B. Vision Statement**

We believe that each child, regardless of socioeconomic status, is entitled to an education which prepares them to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. For Latinos and other marginalized groups, this includes the integration of their community and family experience into a superior academic environment founded on high expectations. That integration can be strengthened by the provision of social services necessary to address the issues of circumstance getting in the way of student, family and community advancement.

Barbara Rivera, a well-known and admired, local organizer and community activist, dedicated her life to mobilizing residents to address such issues. Her legacy of promoting civic engagement changed the lives of many families. Our effort is a continuation of her dedication to serving our community.

- **Academics:** We envision developing active learners through high quality, standards-based academic and co-curricular programs. We will use the study of arts and technology as the context for college preparation. Students will study the humanities, mathematics and science and use art and technology to learn in each class. Instruction will be extended in hours and outside of the classroom. We will make the curriculum relevant to the lives and experience of our students. There will be educational supportive and mentoring services scheduled into each school day. We will guarantee that students are prepared for college by teaching them that it is an achievable goal. One that will change the course of their lives and will make them life-long learners, and active citizens.
- **Family/Community:** Family and community are great influences in the lives of our students. This is especially true for those students with language barriers and other obstacles keeping them from achievement. It is imperative that the school become a welcoming place where the relationship between home/school/community is collaborative, respectful and progressive. Each sector should inform the other in respect to the needs of each student and have a voice in the planning and implementation process.
- **Comprehensive Service Provision:** Our target population currently does not enter school ready to learn. The high rates of poverty, drug abuse, homelessness, lack of access to fresh food, domestic violence and crime in our target neighborhoods indicate that each of our students is experiencing one or more of these in their home; certainly on their street. Our extensive network of collaborative relationships with local social service agencies will provide access to health, mental health, food and fitness services, afterschool services, adult education opportunities and job placement services. The provision of comprehensive services will be offered to the entire family.

### **C. Description of the Community to be served**

*Speak to the value of the school, based on its own merit.*



The Barbara Rivera Regional Community Action Charter School is designed to combine high academic standards with opportunities to learn in all settings. Children experience and practice the arts and humanities as an integrated part of their studies in social studies, science and mathematics. Technology will be used in all settings to ensure constant communication and prepare students to compete in the global economy. Every child is known well by the teachers, and his or her gifts, talents and special needs are recognized and addressed.

Parents will play an integral role in the educational experience of the children through volunteer opportunities inside and outside the classroom, leadership positions, and reinforcement at home. Teachers, administrators, and other staff members and parents model life-long learning and civic engagement through consistent practices and behavior both in and out of the classroom. Parents, community members, and other individuals share in the learning experience through various opportunities.

We will build a community of learners who are interested in building capacity among themselves to ensure the prosperity of the community as whole based on principles of freedom that promote a healthy sense of self determination.

*Describe the student population that the proposed charter school would serve and the needs of that population.*

We propose to serve children that disproportionately make up a large percentage of the regions Special Needs populations and are at the greatest risk of dropping out by the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. There is an extensive overlap between these children and ELL students. ELL student populations are largely made up of Latinos and other ethnic minorities living under the federal poverty guidelines.

These categories overlap in our target districts in the following manner:

	<b>Springfield</b>	<b>Holyoke</b>	<b>Chicopee</b>
Latino	55%	77%	27%
Living Under the Federal Poverty Guidelines	81%	74%	61%
ELL	36%	51%	14%

Springfield and Holyoke have consistently been two of the lowest performing school districts in the state. Also, Latinos are under achieving in Chicopee when compared to other race and ethnic groups. In all three districts, Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) which charts a school district’s progress toward achieving minimum levels of improvement on MCAS results has also been substandard among our target populations.

The following chart shows the MCAS results by academic area (Language Arts, Math and Science) for 2009 for grades three through eight. This chart compares the three districts to the State by race/ethnicity under the categories of Needs Improvement & Warning/Failing.

Grade & Subject	Percentage in Needs Improvement & Warning/Failing Categories											
	Latinos				African Americans				Whites			
	Spfld	Holyoke	Chicopee	State	Spfld	Holyoke	Chicopee	State	Spfld	Holyoke	Chicopee	State
Grade 3-Reading	71	88	70	68	63	66	61	65	47	48	52	35
Grade 3-Math	69	87	69	65	64	89	61	67	40	52	55	67
Grade 4-English	77	90	73	72	70	92	76	71	55	58	60	39
Grade 4-Math	78	92	84	75	75	92	92	76	54	69	61	46
Grade 5-English	67	87	65	65	65	79	69	61	45	63	38	30
Grade 5-Math	75	91	78	72	74	85	91	69	53	70	52	40
Grade 5-Science & Technology	84	92	88	79	89	93	96	82	61	68	64	43
Grade 6-English	74	83	60	60	69	80	44	54	56	45	37	27
Grade 6-Math	85	84	76	70	85	86	54	68	60	47	52	36
Grade 7-English Language Arts	72	82	71	47	60	82	54	50	44	38	44	23
Grade 7-Math	88	92	87	77	85	95	66	77	70	63	60	44
Grade 8-English Language Arts	60	62	46	44	48	35	54	66	37	28	28	16
Grade 8-Math	93	91	81	78	91	77	87	76	74	60	61	44
Grade 8-Science & Technology	80	95	92	88	93	92	93	87	80	76	80	53

In grades three through eight in all subjects an average of 80% of students attending the targeted districts in our target population are in the Needs Improvement or Warning/Failing (NI or W/F) categories.

*Briefly discuss the reason for the selection of the community and the founder's ability to serve this particular area.*

The reason we have selected the Latino community as our primarily focus is the great need within that population for increased educational achievement, increased access to higher education and access to comprehensive service provision. In each of our target districts, Latinos are dropping out in greater numbers when compared to their counterparts.

Our founding group is made up of professionals from a varied list of disciplines with an extensive background in working with our target population. Our respective successes in providing services to the selected community include projects in early education and care, adult education, afterschool/wrap around services, summer camps, job placement, housing, and teen services. Each member's work would be much more impactful if it were integrated into an educational setting.

*Provide a specific rationale for how this school will enhance or expand the educational options, including whether the innovative methods to be used by the proposed school differ from the district or districts from which the charter school is expected to enroll students.*

The most significant difference between our school design and that of our target districts is our ability to integrate family and social services as supplements to the educational experience of our students. Children from low-income homes are overwhelmingly not ready to succeed in school because of a myriad of obstacles. Students will only be prepared to learn once the comprehensive, family services we and our partners provide are part of the educational experience. The dropout rates in our target districts among our target populations are 30% and over.

Parents continue to be disconnected from their child's educational experience to the detriment of the entire family. Families are trying to survive without the supportive networks and services they need. It becomes increasingly difficult to provide the structure, nurturance and high expectations necessary to ensure student success. Lastly, as families become more disenfranchised and suspicious of systems they are less likely to engage those systems civically and take on leadership roles in the transformation of their current condition.

*Describe how the educational option provided by the charter school will address the needs of the student population.*

To provide our students with an educational environment and curriculum that rivals the best schools in the country, we believe it is essential to instill rigorous academic expectations and firm behavioral standards. Only the best will be acceptable from our students, teachers, and leaders.

Our curriculum will be structured around 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Frameworks and in accordance with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and will incorporate many best practices used at other successful charter schools. It is designed to challenge students to do their best academically regardless of their language proficiency, special education status, or the academic level at which they enter the school. Our rigorous core academic program provides more time. Frequent evaluations will ensure that teachers and families know exactly where each student stands in relation to our rigorous standards and what each student needs to do to make progress. They will ensure that group instruction, lesson planning, and student support can be adjusted in direct response to their results. Our teachers must be willing to do whatever it takes for our students to succeed in college and to engage in their communities as active democratic citizens.

*Provide a description of how the founding group has assessed parental support within the proposed sending district(s)/region for the proposed school.*

Our group has assessed the parental support through a series of methods. New North Citizens' Council has opened its doors to parents needing assistance with navigating the school department in their city. We also have been collecting anecdotal information from parents and staff regarding the current typical educational experience of members of our target population. Our collective works allows for significant interface with both parents and students. Overwhelming, parents are desperately seeking assistance with negotiating their presence in the schools and ensuring their children are successful.

*Explain why a Commonwealth charter is necessary in order for this school to exist or succeed.*

Many of the practices including extended academic calendar, performance-based compensation and evening community events would be impossible to implement without the autonomy a Commonwealth charter would provide. Certain aspects of our program require non-traditional staff with unique areas of expertise, such as staff with predominately university or non-profit experience. We offer incentives and opportunities for mobility into different areas of work. It would be extremely difficult to implement without a Commonwealth Charter.

## **I. How will the school demonstrate academic success?**

### **A. Educational Philosophy**

*Describe the founding group's core beliefs and values about education.*

*“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with the reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”*

**-Paulo Freire (Pedagogy of the Oppressed)**

We value education as the vehicle to escape poverty and the greatest tool for combating discrimination in the quest for justice and freedom. We recognize that a disciplined commitment to scholarship can enable all students to learn and accomplish at the highest levels, regardless of luck or ability. Yet, that without a community-wide approach our target population will not enter the educational environment ready to learn.

Two of the most demoralizing effects of poverty are the absence of the ability to self-advocate or determine and the likelihood of encompassing generations in a vicious cycle. We believe that those cycles can be broken by addressing the compounding issues that perpetuate them. These include education, health services including mental health, adult education and access to transitional assistance for basic needs.

*Describe how this educational philosophy aligns with the school's mission and is integrated into the implementation of the comprehensive educational program.*

Our mission describes the integration of services into an educational setting where expectations are high and active citizenship is the result of commitment to life-long learning. That environment is created by instilling a healthy sense of pride, entitlement and expectations that rival the constant messages keeping our target population from achieving, becoming civically engaged and living in poverty.

*Demonstrate that the philosophy will serve the diverse needs of individual students.*

*Provide research, including explicit citations, on this educational philosophy that demonstrates it may improve the academic performance of the anticipated student population and its diverse needs. Include specific subgroups of students consistent with requirements of M.G.L. c. 71, § 89 for a recruitment and retention plan. (Also see section III.A of the final application section.)*

Our educational philosophy is based on scientifically-research, as defined by section 9101(37) of the ESEA, that have been recognized by the Department of Education, HHS/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and HHS/Health Resources and Services Administration.

### **B. Curriculum and Instruction**

#### **a. Curriculum**

*Explain the process utilized to identify the curriculum that will be used by the school and provide reasons why the curriculum was chosen for the school.*

To identify the curriculum for our school we researched the approaches of successful charter schools. The designs which resonated with our founding group are the ones which best met the needs of the current reality of our target population. The foundational principles of the designs are Community, Integration, Variation and Application. Instruction comes in the form of inquiry-based and performance-

based learning. The results are students who are independent thinkers, dynamic workers and active citizens.

The learning objectives for each of those in these three areas include:

Independent Thinkers	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. read and compute fluently and insightfully</li> <li>b. express themselves creatively, elegantly and persuasively</li> <li>c. gather, organize and construct meaning from a large body of knowledge</li> <li>d. pose difficult questions and discover significant answers</li> <li>e. use multiple modalities of thinking and learning</li> <li>f. recognize and consider different perspectives</li> <li>g. remain open to learning throughout their lives.</li> </ul>
Dynamic Workers	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Produce work characterized by excellence and quality</li> <li>b. Attribute success to effective effort and constructive habits</li> <li>c. Accept challenges and take risks</li> <li>d. Use cooperation to accomplish goals</li> <li>e. Prize originality and efficiency</li> <li>f. Value the process as well as the outcome</li> <li>g. Pursue careers that both engage their hearts and minds and benefit society</li> </ul>
Active Citizens	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Take pride in their identity</li> <li>b. Trust their abilities</li> <li>c. Exhibit courage, honesty, respect, responsibility, and leadership</li> <li>d. Handle conflict and crises calmly and constructively</li> <li>e. Cultivate healthy supportive relationships</li> <li>f. Care about their influence on other people and their environment</li> <li>g. Appreciate and nurture diversity</li> </ul>

*Provide an outline of the curriculum that will be used by the school, including the content and skills to be taught in the core content areas at each grade level.<sup>1</sup> Four grade levels should be included in the text of the application. All additional grade levels must be included in the attachments but will not be counted toward the page limit.*

Our curriculum will be geared to achieving our school’s objectives and prepare students for the MCAS exams they will take during their academic careers. The following tables display content and skill standards in our core subjects based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

<b>Humanities</b>
<p><b>Contents:</b> Literature, Civilizations and Cultures, Local, State, U.S. and World History, Geography, Economics, Civics, World Religions, Current Events</p>
<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comprehend literary works and expository texts by identifying, analyzing and applying knowledge of different literary forms and genres, including poetry and prose.</li> <li>2. Identify and describe significant people, events, institutions, and literary, artistic and technological achievements in the rise, zenith and fall of civilizations.</li> <li>3. Understand chronological order of historical events and recognize the complexity of cause and effect.</li> <li>4. Describe and understand the philosophies and beliefs supporting major world religions, forms of government and economic systems, and explain how they have influenced history, arts and literature.</li> <li>5. Explain the concepts of identity, community, space and region as they apply to the study of history, geography,</li> </ol>

<sup>1</sup> Content is what students should know; skills are what students should be able to do; and the core content areas include English, reading/language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.

arts and literature.

6. Apply appropriate technology, methods of inquiry and standards of analysis in conducting artistic and literary criticism and historiography.

7. Create effective compositions and oral presentations in a variety of forms and for different audiences that exhibit logical structures, related ideas and supporting details.

8. Analyze current world events in terms of historical contexts and personal experience.

9. Use contemporary multimedia technologies to independently and collaboratively research, analyze, critique and present information.

10. Use appropriate speaking, listening and viewing techniques to suit various purposes and audiences.

11. Practice democratic principles within the classroom and the school.

### Arts Standards

**Content:** Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Vocal & Instrumental Music, Dance, Theater, Film, Television, Video

#### General Skills:

1. Use critical judgment, reflection and refinement to create artwork.

2. Apply both emotion and reason to the creation of artwork.

3. Use a variety of art styles and methods to convey complex meaning and emotions.

4. Present and perform art publicly.

5. Reflect critically on the characteristics and assess the merits of artwork.

6. Understand aesthetics and explain preferences and interpretations of artworks.

7. Understand and make connections between the arts and technology.

8. Recognize the role of art in history and contemporary life.

9. Make connections between the arts.

10. Use arts literacy to enhance understanding of other subjects and personal experiences.

11. Use artistic expression for the benefit of the community.

#### Dance Skills:

1. Identify and demonstrate movement elements and skills in dance.

2. Understand choreographic principles, processes and structures.

3. Improvise dance movements to a variety of musical accompaniments.

#### Visual Arts Skills:

1. Understand and apply media, techniques and processes.

2. Use knowledge of structures and functions.

3. Use tools and materials properly.

4. Understand distinctions between different styles, including representational art and abstraction.

#### Drama Skills:

1. Write improvisational scripts based on personal experience, imagination, literature and history.

2. Assume roles and interact in improvisations and scripted productions.

3. Visualize and arrange environments for dramatizations.

4. Direct dramatizations.

5. Identify and describe dramatic elements.

#### Music Skills:

1. Sing or perform on instruments a varied repertoire of music.

2. Improvise melodies, variations and accompaniments.

3. Compose and arrange music.

4. Read and notate music.

5. Analyze and describe music.

### Mathematics Standards

**Content:** Numbers Sense and Operations; Patterns, Relationships and Algebra; Geometry; Measurement; Data Analysis, Statistics and Probability

**Skills:**

1. Apply mathematics, including concepts of algebra, geometry, probability and data analysis, to formulate, test and solve problems.
2. Use a variety of mathematical representations, including numbers, shapes, operations and relations.
3. Develop a number sense for whole numbers, fractions, decimals, integers, rational and irrational numbers, and percents.
4. Know the meanings of operations, how they relate to each other and their computational procedures.
5. Apply knowledge of measurement systems, technology and techniques to solve problems.
6. Use reasoning skills to make and evaluate mathematical conjectures and arguments.
7. Communicate mathematically to justify, interpret and generalize results.

**Science Standards**

**Content Standards:** Earth's Structure and Processes, Planets and Solar Systems, Origin and History of the Universe, Living Organisms, Reproduction, Genetics, Evolution, Ecosystems, Properties of Matter, Energy, Motion, Forces and Light

**Skills:**

1. Understand the elements of scientific inquiry in field, laboratory and simulated investigations.
2. Identify questions suitable to scientific inquiry.
3. Plan and conduct scientific investigations using observation and experiments.
4. Develop models to explain the findings of a scientific investigation.
5. Draw relevant and appropriate conclusions from scientific investigations.
6. Identify sources of error and alternative explanations.
7. Communicate conclusions clearly and precisely using speech, writing, images and physical models with the aid of technology.
8. Understand the interactions of science, technology and society throughout history.

**Technology Standards**

**Content:** Computer Operations, Productivity Tools, Communication Tools, Research Tools, Ethics

**Skills:**

1. Demonstrate grasp of basic operations and concepts.
2. Judge the costs and benefits of technology to individuals and society.
3. Recognize how artists have used technology in their works.
4. Use productivity tools to produce original works.
5. Use communication tools to interact with others and share information.
6. Use technology to locate, evaluate, and collect information from a variety of sources.
7. Use technology to analyze data and report results.
8. Determine the appropriate technology with which to analyze and solve problems.

*Include non-academic goals for students that are consistent with the stated mission, academic program, and educational philosophy of the school.*

Our mission includes the integration of home and community into the educational experience of each student. It is an enhancement that takes into account the background and learning style of each child. It promotes active citizenship and a sense of community through a varied list of school activities. Our specific objectives for each student include:

- a. Take pride in their identity
- b. Trust their abilities
- c. Exhibit courage, honesty, respect, responsibility, and leadership
- d. Handle conflict and crises calmly and constructively
- e. Cultivate healthy supportive relationships
- f. Care about their influence on other people and their environment
- g. Appreciate and nurture diversity

*Describe a clear plan and curricular components that will facilitate ongoing development, improvement, and refinement of the curriculum.*

During the typical school day, teachers will work with students for two extended learning blocks and have one block for planning and professional development. Teachers will use grade level benchmarks to continuously assess student progress and the efficacy of curriculum and instruction. Team teachers will have a common block to work together and students will be released early every Wednesday to allow teachers to meet as subject-discipline teams or work with elective teachers. Professional development activities will include structured reflection on instructional practices (modeled after Critical Friends Groups), design and evaluation of interdisciplinary projects (modeled on Japanese Lesson Study), and collaborative assessment of student work. In addition, teachers and staff will have a professional development allowance that can be used to attend conferences and workshops, and bring back new ideas and resources for improving the curriculum.

*Describe the process and procedures used to evaluate whether the curriculum is effective and successfully implemented.*

The implementation of lessons and projects will be considered the exhibition of teachers’ work and be the legitimate subject of student, colleague and expert discussion and feedback. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction will regularly observe classrooms to ensure alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment. Classrooms will be open to other staff, parents and members of the community to observe and critique the efficacy of instruction. This will reinforce the school as an intellectual community that regards teachers as well as students as continuous learners

*Describe the process that will be used to align the curriculum to the MCF.*

We will hire faculty with proven experience in curriculum design and implementation. Under the supervision of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, teachers will work for four weeks in the summer to develop curricula aligned with the school’s objectives and standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Core teachers will work closely with art and technology teachers and staff from the student support department to select and design units and lessons that address their grade’s essential question. In addition, they will coordinate their syllabi with the upcoming year’s schedule of arts events, exhibits, performances and residencies.

*Identify which individual(s) on the school’s organizational chart will be responsible for the above processes and procedures.*

It is the responsibility of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction to ensure the above processes and procedures are in place and being implemented in a manner which ensure continuous improvement.

**b. Instruction**

*Describe the pedagogy or instructional methods that will be used to deliver the curriculum model(s).*

We will develop well-rounded students with the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue post-secondary education and careers of their choice. The foundation principles –community, integration, variation and application- established by successful charter schools best articulate the environment and the instructional practices which our founding group intends for our target population.

<b>Community</b>	Effective schools address the social, emotional and academic development of students. This requires the deliberate construction and maintenance of an intellectual community that embodies respect and responsibility for learning.
------------------	--



<b>Integration</b>	Learning is not a hierarchical process; it is a complex process that integrates prior experience with new knowledge and basic skills with critical thinking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our school design will combine skills development with inquiry-based learning. Inquiry-based learning develops students' critical thinking skills by actively involving them in the learning process.</li> </ul>
<b>Variation</b>	Learning for understanding requires students not only to analyze and retain knowledge, but to create and apply it as well. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will use performance-based learning to move students to higher levels of thinking. Performance-based learning puts students in the driver's seat and asks them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills</li> </ul>
<b>Application</b>	Students learn in many ways, and instruction must recognize their developmental stages, academic strengths and learning styles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>team teaching</b> and <b>block scheduling</b> will facilitate grouping students in multiple ways, e.g. homogeneous groups for learning basic skills, heterogeneous groups for exploring complex ideas</li> <li>• <b>appropriate instruction</b> will recognize students' developmental stages by starting with concrete ideas and addressing more abstract concepts as students mature cognitively</li> <li>• <b>differentiated instruction</b> will provide a variety of learning opportunities for students with diverse learning styles and academic strengths</li> <li>• <b>performance-based learning</b> will offer students diverse opportunities to incorporate personal experiences and multiple ways to demonstrate their skills and understanding</li> <li>• <b>educational software</b> and the <b>Internet</b> will permit students to work at their own pace and pursue their individual interests</li> </ul>

*Describe how these instructional methods support high standards of achievement and are accessible and appropriate for all students at all levels, including students with diverse learning styles, English language learners, special education students, students who enter below grade level, and other at-risk students who should be targeted in order to eliminate the achievement gap.*

*Explain how the school will ensure that teachers are proficient in delivering the chosen instructional methods.*

We will hire faculty with proven experience in curriculum design and implementation. Under the supervision of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, teachers will work for four weeks in the summer to develop curricula aligned with the school's objectives and standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Core teachers will work closely with art and technology teachers and staff from the student support department to select and design units and lessons that address their grade's essential question. In addition, they will coordinate their syllabi with the upcoming year's schedule of arts events, exhibits, performances and residencies.

*Briefly explain the process for teacher evaluations.*

Teachers will be observed in the classroom and provided with opportunities to participate in professional learning circles. Each teacher will be formally evaluated each year.

*Describe how the school will determine the professional development needs of the staff.*

Teachers will be observed in the classroom and provided with opportunities to participate in professional learning circles.

### **C. Assessment System**

*Indicate which individual(s) in the school have primary responsibility for overseeing the assessment system.*

It is the responsibility of the Director of Curriculum and Instruction to oversee the assessment system.

*Describe how achievement data will be collected and how it will be used.*

*Indicate whether, in addition to administering the MCAS tests as required by state law, the school will use additional standardized assessment tools to determine and report student progress. In either case, explain why that decision was made for the targeted population and how the data will be used.*

In addition to the MCAS, we will administer the Stanford-9 Exam annually. We believe the Stanford-9 is a valid standardized measure of students' math and reading ability. The reading and mathematical components of the Stanford-9 align with the SAT's verbal and mathematical components. All incoming students will take the Stanford-9 at the beginning of the school year to establish a baseline. They will take it again in the Spring. This will be essential in assessing each student's progress.

*Include descriptions and/or examples of assessments that are consistent with the school's mission, program, and high expectations of students, and that are based upon research.*

Administrators and staff will examine the MCAS and Stanford-9 data for each student and provide that information to parents and community stakeholders. The data will be analyzed around racial/ethnic and socioeconomic lines. Substantial disparities in improvements will result in modifications to the curriculum, schedule, school staffing, or the provision of supportive services.

*Describe which internal/school-developed instruments will be administered in order to measure and report student progress. Explain why these particular assessments were selected for the targeted student population and how the data will be used.*

*Define a meaningful and practical approach for measuring student progress toward attaining non-academic goals.*

*Feature multiple measures of student outcomes that may include reports of absolute scores, within-year student gains/losses, and year-to-year student gains/losses.*

*Provide a thorough, clear, measurable, externally credible, and conceptually sound design for measuring and reporting the performance and progress of the school as a whole and the academic and social development of each student to all relevant stakeholders. Indicate which audiences will receive this information and how often.*

Administrators and staff will examine the MCAS and Stanford-9 data for each student and provide that information to parents and community stakeholders. Substantial disparities in improvements will result in modifications to the curriculum, schedule, school staffing, or the provision of supportive services.

Student progress will be measured using grades in each subject-area class, which will be a product of homework, class work, tests and quizzes, essays and projects. In each class, teachers will use a variety of

measures of student learning. A data collection system will allow us to provide students and families with weekly updates on a student's grades in each class, assignment-by-assignment. We recognize that parents must be engaged as partners in the work of educating children. Weekly discussions about student performance on specific assessments represent an essential component of this partnership.

In addition to course-specific assessments, students will assemble 'College Preparation Portfolios,' known as 'CPPs.' These portfolios will include work demonstrating a student's progress towards 12<sup>th</sup> grade college preparedness. This intentional focus on college-preparatory work will send an important message to our students and to the colleges which will evaluate their applications. These portfolios will include collections of work that cut across school program areas, and might not be clearly reflected in any particular grade or test score which would normally be passed on to a college.

1. **Oral Interviews:** In their first month of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, students will participate in a private, videotaped college admissions-type interview. This will be a standard set of five questions, such as, "Why do you want to go to college?" "What is your most memorable experience from school?" or "Describe your greatest strength." This interview will be re-conducted annually. Each student's interviews will be collected on a single videotape so that the student's growth can be easily tracked.
2. **Written Research:** Students will annually compile work demonstrating their developing capacity for scholarly research-based writing. In early grades, this capacity might be demonstrated through a single well-written paragraph or a short piece of comparative writing. In later years, students will submit more substantive work, culminating in lengthy, written, argumentative work based upon primary source research.
3. **Personal Development:** Students will annually submit work demonstrating personal growth in the five key character virtues. In the middle school years, this work might include a poster or a scrapbook of work from ethical philosophy class. This might involve an award earned as a result of perseverance demonstrated on the Lacrosse team or an audio tape of a performance which required a student to demonstrate courage. High school students might include evaluations completed by service placement supervisors or multi-media presentations about independently designed service projects.

Every other year, beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, students will present these portfolios to a jury of external reviewers. This presentation will include a discussion of areas in which a student believes he or she has made significant progress, and an explanation of why he or she thinks as much. Furthermore, reviewers will assign a grade indicating the level progress beyond the previous year's work.

#### **D. School Characteristics**

*Describe the school calendar, including the number of days school will be in session, the daily hours of operation, and the way the school will be organized for instruction, independent study, and extra or co-curricular activities, if any.*

We intend for students to have a 10-month school year beginning in September and running through the end of June and allow access to our building to our collaborative partners for summer activities during the months of July and August. Teachers will come together for four weeks in August to prepare for the coming school year and remain one week after the students' last day. The school calendar will generally follow that of the local district in terms of vacations but will open during those weeks for students needing supplemental educational services. We will also plan to release students one day every month to provide teachers with time for professional development.

School will open at 8 am for breakfast, and the school day will begin at 8:30 am. Students will be in school until 4:30 pm on every day except Wednesdays, when they will be released at 4:00 pm to allow time for the faculty to meet. There will be three approximately two-hour learning blocks, two for core subjects and one for electives. In addition, each day there will be a 30 minute school-wide meeting, 30 minutes of sustained silent reading, 30 minutes for lunch, and a 30 minute Finale period during which

students can meet in small groups, organize their work and get extra help. Breaks will not be scheduled at a specific time; rather, teachers will provide them during the learning blocks at their own discretion. Because we offer an extended school day, many traditional extra-curricular activities and necessary social services will be provided. We will assist our community partners with recruitment for sports leagues and youth development programs. They will have access to our building to provide those services.

*Describe the grade levels at which students will be admitted to the school and the required age for kindergarten admission, if applicable.*

Children will be admitted to the school for kindergarten and must be 5 years old before October 1.

*Describe any external programs that will be brought into the school and why.*

Our community partners will provide youth development and family programs at our school. These include mentoring, physical and mental health, adult education, leadership and capacity building services and opportunities that promote civic engagement. In accordance with our mission, we believe each student will achieve academically when barriers to their success are addressed comprehensively.

*Describe the implementation of the educational program in terms of the daily or weekly organization of students and faculty (e.g., multi-grade, tracking, team-teaching, etc.).*

Please refer to chart on page 17.

*Describe the proposed school's methods and strategies for supporting students with a wide range of needs.*

We will use an individualized approach to meet the needs of each child. Each child will be assessed at the beginning of each school year both academically and to determine the social service needs of the entire family. Based on those assessments, a pupil progression plan will be developed.

*Summarize, for illustrative purposes, a typical day from the perspective of a student in a grade level of your choice.*

School will open at 8 am for breakfast, and the school day will begin at 8:30 am. Students will be in school until 4:30 pm on every day except Wednesdays, when they will be released at 4:00 pm to allow time for the faculty to meet. There will be three approximately two-hour learning blocks, two for core subjects and one for electives. In addition, each day there will be a 30 minute school-wide meeting, 30 minutes of sustained silent reading, 30 minutes for lunch, and a 30 minute Finale period during which students can meet in small groups, organize their work and get extra help.

*Summarize, for illustrative purposes, a typical day from the perspective of a teacher of any subject or grade of your choice.*

During the typical school day, teachers will work with students for two extended learning blocks and have one block for planning and professional development. Teachers will use grade level benchmarks to continuously assess student progress and the efficacy of curriculum and instruction. Team teachers will have a common block to work together and students will be released early every Wednesday to allow teachers to meet as subject-discipline teams or work with elective teachers.

*Describe the culture of the school.*

The culture of our school is one based on academic excellence as a method for community development and progress. We instill in our students, staff and partners a sense of pride, self-determination and accountability that allows for each student to flourish regardless of their reality at enrollment.

*Provide a clear plan for establishing a school culture and norms consistent with the school's mission and educational program and describe how it is implemented for administrators, teachers, students, and parents, from the first day of the school's operation.*

We will begin to establish our school culture and norms consistent with our mission before our student population is determined. We will do this by affirming our mission during the enrollment processes, hiring of staff and during professional development sessions. These will then be reinforced everyday before the school day begins and throughout our school year.

*Describe how the school plans to involve parents/guardians as partners in the education of their children and build and maintain family-school partnerships that focus on strengthening support for the school's goals.*

Our family and community relations staff will be critical to our family-school partnerships. They will conduct home visits and provide parents with the information they need to participate in their child's educational experience. We will borrow from best practices in family and community engagement to ensure parental involvement. We will provide family services at our school by collaborating with providers from the fields of social work, mental health and projects designed to promote financial stability in the home. These will take the form of workshops, presentations and forums created to establish the necessary exchange of information and ideas between school, home and community.

#### **E. Special Student Populations and Student Services**

*Describe the plan for a responsive, general education classroom and how the proposed school will provide students with disabilities and/or limited English proficiency access to the general education curriculum.*

Our student support services staff will be instrumental in the delivery of services to students with disabilities and/or limited English proficiency and their integration into the general education curriculum. Their partnership with teachers and parents will be critical to the successful implementation of that system.

*Describe the processes and procedures, in compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations that the proposed school will employ to identify, assess, and serve students who are English language learners. Include a description of support services to be offered, the settings in which these required services will be implemented, the qualifications of individuals who will implement these services, and how the program will be evaluated.*

*Describe the processes and procedures, in compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations that the proposed school will employ to identify, assess, and provide specialized instruction to each student in need of special education services. Include a description of support services to be offered and how student identification and assessment will be conducted, including the development of individualized education programs. Include the settings in which these required services will be delivered, the qualifications of individuals who will be recruited to deliver services, and how the program will be evaluated.*

We believe that all students can and should be judged according to high academic and behavioral standards. Students requiring support due to limited English proficiency or special needs will be included in the mainstream classroom to the greatest extent possible. Special education services will extend far beyond simple compliance with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. As with all students,

the greatest service we can provide special student populations is to hold them to the highest reasonable academic and behavioral standards.

We will administer a test of English language proficiency to all students who come from homes where English is not the primary language spoken. Students who are identified as Limited English Proficient will receive individualized tutoring, outside of core academic class time. This tutoring may specifically address English language proficiency and/or compensate for deficiencies in understanding of core academic material.

Parents of newly admitted students will be asked whether their children have received special education services in the past. When a parent indicates that a child has received special education services, records will be solicited and carefully examined by school faculty. Parents and teachers will attend a meeting led by the Director of Supportive Services—our school administrator certified in special education and responsible for developing and implementing IEPs—to determine appropriate services to be delivered at school.

In weekly conversations, faculty will discuss concerns about particular students; when appropriate these concerns will be brought to the attention of families. The faculty will not wait until a student has established a pattern of failure; concerns about a potential special need will be raised as soon as they are identified. Our intimate nature will allow us to conduct a thorough pre-referral process. Faculty will make subtle research-based adjustments in classroom instruction and assess the impact of these adjustments, reporting the results to other faculty members and to families. Parents will be notified about these adjustments.

When these adjustments fail to address the area of concern, a Team meeting will be held—directed by the school’s Director of Support Services—to determine next steps. During this meeting, parents and regular academic teachers will discuss adjustments that have been made thus far in the classroom. Assessments will be identified that might shed light on a student’s needs. Once these assessments have been conducted, the Team will be re-convened and determine whether or not a student is eligible for special education, and whether or not the student’s parents consent to such services being provided.

Students with disabilities will be included in the mainstream classroom to the greatest extent possible. This inclusion will be supported by our Director of Support Services and another full-time special education teacher—both certified special educators—who will work closely with classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional plans and assessment. We recognize the importance of ‘front-loading’ our special education program as a new charter school, in order to promptly and thoroughly organize our provision of services. Eventually, we will hire additional highly-trained special education faculty, aiming for a ratio of at least one special education teacher to every fifteen special education students. Resource room services will typically be provided outside of time allocated for core academic subjects. We will contract out for specialists in occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, and counseling, as needed.

*Explain how the proposed school plans to deliver nutritional program services to students. What meals and/or snacks will be served and when.*

We will contract with a local vendor to provide breakfast, lunch and two snacks a day. Breakfast will be served before instruction begins. Breakfast will be followed by a snack, lunch and an afterschool snack during extracurricular activities, tutoring and mentoring services.

*Describe any ancillary and support services the proposed school expects to offer students and families, for example, counseling, family outreach, and/or relationships with community organizations or service agencies which may benefit community members.*

Our extensive collaborative relationships with area service providers will ensure each of our students receives the supportive service he/she needs to be successful at school. We are a member of the North

End Campus Coalition. The Coalition is a network of services providers. Our collective areas of expertise include health, mental health, youth development and mentoring, nutrition and exercise, housing, alcohol and substance abuse, adult education, early education and care and parenting services. It will be the responsibility of our Director of School Community to ensure an integrated system of family referrals in place. It will be his/her responsibility to connect the school to the greater community.

## **II. How will the school demonstrate organizational viability?**

### **A. Capacity**

*Describe briefly how the founding group came together to form this proposed school and why the group is united to establish the proposed charter school.*

Our founding group is made up of professionals from a variety of disciplines working to improve the conditions of our target population. We came together to strategize ways to help to alleviate the current status of the public schools in our communities. It became clear to us that a charter school based on principles of equity and justice would be our greatest contribution to our community.

*Explain how often the group meets, how the planning and writing process is completed, and identify the primary author of the prospectus.*

The group meets regularly and communicates through email and phone when necessary. The primary author of the prospectus is Vanessa Otero under the direction and guidance of Michael Denney. As the Director of New North Citizens' Council (NNCC), Michael would supervise the Head of School and report to the NNCC Board.

*Summarize briefly within the text of the document each founder's and/or proposed board member's experience and qualifications, including previous charter school board or employment experience.*

**Michael Denney's** resume outlines his background in education and as an administrator. He has a successfully directed New North Citizens' Council to become the primer social service provider to our target population in this area. NNCC is a 5 million dollar organization with considerable ties to the community it serves and local and state initiatives.

**Hector Toledo's** resume outlines his background in finance and community development. He was a member of the founding group of a successful charter school in Springfield.

**Jose Claudio** is a well-respected member of our target population. As the Director of Community Relations at New North Citizens' Council, he has successfully participated in the collaborative efforts of community groups and City government.

**Jaime Cotto** is currently employed by the Holyoke Public Schools and is aware of the needs of our target population.

**Jorge Perez** has a background in social work and a history of working with youth in our target community.

**Vanessa Otero** is trained as a public administrator and currently directs a neighbor health initiative which is poised to integrate social services into the public school day.



**Armando Feliciano** is currently employed by the Springfield Public Schools as the director of adult education services. As an instructor and community advocate, he promotes the integration of family engagement in all aspects of the educational experience. He was also a member of the founding group of a successful charter school in Springfield.

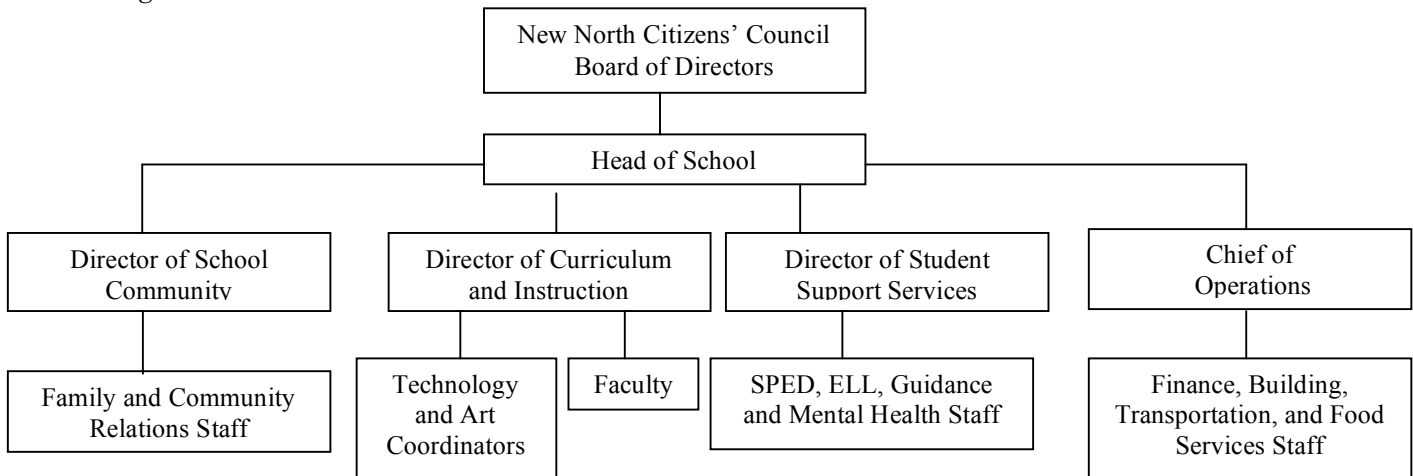
**Becky Borges** is a parent of children in the public school system. She is an advocate for community and parent. .

*Attach a statement of commitment and resume for each founding group member and specify whether the individual is a proposed board member, proposed school leader, or proposed for any other positions.*

See attached

**B. Governance Structure**

*Organizational Chart and Narrative*



New North Citizens' Council is currently governed by a community board. That is, the Board of Directors of NNCC is made up of elected residents. They are elected by their neighbors. The Board of Trustees for the Barbara Rivera Regional Community Action Charter School will hold the responsibility of ensuring the successful implementation of the school design to fulfill its purpose.

The NNCC Executive Director will supervise the Head of School who will manage the school senior leadership team. Each member is responsible for supervising their respective areas and ensuring its integration into the overall educational experience of each student.

We do not intend to build a network of school, contract with other entities to provide the school's educational or management services or partner with other organizations to administer our school.

*Briefly describe the recruitment, selection, and development plans for board members.*

Board members will be recruited based on their interest, alignment with the mission of our school and their area of expertise. Our founding group will establish a selection criteria based on those standards and needs. A successful charter will initiate our recruitment of interested persons with backgrounds in law, finance, family and community advocacy, management and education.