PLAN TO START ANOTHER PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN CAMBRIDGE

The school we want to start, currently called the Cambridge Charter High School [CCHS], will provide a rigorous academic environment that engages students, challenges each to excel and requires community service. The curriculum themes will draw from the Massachusetts Frameworks and from well-researched school organizing structures, notably the International Baccalaureate Program and the Coalition for Essential Schools.

CCHS will have a maximum of 380 students open in 2003 with 9th graders, adding a grade each year until the school offers 9th-12th grades. We hope that CCHS will help to stop the declining enrollment Cambridge has seen in its public school system over the last twenty years.

Please read this plan and give us feedback. E-mail: CambridgeCHS@aol.com If you do not have personal internet access, the Cambridge Public Library offers free internet access, as do many community institutions. You may also leave a message at 617.497-7230.

Proposal is about positive change

We know that many people feel and believe that CRLS works as a high school and that the restructuring is a positive step. Many parents and students feel that it is a great environment for them. We are glad that they have that opportunity. This proposal is not about taking away anything from anyone. Rather, it is about constructing something that works for those for whom CRLS does not offer the desired educational experience. CRLS remains an option for those who want it. But we believe that some families seek something different, a truly autonomous small school distinct from CRLS and the five same small school model. We believe Cambridge should have a more diverse offering of educational choices at the high school level. We believe in public education, and hope that CCHS can serve as a positive example for the regular public school system.

We need your help: Calling teachers, parents, volunteers

If we make it to the next round of the application process, we will need lots of help, since we are seeking to start up a whole new school. Whether you are a teacher, a parent, guardian or an interested resident, we invite you to help. A list of ways we could use help on is below. Please contact us with your ideas and/or offers of help as we proceed.

- Ideas for shaping the school to meet community needs

- Demonstration of community support, which could mean sending a note of support (which you can do at any time via e-mail)
- Organizational partners and names of people who could help
- Raising money, to support the people spending lots of time trying to get this venture off the ground and to cover the expenses of doing this project
- Finding an appropriate space to house the school
- Finding great Board of Trustees members to govern the school once it is granted a charter
- Getting the word out to everyone, and letting local folks, especially politicians, know why it is a good idea. The first step is to share this site widely or print it and share it for those without internet access.
- Hiring a great staff for the school

FAQ frequently asked questions

How do you get a charter?

Getting a charter is not easy. A group of people must put together an application which is comprehensive, covering all aspects of starting a new school. The Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE), which has the authority to grant charters, must believe that the school is based on sound educational principles, that the group applying can make it happen, and that the school will provide a model for other public schools. The process is rigorous, requiring a lot of work. We are at the beginning stages. Now that the preliminary application (called a prospectus) is filed, we are waiting to hear if we make it to the next step, which is to be asked to file a full application. After that, if a charter is granted, the work of doing an enterprise start-up gets into gear.[1]

Who will go to the school?

CCHS will be a public school, open to anyone in the city to enroll. By law, a charter school cannot have any entrance requirements other than finishing eighth grade. If the school is oversubscribed students are admitted by lottery. If there are not enough Cambridge residents who enroll to fill the seats, any student from any other district may apply.

How does financing work?

If CCHS received a charter, it would get a planning grant for the first year from the federal government of $150,000 to help pay for start-up. Once the school is up and running, money comes from the state. Just like the existing Benjamin Banneker Charter

[1] The prospectus and application and other information on charter schools can be viewed online at the DOE website. www.doe.mass.edu/charter/.

School, CCHS would receive money for each student enrolled, based on the sending district's spending. For example, if 100 students came from Cambridge, the funding from the state would be about $1,540,500 (100 x $15,405). Additional revenue is available from any program funds available to public schools, like Title I. Like other public schools, charter schools do fundraising to supplement their budgets. One of the key financial differences is that other public schools do not have to find, finance, or worry about obtaining a building. That cost will cut into the money available to pay for CCHS operations.

The financial structure for charter schools, outlined in the Education Reform Act, means that if CCHS were granted a charter and upon opening its doors Cambridge parents and students chose it that the Cambridge School Department would have less money. But the system would also have fewer students to teach, since the only dollars a charter school receives is for each student who enrolls. The total impact on the budget should be minimal. Furthermore, if the system adjusts its own staffing accordingly, no other programs should have to be cut.

What is the document that follows this intro?

It is a "Prospectus" which is in essence a preliminary plan for the school. A version of this document was filed with the DOE as a first step to applying for a charter. The prospectus, per DOE requirements, covers the proposed school's: mission, statement of need, educational philosophy, curriculum, and governance structure. If a full application is requested, each of these sections will be filled out in more detail, along with a full financial plan and serve as the basis for DOE deciding whether to grant a charter.

Next steps

We are now waiting to hear whether the DOE, based on our prospectus, will ask for a full application. If we are asked back, we will have only one month to turn the prospectus into a full business plan. We hope that after reading this, you are as excited as we are about the possibility of having a great public high school started through the democratic, grass-roots efforts of Cantabridgians. E-mail your ideas, support, and questions to CambridgeCHS@aol.com

CAMBRIDGE CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

EXPECTING EXCELLENCE FROM ALL

PROSPECTUS

Proposing an academically and socially engaging education for Cambridge high school students.

SUBMITTED TO:
Massachusetts Department of Education
Charter School Office

Submitted by the
Way Cool Charter School Organizing Group

September 17, 2002

Contact information:
617.497-7230
CambridgeCHS@aol.com

CAMBRIDGE CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

Mission Statement

The proposed school, initially named the Cambridge Charter High School [CCHS] will provide an academically and socially engaging education by designing a school environment with high levels of expectations, a challenging curriculum and a dedicated group of teachers, parents and administrators. The cornerstones of the school are: a small school structure and culture, project based learning, community contribution, and technology integration. The overall curricula holding these cornerstones together are the Massachusetts Frameworks and the International Baccalaureate [IB] program. The culture will be one of mutual respect and accountability by and to all: students, teachers, parents, administrators and the community. The school climate will be one of intellectual inquiry, setting a foundation for graduating students dedicated to lifelong community contribution and active learning.

This second public high school in Cambridge will reflect the rich diversity of demographics found in Cambridge. CCHS will serve as a model for small school excellence and rigor in a small urban public school environment. CCHS will be a school where all students have a mentor who knows them and follows their progress. CCHS will promote high standards, creativity, respect for individual interests and aspirations. Besides achieving high standards on basic skills, every student will be expected to excel in at least one area, whether academic or community or athletic.

The mission of the Cambridge Charter High School is to create an educational community committed to development of a broad set of intellectual and emotional capacities in young people. A supportive and challenging school culture will be created by the generation of close and caring relations within the school community. Such a culture will include supportive and demanding standards of teaching, and flexibility of methods, as well as the use of a broad range of learning experiences and curricular activities. These methods will include familiar lecture-discussion-textbook based courses to community internships, major projects, service learning for all, individual and group tutorials, and steady advisory support. The school will reflect the wide community demand for an intellectually demanding school and for the enthusiasm that comes from family and student choice and commitment. CCHS aspires to be a model for the recognized educational virtues of such small "characterful" programs of choice. CCHS aspires to be a model for the recognized educational virtues of individual instruction and the opportunity for students to discover their own strengths and interests and excel at them. The ultimate measure of our success will be replication of our program at CRLS, over time.

Statement of need

In a city known for its academic character and intellectual capital, and topping the state for most dollars spent, the public schools should be considerably more successful than they have been in meeting the needs of its diverse population. Yet many Cambridge families dedicated to public schools choose to leave the community, or pay for private schools because they reluctantly judge the schools to be inadequate for their own children. No end to this trend is in sight. Further, the city lags the state in MCAS performance. Many point to the high number of poor families (measured by reduced or free lunch percentages) and the high number of languages spoken as explanatory. But that reasoning is patronizing to poor and non-

English native speaking parents and inconsistent with some comparable test data.[2] There are impressive examples of small, intimate, pedagogically creative programs that have very impressive outcomes with populations comparable to Cambridge's. Furthermore, it is not only high-income parents leaving. The middle class has been increasingly choosing other systems, either by leaving or not moving in. Many lower income families enroll in parochial schools, and more would leave if they could afford to.

Cambridge currently has only one high school, which was recently reorganized into five small schools within the larger school of approximately 1900. Yet the redesign offers less choice to parents and students than previously, since the school offers no choice among the five schools, in matriculation, culture, or approach to learning.[3] The drive to top-down standardized formats is presented as the only kind of school organization that will assure "equity," which has come to be defined as all students in the same kind of school design, with no real choices for parents and students. Yet every student has different needs, interests, background, talents, perspectives, and ways of learning. We believe the city should celebrate diversity not only in words, but in educational experience. One of the advantages of the "small school" perspective is the ability to offer options and variety of pedagogical possibilities.

Creating an IB program has been floated in Cambridge for many years, well before the decision to restructure the high school was made; consideration of this option was set aside in order to concentrate on the restructuring. Yet, the decision to create 5 small schools with identical curricula and structures deprived the community of diversity; an IB school is an attractive model that is gaining in popularity across the US. A curriculum based on the IB program should appeal to many immigrant families whose children may be at a disadvantage in a more conventional American school system but might thrive in one where the curriculum is more closely aligned to the one with which they are more familiar. Thus, it is time to look at how an IB program might fit into the educational arena in Cambridge.

Earlier this year, many high school families expressed concern that promised educational options were not being offered. To underscore their concern, parents launched a petition drive asking for a commitment to educational diversity, and for greater inclusion of parents in decisions. More than 650 people signed the petition, which was delivered to the School Department and School Committee. The organizers and many signers feel that rather than being lauded for their interest and dedication they were criticized. This petition signing demonstrates a strong community need for an alternative school like CCHS.[4]

There is a critical need to keep parents – across all income and racial and ethnic groups – engaged in the system. Families have been leaving the system with little public response by the School Department. Instead of analyzing why Cambridge might be losing students, the department appears to be assuming it was expected. The School Department points to state Department of Education [DOE] projections for Cambridge when the question of declining enrollment comes up. But DOE's projections were based on past declines in Cambridge, not overall statewide declines.

---

[2] Neighboring Somerville has almost twice as many LEP (16% v. 8%) and low-income students (69% v. 39%) as Cambridge and about the same percent of SPED students, but achieved the same MCAS scores. And the latest class of 2003 pass rate on MCAS is 77% in Somerville, 62% in Cambridge.

[3] The exception is RSTA, the Rindge School of Technical Arts, which is the city's technical program recently re-accredited by the state. The successful redesign of RSTA required a substantial investment and community commitment. Partly due to this type of investment, Cambridge has a relatively low dropout rate, in relation to its urban setting and demographics. Its 2.7% dropout rate is half of neighboring Somerville.

[4] We do not assert that all signers are in agreement with this proposal. However, we know that many are, and we are citing it to support the overall community concern about CRLS expressed quite loudly through the petition.

An analysis of DOE's public school enrollment data[5] suggests that Cambridge Public Schools [CPS] is losing educational ground compared to the state and surrounding communities. From FY95 to FY02, the state saw an 8% increase overall in public school enrollment, with wide variation in school districts. During that period CPS lost more than one thousand students, a decline of 14%. At the same time nearby districts of Arlington, Belmont, Newton and Lexington saw increases of 6 to 17%. Boston and Brookline enrollments stayed about even, and Watertown's and Somerville's declined, but less than Cambridge (7% and 12% respectively).

As telling, according to census figures[6], the city's population of 5-17 year olds increased from 8,853 in 1990 to 9,322 in 2000. At the same time, the district's DOE enrollment data shows 7,621 in Oct. 1990 and 7,078 in Oct. 2000. While the overall population of school age residents **grew** by 469, the public school population **declined** by 543[7]. That means that the percent of 5-17 years olds in the public school system declined from 86% to 76% over the past decade. This decline has not been addressed by the system with a serious inquiry into how to better meet the needs of families.

A major factor for families choosing where to live is the perceived quality of the public school system. Why have many communities comparable to Cambridge in desirability been gaining in public school enrollment while Cambridge has been losing? The school system, surprisingly, has not studied the reasons for the decline.[8] We believe the decline is because the system has not been responsive to concerns and voices of many families and students in the community. Widespread anecdotal evidence suggests that people are leaving the system due to a perceived lack of educational options, most notably at the high school level. There is also evidence that more students are applying to independent schools.[9] Several CPS elementary schools have stated that there is more interest among parents in the last couple of years, particularly in the middle school years.

In sum, CPS is in danger of losing some of the economic diversity of population which helps maintain a quality public school system. The city's public schools are losing a critical mass of the middle class, and high-achieving students from every socio-economic group. This trend could negatively affect all students, since research suggests that an important factor in overall school achievement is a significant percent of middle class students[10]. Middle class families often bring greater parental involvement, classroom critique and high expectations for student motivation. This forms the basis for a positive experience for all. There is a community need to provide a different kind of high school experience, a need not being met by the regular system. We hope to achieve that with the CCHS. We also expect to provide a model for how Cambridge and other communities can retain a diverse set of families. CCHS will be a small school where staff work together intensely and where the commitment of families and students who choose the program

[5] All figures calculated from enrollment from DOE statistical enrollment trends report, by district, on DOE website.

[6] From City of Cambridge Community Development Report Dec. 4, 2001: *Demographic and Socioeconomic Statistics*, p. 11

[7] Cambridge students in charter schools according to DOE FY03 sending district chart will be: 150 Banneker Charter School and 65 at Somerville Charter High. Thus, charters do not account for most of the decline.

[8] Since every student who leaves needs a transcript, CPS could easily gather data on reasons for leaving and use it as a management tool for continuous improvement. No such data synthesis is public.

[9] Area independent schools noted an increase in applications and interest in the last couple of years from Cambridge families.

[10] Kahlenberg, Richard D. All Together Now: Creating Middle Class Schools through Public School Choice. Also, research by Eric Hanushek, John Kain,Jacob Markman and Steven Rivkin on peer ability affect on student achievement suggests that students throughout a school appear to benefit from higher achiving schoolmates. NBER Working Paper No. w8502 October 2001.

becomes a key asset, creating a varied and stimulating program that serves students of all backgrounds and abilities.

Why a charter school? We understand the School Department, and the political environment in our city. We know that the current system will not move quickly to provide an effective alternative to the current situation. Even though there are distinct choices offered at the elementary school level, the high school has reaffirmed its policy of relative uniformity across the five schools within the high school. Although reorganization of the high school into five small autonomous schools was promised, five small same schools, resistant to educational diversity, have emerged. Within the system, there is not a possibility of building what we know a significant number of families – those responsible for the observed trends – want and deserve. The city needs what only a charter school can provide: the freedom to provide a high-performing public high school in a relatively short time frame. We want to show that public education can work more effectively, and respond to the need for change thoughtfully but rapidly. Working for change within the system has had more than enough time to produce results. We cannot wait any longer. This proposed charter school has emerged from the community of parents and others concerned with improving public education and expresses a democratic ideal of community creation of educational institutions, a value that goes beyond a single new charter school.

II. How will the school demonstrate academic success?

A. Educational philosophy

The educational philosophy of the CCHS is based on a number of instructional strategies for organizing and structuring the way students learn: (1) project-based learning, (2) an interdisciplinary approach, (3) community involvement, and (4) technology integration. The overall philosophy is based on research into how high school age students best learn, and how to structure a nurturing learning environment for them.

CCHS believes that a successful high school design must be rooted in values and educational understandings that are embraced by the entire school community and which inform every aspect of the school. In order to carry out the mission of the school, CCHS will build an institution that expresses a set of educational ideas supported by experience and incorporating recent understandings of the diversity of ways people learn. An overarching principle is the small school structure, which has been recognized[11] as an essential element in creating an engaging school culture powerful enough to overcome teenage cynicism.

Schools that model democracy in action, nourish a strong sense of community, and encourage connections to the larger community have the best potential as sites for powerful learning. Learning is best supported in an environment where trust and respect prevail, where the student's life experiences and culture are affirmed and valued and where learning from mistakes is understood as a tool to improve and deepen student capacities.

The world of school should not be separated from the rest of life, but integrated as much as possible. This idea translates into teaching approaches that go beyond the classroom, including supervised community internships and service learning opportunities, which are an integral part of CCHS.

[11] *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, A Report of the National Association of Secondary School Principals in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching on the high school of the 21st century

Clearly defined learning expectations of essential skills, "habits of mind" (well-articulated in the work of the Coalition of Essential Schools, one of the experiential sources of teaching and learning approaches that the CCHS will draw from in formulating a program that draws on several school models), and high-level capacities will define what the school promises to accomplish for all students who commit themselves to the school.

Learning is most effective when learners are actively pursuing areas of their own interest and choice. At CCHS instruction will offer ongoing opportunities for students to produce complex projects that demand a wide range of capacities that are not usually measured in regular programs, like ability to plan and carry out complex work requiring extensive reading and writing, in addition to application of skills learned in math, science and technology courses. Students will be called on to construct and demonstrate deep understanding, not just to memorize facts or learn algorithms and then pass tests.

We expect that students will come to the school with differing capacities and competencies. The structure and methods of instruction will allow the school to offer to each student support that will enable each to progress at different rates and in different ways. There will be high standards that will measure a minimum competence, and students able to reach beyond this basic competence will be supported in such aspirations. Our pledge is that students will not only be equipped to enter college, but that they will have the means to finish college programs, a goal not achieved by half of those who enter college currently.

Explicit exploration of the subject of learning, part of the ongoing staff engagement in evaluating and improving their teaching skills, will be an aspect of both students' and teachers' work. Curriculum will cover the major fields of knowledge. In addition to imparting information, the school will help students learn how to think well, reflect, engage in critical inquiry and discovery, tackle complex problems and issues, make connections, discover patterns, apply concepts, work cooperatively, make decisions intelligently, manage change, and take on risky challenges.

School size has been noted as a key variable in creating a culture conducive to high achievement. Several years ago, the high school reform document presented by the National Association of Secondary School Principals recommended strongly that no school or unit be larger than 600. But even administrators and teachers who affirmed this idea find themselves still working in schools of several thousand. CCHS will be intentionally a fully autonomous "small school," of 380 students, in the spirit represented by well-known models like Central Park East Secondary School (less than 300 9-12) and Urban Academy (120 students, named a national model by the Gates Foundation). [12]

By being a small school, CCHS will have the flexibility to know each individual well, and provide support for special needs (whether remedial help or opportunity to take college courses). The school culture will set standards that can be met by all students, at their own pace. This commitment means that the school will be a place of success for every student who makes the commitment to actively participate in the school community. That includes students labeled "at-risk," those from immigrant families, and those intellectually and academically successful students who have felt a lack of opportunity for a truly engaging educational challenge. With simple structures, with all teachers constantly involved in evaluating and revising structures, with a corps of volunteers for individual and group projects, with flexible use of school time that could be extended considerably beyond the normal required school day in regular high schools, CCHS believes it can be a model for the vision of a broad spectrum of different kinds of schools and programs that can match the diversity of the community it will serve.

[12] Convincing observational and objective results for these schools – and other "small school" models – is available through a variety of publications, and is not elaborated on here.

Staffing Philosophy

An important part of the educational philosophy and in line with the small school perspective, CCHS will build into the structure ways for all teachers to know some students individually. CCHS will be a high school, and therefore follow the usual breakdown of hiring different teachers for different subjects. But in order to gain some of the benefits of intensive understanding of students that helps elementary schools, we plan to loop some core subject teachers for the first two years. That means that 9th and 10th graders will have the same teachers for some subjects for two years. After that, the breakdown of grades will be such that there will be no specific 11th or 12th grade classes. Students will be doing more project based work, and may be taking courses in different order from some of their peers.

Teachers will have time during the school week to meet as teams, and discuss strategies for keeping students engaged. Time for planning and professional development will be significant. If summer work is required beyond the contract, staff will be compensated for their time. Another important part of the staffing philosophy, and consonant with our mission, each administrator certified to teach will be expected to teach one course during the year, to keep engaged in the school and model lifelong learning. In addition, part of the teacher contract will require that each teacher be involved in an extracurricular activity.

Learning philosophy

In recent years, researchers have formed a strong consensus on the importance of engaged learning in schools and classrooms.[13] Engaged learners are responsible for their own learning and are successful. These students are self-regulated and able to define their own learning goals and evaluate their own achievement. They are also energized by their learning; their joy of learning leads to a lifelong passion for solving problems, finding things out, and taking the next step in their thinking. Engaged learning also involves being collaborative--that is, valuing and having the skills to work with others.

In order to have engaged learning, tasks need to be challenging, authentic, and multidisciplinary. Such tasks are typically complex and involve sustained amounts of time. Collaboration around authentic tasks often takes place with peers and mentors within school as well as with family members and others in the real world outside of school. These tasks often require integrated instruction that incorporates problem-based learning and curriculum by project. The most powerful models of instruction are interactive. Instruction actively engages the learner and encourages the learner to construct and produce knowledge in meaningful ways. Students teach others interactively and interact generatively with their teacher and peers. This allows for co-construction of knowledge, which promotes engaged learning that is problem-, project-, and goal-based.

Collaborative work that is learning-centered often involves small groups or teams of two or more students within a classroom or across classroom boundaries. Heterogeneous groups (including different sexes, cultures, abilities, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds) offer a wealth of background knowledge and perspectives to different tasks. Homogeneous grouping and individual projects provide highly-focused learning opportunities, specific to students' interests and skills. The guiding principle will be to maximize potential learning, whether accomplished by heterogeneous grouping, or by more homogeneous groupings and maintain fluidity wherever possible.

Jones, B., Valdez, G., Nowakowski, J., & Rasmussen, C. (1994). *Designing Learning and Technology for Educational Reform*. Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.[13]

The role of the teacher in the classroom has shifted from the primary role of information giver to that of facilitator, guide, and learner. As a facilitator, the teacher provides the rich environments and learning experiences needed for collaborative study. The teacher also is required to act as a guide--a role that incorporates mediation, modeling, and coaching. Often the teacher also is a co-learner and co-investigator with the students. One important student role is that of explorer. Interaction with the physical world and with other people allows students to discover concepts and apply skills. Students are then encouraged to reflect upon their discoveries, which is essential for the student as a cognitive apprentice. Students also become teachers themselves by integrating what they've learned and becoming producers of knowledge.

Instructional Strategies

Project-based learning

Learning by doing, an educational philosophy going back at least as far as John Dewey, is a proven way of engaging students in their own learning. During the past five years, there has been a strong move, especially in urban schools, to base high school learning around projects and real-world problems. There is an emerging body of research supporting this move.

> In conclusion, we believe that our data supports the hypothesis that the same amount of curricular content can be taught in a problem-based style....PBL does increase higher-level thinking skills by asking students to think about a given problem more critically and to analyze data to derive a solution.[14]

Project-based learning creates situations:

- where students actively solve problems
- where students and teachers work together
- that simultaneously involve students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- that are driven by essential knowledge that is meaningful to students
- where activities are connected
- where students publicly exhibit their learning

The practical implication of a project-based approach to learning is that a student's schedule will be quite different than what that student would experience in a curriculum organized around class subjects. Many of a student's classes will be for extended periods of time to allow students to delve more deeply into their subjects. At the same time there will be periods during the week when students have blocks of time with no assigned class, to allow students to work with other students, engage in research, and prepare presentations.

Interdisciplinary approach

An interdisciplinary approach is a corollary to project-based learning. One of the problems with contemporary high school education is that each subject, each set of content, knowledge, and skills, is often taught in a way that is completely independent of any other subject. For many students this disconnectedness in teaching methods amplifies the disconnectedness between subjects and the students' own lives. Our educational philosophy requires that through projects, content, knowledge, and skills from a variety of traditional subject matters are brought to bear on a single project.

For example, a project could involve students in preparing residents of a community to make a decision about building a new water treatment plant versus renovating an existing one. This project integrates

[14] Krynock and Robb, "Is Problem-based Learning a problem for your Curriculum?" Illinois School Research and development Journal, Fall, 1996.

science (earth science, life science, technology, and engineering), social studies (economics, political science, geography), mathematics (measurement, Data Analysis, Statistics, and Probability), and language arts (discussion, composition, media presentations).

Community connection

If an interdisciplinary approach is the first corollary to project-based learning, community connection is the second. Although projects can be accomplished entirely within a school building, they can also be accomplished outside of school, integrating community involvement with academic work. However, a community-involvement curriculum must be supported by appropriate instruction and assessment. Instructional methods for this integrated curriculum often include applied teaching methods and team-teaching strategies so that learning is more contextualized, more integrated or interdisciplinary, student-centered, active, and project based.[15] A student-centered approach encourages students to be active participants in their own learning. Instead of emphasizing memorization and abstract learning, teachers focus on authentic instruction to promote contextual learning. Contextual learning refers to learning that occurs in a real-life context or a close simulation of a real-life context. These teaching and learning processes require students to solve problems and complete tasks that are found in real-life situations--especially, but not solely, in workplace situations.[16] Students work in small groups to acquire and use information, make decisions, and apply academic knowledge to vocational or real-world frames of reference. Teamwork and hands-on approaches are emphasized. Such instructional practices make learning more meaningful, help students to see the applications of their knowledge and skills, and connect learning to the world outside the classroom. In this way, community involvement provides a way of orchestrating all aspects of our educational philosophy in an organic and logistically consistent whole.

The school will reinforce the community connection by requiring every student to work with a non-profit organization at least twenty-five hours a year for each of their four years. This community contribution component will reinforce the culture of the school, and make a positive impact on the community. For the first two years, students will be given direction in structuring their community contribution project. For the last two years, students will be encouraged to define a goal they want to accomplish through their project. They will be required to report on the success of the project.

Technology Integration

Finally, our educational philosophy includes integrating technology into our ordinary classroom practice. We are not interested in "teaching" technology or in using technology as a superfluous "add-on," such as providing reward games for students.

There are two ways in which we intend to integrate technology into instruction. The first is to use technology as an integral part of project-based learning itself. Each student will have access to computers for part of the day. Software to be used will include Presentation Tools, including word processors, PowerPoint-like presentation software, video presentation software, and desktop publishing software. We will also have access to such a suite of Presentation Tools from Maestro Learning, who has agreed to

[15]Phelps, A. (1997). Critical policies in school to work. In J.J. D'Amico, A. Phelps, & M. Anderson, *School-to-work systems: An overview of key issues, elements, policies, and practices* (pp. 35-57). Oak Brook, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

[16]Rogers, A., Hubbard, S., Charner, I., Fraser, B.S., & Horne, R. (1996, October). *Study of school-to-work initiatives: Cross-site analysis*, http://www.ed.gov/pubs/SER/SchoolWork/index.html

consider the CCHS as a demonstration site.[17] To ensure technological fluency, projects will be created in which students will be able to use the Internet as a significant element in their research, because research has demonstrated that Internet-based communications can support for collaborative, project-based learning activities.[18]

The second way we will integrate technology into the curriculum will be in the area of basic skills. By the time students have gotten to high schools, they have used textbooks, videos, workbooks, lectures, discussions, small group work and more to learn basic skills. If their skills are inadequate, providing them with the same experiences again, no matter how much better the curriculum or the instruction, is likely to doom them to a new cycle of failure. Basic skill instruction could be mediated by technology, through the use of *Maestro Workshop*. Most high school students have had limited experience with technology as a teaching methods for basic skills and therefore do not associate it with experiential failure. Using technology for basic skills instruction has the additional benefit of freeing teachers to spend the majority of their time on the other areas of instruction—team-building, problem-solving, and life skills. Here, too, research demonstrates the power of using technology in this manner.

A study of a comprehensive effort to integrate technology into schools shows an increase in test scores related to the use of technology. In West Virginia, curriculum objectives for basic skills development in reading and mathematics were integrated with instructional software. This curriculum was reinforced with teacher instruction and the achievement tests used to evaluate student performance. Gains in student test scores on the SAT-9 (for 950 fifth graders in 18 schools) were attributable to the alignment of the targeted curriculum objectives with the software, teacher instruction and the tests.[19]

A third element of technology integration is not related to instruction, per se, but to the need for a well-structured information system as an enabling tool supporting the instructional agenda. We will make sure that all administrators and teachers have access to a user-friendly system that gives them the information they need to do their job. For example teachers will be encouraged to use assessment results quickly, and to update student records regularly, to better enable the instructional team to develop appropriate plans for student progress and their own professional development.

B. Curriculum

Building on the educational philosophy discussed above, the curriculum will be based on two sources: the International Baccalaureate Program and the Massachusetts Frameworks.

International Baccalaureate

Although many view the world as shrinking, most United States residents know little about, and feel little affinity for, people in other countries and cultures. People living in the US have difficulty seeing connections between their own lives and the lives of people elsewhere in the world. This lack of knowledge

[17] In addition, we will have access to their revolutionary authoring tools—*Maestro Workshop*—which will enable teachers to create project-based versions of these tools for students, incorporating direct instruction and project-appropriate assets within the software tools themselves.

[18] Wang, M., Laffey, J., & Poole, M. J. (2001). The construction of shared knowledge in an Internet-based shared environment for expeditions (iExpeditions). *International Journal of Educational Technology, 2*(2).

[19] Mann, D., Shakeshaft, C., Becker, J., & Kottkamp, R. (1999). *West Virginia story: Achievement gains from a statewide comprehensive instructional technology program.* Santa Monica, CA: Milken Exchange on Educational Technology.

or connectedness makes thinking intelligently about other peoples' lives and perspectives virtually impossible for most Americans. If America is to continue its leadership role in the 21st century, it is imperative that we educate our children to a meaningful awareness of the world in which they live.

The IB curriculum has been developed over many years and has evolved to take elements of different national systems into account. Many of the appealing parts of an IB program are similar to models across the US of successful reform efforts. The interdisciplinary nature of the courses, the community action service (CAS) component, the extended essay, even the Theory of Knowledge integrative course all have antecedents and corollaries in schools born in the US. In many ways, IB is a curriculum like many that provides a coherent framework, some solid guideposts for learning and a well-articulated assessment system.

It is in this spirit of understanding the appeal of IB that we will use IB material as the theme of the curriculum. This perspective will provide a context in which students interact with the content, knowledge, and skills associated with the curriculum, as well as the four instructional strategies. The theme grows out of an expressed interest among Cambridge parents for an IB program.[20] This program resonates with many Cambridge families for several reasons. First, the curriculum is perceived as a rigorous and coherent, with very high standards, which many feel are missing from the current options at the one high school. Second, the international foundation of the program appeals to a range of families who come from many different countries. In the mix of Cambridge residents are many who know the IB program as an international credential, and seek it for that reason. Third, the IB program focuses not only on academics but inculcates in its students the value of contributing to the larger society. Finally, as part of the course of study, students are required to be conversant in a second language upon graduation. As stated above, these hallmarks are shared by a number of other curriculum developed here, for example the Central Park East schools.

At its heart, the IB Diploma program is a standards based curriculum. Since we are required to use MCAS as a foundation for our standards testing, we do not want to overlay another standard wholesale. Furthermore, most schools in the US offering the IB Diploma (of which there are 300, with none currently operating in Massachusetts[21]) have selective admissions to their IB program. The Charter law does not allow us have selective admissions. Until we know how this would impact the school, we will not make a decision on whether to become certified. However, we do intend to develop a curriculum that builds on the elements of the IB model.[22] That perspective has been included in our educational philosophy, and in curriculum development and assessment as well.

The IB curriculum will be a source, and adapted to the CCHS context. The principal as instructional head will decide on which elements to incorporate elements, and how. Teacher, parent and student feedback will be used to guide the use of the various courses and specifics of IB, depending on which work the best with the CCHS population. This approach gives us flexibility to change the emphasis. We are especially aware that trying to do too many things at once proves too challenging to small start-up organizations. If over time, CCHS staff determines that it can fulfill Massachusetts mandates stemming from MCAS, and the IB

[20] In a recent survey sent to all incoming and current kindergarten parents, the Cambridge School Department found high levels of interest in an IB school.

[21] The High School of Commerce in Springfield is part of the IB network, and the Sturgis Charter School is in the process of accreditation.

[22] There is interest in Cambridge for an IB elementary school, which might happen within the system or outside the system. If an IB elementary school is started, we would expect the principal to work with the school and recommend whether to pursue an IB Diploma program in the future.

requirements, it will move towards accreditation. Since the process to apply requires that the school be up and running, with classes, prior to application, the school would barely be eligible to apply by the time the charter was up for renewal. When a charter renewal application is filed, four years into operations, CCHS will have determined the best way to handle the IB Diploma and certification question. [23]

The ways in which we might diverge from the IB format include a math sequence. Our hope is that we will need to offer higher-level math classes than are typically taught in an IB context. Students at CRLS ready for upper level math take courses at the Harvard extension school. We hope to develop a student body that has a large enough group to demand that we offer the classes in-house.

Like many programs, each CCHS student will be conversant in a language other than English. There will be several ways students can fulfill this requirement. First, for bi-lingual students coming to the CCHS, they will get credit for foreign language interaction based upon their second language. In this way, we will honor and acknowledge a strength they bring with them. Second, some students will want to pursue another language in depth. We will offer four years of classroom instruction in Spanish or French for those students. When possible, the classroom instruction will be supplemented by study groups run by native-speaking bi-lingual students and projects in which students can use and augment their classroom learning. Third, some students will want to become familiar with another language without studying it in depth. These students could use their community involvement internships with organizations where a language other than English is spoken and informal classes in the school taught by bi-lingual students whose second language is the chosen language. This flexibility in approach aligns well with CCHS philosophy.

MCAS standards Example

Instructional staff, led by the principal, and supplemented by outside consultants, will work to develop and continually update the curriculum in line with Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. A project-based learning approach means that content, knowledge, and skills are often organized around projects. For example, a project could involve **students in preparing** residents of a community to make a decision about building a new water treatment plant versus renovating an existing one. This one project alone involves students in the following MCAS frameworks and standards:

Science Frameworks

The Earth's Sources of Energy

Broad Concept: Numerous earth resources are used to sustain human affairs. The abundance and accessibility of these resources can influence their use.

Ecology

Broad Concept: Ecology is the interaction between living organisms and their environment

Properties of Matter

Broad Concept: Physical and chemical properties can be used to classify and describe matter.

Strand 4: Technology/Engineering

Engineering Design

Broad Concept: Engineering design involves practical problem solving, research, development, and invention and requires designing, drawing, building, testing, and redesigning.

Construction Technologies

Broad Concept: Various materials, processes, and systems are used to build structures.

[23] This decision will be affected by changes in the CPS related to IB, and the experience of the staff incorporating IB curriculum into operations.

Math Frameworks

Measurement

Understand measurable attributes of objects and the units, systems, and processes of measurement
Apply appropriate techniques, tools, and formulas to determine measurements

Data Analysis, Statistics, and Probability

Formulate questions that can be addressed with data and collect, organize, and display relevant data to answer them
Select and use appropriate statistical methods to analyze data
Develop and evaluate inferences and predictions that are based on data
Understand and apply basic concepts of probability

History Frameworks

Society, Diversity, Commonality, and the Individual.

Students understand the rights of individuals in conjunction with the ideals of community participation and public service.

Research, Evidence, and Point of View.

Students compose a research paper, using conflicting primary sources, and explain the degree to which they are able, or unable, to establish which is the more credible source.

Language Arts Frameworks

1.5 Identify and practice techniques such as setting time limits for speakers and deadlines for decision-making to improve productivity of group discussions.
2.5 Summarize in a coherent and organized way information and ideas
3.14 Give formal and informal talks to various audiences and for various purposes using appropriate level of formality and rhetorical devices.
19.27 Write well-organized research papers that prove a thesis statement using logical organization, effective supporting evidence, and variety in sentence structure.
21.8 Revise writing by attending to topic/idea development, organization, level of detail, language/style, sentence structure, grammar and usage, and mechanics.
23.13 Organize ideas for a critical essay about literature or a research report with an original thesis statement in the introduction, well constructed paragraphs that build an effective argument, transition sentences to link paragraphs into a coherent whole, and a conclusion.
23.15 Craft sentences in a way that supports the underlying logic of the ideas.
24.5 Formulate open-ended research questions and apply steps for obtaining and evaluating information from a variety of sources, organizing information, documenting sources in a consistent and standard format, and presenting research.
27.6 Create media presentations that effectively use graphics, images, and/or sound to present a distinctive point of view on a topic.

Students will be studying different subjects at different times, at their own pace. Certain material will be required to be mastered by all students. Further study at higher levels will be available once mastery of the basic level is achieved. Below are examples of the core structure. In each area, there will be opportunities for advanced work and for remedial instruction.

Subject area	Required	Advanced
English Language	4 years of progressively more advanced	Independent study

Arts	work, with a minimum standard of passing the MCAS	Fiction writing
Mathematics	4 years, Algebra I and II, Geometry, Introductory Statistics	Calculus, Trigonometry, Linear Algebra, Advanced calculus, Advanced statistics calculus
Science	3 years including Biology and life sciences, Chemistry, Physics, all taught using integrative sciences models for classroom learning. Technology (in conjunction with Social Studies)	Advanced work in each area. Independent study, including lab work supervised by professionals in the field
Social Studies	Areas to cover include: World history Economics American history Political philosophy & practice Technology (in conjunction with science)	Advanced seminars Independent study
Second Language	4 years or until conversant	College level literature study
Music/Arts	2 years of courses	Independent study, including work with professions in the field
Electives	Range of courses offered, student selection with input of advisor	Range of electives, including work off campus
Extracurricular	25 hours of community service each year Physical Education	Community internship Athletic Team participation

Senior Project
A specific requirement for graduation, which pulls together each of these approaches, is a senior project required of each student. The project is expected to be original work proposed, developed and executed by the student. It will be the culmination of the student's school experience. It is expected that it will be interdisciplinary, make a connection to the community, and make use of technology. This project will be judged through public assessment, using outside evaluators in the chosen field.

C. Assessment

Schools should be held accountable not just for intentions, but for results. CCHS will make a promise to students to provide a solid education, with measurable results.

The school will use both standards based measures and normative measures to gauge success. In addition,

a key part of student achievement will be a portfolio presentation in the second half of the senior year on an individual topic. Some but not all of the projects will be tied into the student's community service.

Assessment of engaged learning involves presenting students with an authentic task, project, or investigation, and then observing, interviewing, and examining their presentations and artifacts to assess what they actually know and can do. This assessment, often called performance-based assessment, is generative in that it involves students in developing their own performance criteria and playing a key role in the overall design, evaluation, and reporting of their assessment. The best performance-based assessment has a seamless connection to curriculum and instruction so that it is ongoing. Assessment should represent all meaningful aspects of performance and should have equitable standards that apply to all students. The process will follow several steps:

Step 1. Choose a set of content standards and develop performance expectations

Standards have learning expectations that generally fall into one of these categories:

- concepts and information (what students should know);
- skills (what students should be able to do);
- communication (how students can articulate concepts and skills);
- transfer (how they can apply information and skills in new ways or to different subject matters).

The key to effective performance and valid scoring is setting standards and criteria in advance. Scoring criteria make public what is being judged and the standards for acceptable performance and let students know exactly what they need to do to get a particular rating. A rubric is an assessment scoring guide that describes student work at different levels of performance. A rubric gives students feedback on their performance. It tells them what the lesson or teacher expects and what they need to do in order to improve their performance.

A typical rubric:

- is aligned with the content standards (essential skills) and performance standards (levels of understanding) of the lesson;
- includes quality indicators or descriptions of each performance standard that represent what each standard represents;
- includes quality indicators that represent a smooth continuum of performance so as to convey that high-quality work is possible through the steps of review, feedback, and improvement;
- includes an example, performance description, or anchor of what each performance standard looks like in practice; and
- has the highest point on the scale describing genuinely challenging (yet attainable) performance.

Step 2. Decide how to communicate performance expectations to students

Students and others need to understand performance expectations and what they need to do to demonstrate mastery. The easiest way to communicate this is to share the rubrics and anchors (sample products of what each performance standard represents) with students. Assignments will be introduce with an explanation of learning expectations and how their tests, performances, or products will be evaluated. For example…

- The standard we are addressing is your ability to organize, analyze, and communicate data.
- An excellent performance will include a graph that is accurate and easy to read and a letter that is complete, accurate, understandable, persuasive, grammatically correct, and written in appropriate letter style.

Step 3. Develop assessments that are aligned with the performance expectations
Assessments can draw upon a myriad of testing or measurement tasks ranging from informal, teacher designed activities to standardized, norm referenced tests. The fundamental role of assessment is to provide meaningful feedback for improving student learning, instructional practice, and educational options. There are many ways to categorize assessments. For our purposes, we will divide the categories into

- selected response assessments,
- constructed response assessments, and
- performance assessments.

Selected response assessments include multiple choice, true/false, and matching tests. They are efficient ways of measuring knowledge acquisition and it is easy to set levels for performance (e.g., 18 correct out of 20 = B). Constructed response assessments include fill in the blank, short answers, show your work, and visual depiction activities. These give teachers a better sense of how well students can convey information and demonstrate some skills like mapping, graphing, and so on. Performance assessments generally require students to demonstrate something that meets specific criteria. This could include, for example, demonstrations of how to conduct a search, posting artwork on the web, producing a book, enactments, scientific demonstrations or exhibits, research papers, and so forth.

Good assessments must:

- be aligned with specific standards and learning targets;
- have adequate breadth and depth;
- affect what is important for students to know and be able to do;
- be fair and equitable for all students (that is, not reflect cultural, gender, ethnic, or other biases);
- be aligned with instruction;
- have appropriate rubrics or scoring criteria attached that already distinguish between levels of performance;
- be doable within the specified timeframe;
- be valid and reliable for the purposes for which they are to be used (that is, measure what they say they are measuring and provide consistent results over time and across groups);
- be readily understood by students; and
- give information that is useful for student or instructional improvement.

The goal of the accountability plan for CCHS is to define clearly what the goals are, and to be able to measure progress on meeting the goals. The accountability will be for student mastery of subject matter, student involvement with the community, continual teacher professional development, and family satisfaction. Our commitment is to the students, their families, teachers, and the community.

As a public school CCHS will administer the MCAS. As baseline data, for all entering students (the majority of whom should be in the 9th grade), we will get MCAS individual item data.[24] Since success in the core subject areas of ELA is a prerequisite to success in other areas, we will administer the Stanford 9 reading test annually. Our measure of success will be to see an increase of at least 1.5 grade levels every year for each student at least 2 grades below grade level, an increase of at least 1.25 grade levels for all other students, until the 80% percentile of performance is reached. Whenever there is a choice to be made pedagogically, reading comes first.

[24] For students entering without individual MCAS data, we will ask for full school records from 8th grade and determine the best way to establish a baseline.

Instead of letter grades, standards based assessments will be criterion-referenced in each subject area to determine whether students have achieved mastery of the course. These reports will be used to determine by topic where a student needs extra time and/or help. Whenever school-wide results are used, only cohorts will be followed, to ensure that the data is measuring the same group of students. Teachers will be involved in developing individual achievement plans for students in their core group. Teachers involved with developing assessment plans are more successful at helping students reach the goals. Aggregated data will be used to identify needs of individual teachers for extra support whether it be via mentoring or new ideas for presenting material.

The measurement of success in second language acquisition will include both an oral presentation, in conversation form, and a written original essay on how the school can be improved. Each student will be expected to converse with a native speaker in a second language by the end of senior year.

Each student will be expected to design and plan a community contribution project for the 11th and 12th grades. Each student will be given reference sources, but will be responsible for proposing an internship and securing it. This model is based on the successful Fenway High School model, which encourages independent pursuit and instills confidence in one's ability to secure a position. Public assessments including the organizational contact and outside evaluators will be used to measure of success for this project.

Accountability to others (beyond student assessment)

Accountability to parents will be measured by an enrollment of at least 90% of capacity. A second measure will be satisfaction, as measured in annual surveys with 80% participation rate, for 80% of respondents on the following items: overall academic program, their child(ren)'s progress, communication from the school, and community contribution.

Accountability to the community will be measured by the number engaged in the community contribution program and relations with community partners. Over the long term, the benefits will be seen in the number of involved residents who graduated from CCHS and are continuing to contribute to their community as adults. In addition to the usual form of interaction, we hope to engage families in the life of the school. And, whenever possible, if we have an activity, e.g. a seminar on Adolescent Development Issues of interest to the wider community, we will publicize it and make it open to all Cambridge families.

Accountability to teachers will come in the form of strong professional development and strict adherence to performance evaluations and reviews procedures. All new teachers will be evaluated through in-class observation within the first three months, and given feedback on areas of strengths and weaknesses. The promise to teachers is that CCHS will provide them with everything they need to succeed. Like students, that includes comprehensive, honest feedback and opportunities to improve. Each staff person will be on a one-year contract. A condition of renewal is the completion of a 360 review.[25] The principal's contract will specify that completing evaluations of all direct reports is required for renewal. The purpose of this is not to suggest that retention is not desired or expected. Quite the opposite. It is to give a very clear

[25] A 360 review in the usual sense means including supervisors, peers, and direct reports. In the school setting, we will use feedback from supervisors, peers, parents and students. While we understand that families' and students' feedback come from a very different perspective, we believe it is important, especially in light of our promise of accountability to all. The way to ensure it is to build feedback from the ultimate "user" of the service into the system.

message to all staff that the school recognizes that it must provide a positive environment so that everyone will seek renewal of contracts.

Another message from detailed, frequent and consistent evaluations is that student learning is paramount, and assessing it is built into the structure of the school. We believe that this measure will energize and encourage teachers to reach their potential. The message is that if it is the right fit, we will recognize and appreciate the teachers' efforts. The process will also ensure that any needs for improvement are identified early, and addressed. However, it will be equally clear that if it is the wrong fit, the person will leave, and soon. In line with this policy, we will have a mentoring program for all teachers, with an emphasis on new teachers. We hope to work with area educational institutions such as Tufts School of Education (which led a summer program on VideoPaper Builder, which might be a useful model), Lesley College and the Harvard Graduate School of Education in formulating such a plan.

D. Special Student Populations and Student Services

We believe that students with special needs will do well at CCHS. Built into the school is the acknowledgement of differential learning styles, and therefore, differential instruction. Some students will enter the school with either a 504 plan or an IEP, which we will be prepared to implement through an inclusion model of instruction. We will work with students and families to understand the need for services. As a public school we will be subject to the laws and regulations relating to providing special education services (up to the need for a separate school). The school will employ a part-time certified SPED coordinator/teacher from the start, with the position growing into full-time. If additional resources are required, depending on the student population, positions will be added as needed. Our program will be in compliance with both chapter 766 and IDEA. Students coming into the school with an IEP will be seen by the SPED coordinator, who will make sure that all necessary information is communicated to all relevant people. Teachers, principals, parents, or students can identify pedagogical problems that might be a sign of a disability. The SPED coordinator will be available to anyone to discuss how to initiate discussions about assessments for disability.

Limited English Proficiency students are expected to comprise a percentage of the student body, probably similar to the city's overall average of 8%. Our goal is to help LEP students gain proficiency as quickly as possible. We will develop tutoring programs, to be available before and after school. In addition, we will encourage students to work on achieving fluency in English during the summers. Depending on the results of the enrollment process, we may either contract out for intensive English services, or provide them in-house.

We understand that literacy will need to be a component of the educational program for those not able to read at an appropriate level to accomplish the work required. Student services will stress the need for literacy as a prerequisite for success. As noted in the technology section, software will be utilized to help those needing remedial help get up to speed as quickly as possible. Summer study and work will be assigned for all those identified prior to matriculation as needing extra help.

We recognize that students coming to the school will have had a wide range of experience, and will have widely divergent strengths and needs. Our guiding philosophy is that every student can be engaged, and that engaged students will achieve at high levels. We also recognize that students facing stress do not learn and cannot engage in school as well as those without stress. We are exploring a partnership with social workers to provide services at the school to address the need for counseling.

Using advisory groups will provide a process to ensure that all students are known as individuals. Individual attention and a coherent mission clearly articulated, communicated and driven home by every means possible will inspire each stakeholder, teacher, student, parent, administrator, to do their best. Students will meet in small advisory groups once a week to share information, touch base with each other and their advisor. Advisors will be drawn from regular teaching staff.

A nurse will be available to students requiring health services. We expect this position to be part-time at the beginning, and to grow over time into a full-time position. A nutrition program will be in place for students, per requirements of public schools. As the project moves forward, more details of the provision of this service will be worked out.

It is our hope that we will be able to coordinate with the regular public school department in providing some services and activities to students across the city. For example, if CCHS develops an extracurricular activity not available at CRLS, we will invite interested students to join. Similarly, we hope that the city and School Department will work with us on some joint initiatives, as happened initially with the Banneker School.

III. Organizational viability: School Governance and Management

Founding Group

This proposal comes out of a long-running community commentary on the need for change within the high school. The group came together to put forth a proposal to address very specific and widespread community needs. People contribute their expertise, according to their time availability and expertise. Various people have been to different meetings with people in the community as the proposal was being developed. The working group will grow during the next phase to include more people, including many from the ring of advisors and supporters. The working group includes two educators, Peter Dublin and Allen Graubard. Three parents of current students in Cambridge, Joy Lucas, Patty Nolan and Tom Stohlman are members of the working group as well.

In addition to the initial working group, there are a number of other people who have supported and contributed to the proposal, and who will continue to help with the project. There is broad and enthusiastic support from the organizers of the petition drive at CRLS. A key advisor is David Rabkin, Vice-President for Technology at the Museum of Science. Lisa Stapleton, director of Marketing for Fidelity Charitable Services, has agreed to advise and help on development issues. Hue-Tam Tai, parent of a CRLS graduate and a current student, a product of an IB school, and professor at Harvard and Leah Greenwald, parent and active school and community leader and volunteer are examples of other advisors. These and several other supporters have indicated that they are excited about the project, and as it moves forward, will help.

In addition to the deliberately small founding group and advisors we have benefited from the input and support of a wide range of people. Some prefer not to be publicly associated with the venture at this stage in its development. These include some current teachers in the Cambridge school system, as well as several other teachers currently working in nearby communities. It also includes several politically connected citizens with a wide range of contacts. Many parents who are currently involved with the system, working hard to improve it and support it have endorsed the project and will be more involved as it moves forward. Like them, we do not view working to establish a second public, charter high school in Cambridge as antithetical to working for improvement of the regular public schools. To the contrary, we view the two goals as complementary. We are confident that through the range of contacts we have already that we can

make quick progress on developing a full business plan, and moving from planning into action. The range of contacts among the founding group and the wider circle of supporters/advisors include people with professional expertise in the areas of education, business, human resources, real estate, fundraising, community relations, and legal.

We have started discussions with community organizations that might be future partners assuming the project goes forward. For example, with Harvard HAND about developing a tutoring program, and the Museum of Science about building an internship program in line with its Urban Youth Program. For the internship program, we will look to the Cambridge philanthropic and business community. We have ties to the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, MIT, Harvard Graduate School of Education and other institutions. We will draw on those as the planning for the endeavor evolves. Cambridge has an extremely wide range of organizations interested in education and children. We will be developing partnerships with many organization, institutions, businesses and governmental entities going forward.

Organizational Structure

The charter school will be governed by a Board of Trustees. The school will be administered by a Principal, who will be assisted by a Chief Operating Officer [COO] and advised by a school council. The board will hire and evaluate both the Principal and the COO.

The organizational structure recognizes and emphasizes that the principal is the educational leader and should be the highest responsible party for teaching and learning and the ultimate success of the school. As such, the person selected will be expected to have superior competencies in curriculum development, teaching, and teacher evaluation. The principal will be hired by and report to the board of trustees. The principal will hire and evaluate all educational personnel.

The COO will support the principal by managing the budget, infrastructure, physical plant, and other areas not traditionally within the expertise of educational leaders. Strong competency shall be required in business management. The COO shall work for the principal and the Board.[26] The two positions are seen as partners, who must work well together. Therefore, the Board will ensure that the two people can work well together. The COO will hire and evaluate all support personnel.

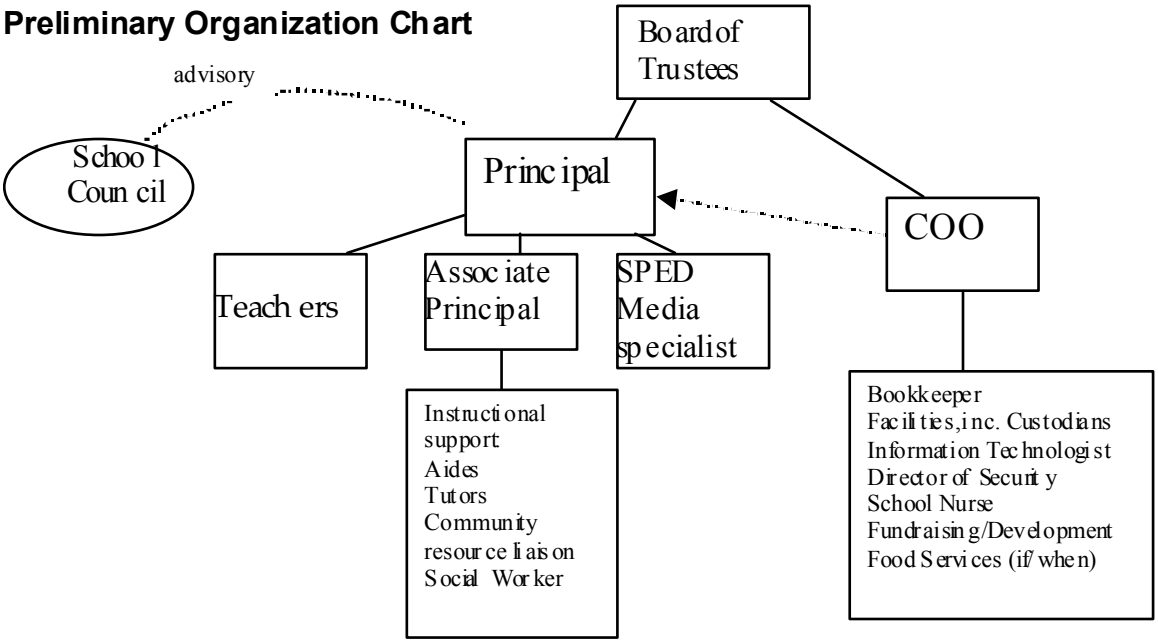
The Board of Trustees will be a 9-15 member group who will be responsible for oversight, and adherence to the spirit and letter of the charter. Members will serve staggered 3 year terms, with 1/3 members elected or renewed every year. The Board shall set school policy. The board shall hire and evaluate the principal and director of operations. The Board will be selected based on a number of criteria, with a clearly defined mission to govern the overall organization, while the staff of the school will be managing it and teaching in it.

A School Council will consist of parents, teachers and students, elected by the school community at the beginning of every school year. The council will provide the principal with a sounding board for all issues effecting the school community. The structure shall be set by the principal, but shall include representation

[26] Such joint hiring, and matrix reporting relationships are widespread in corporate America. Since the principal cannot be expected to be expert in overseeing all educational AND operations tasks, we split up the responsibilities. Many charter schools choose to give an ED, more akin to our COO a position above the principal. However, since the service of CHHS is education, we believe that the Chief Educational Officer, in this case the Principal, should report directly to the Board, and not be below the ED/Headmaster/CEO.

from each grade and constituent group. To reflect the mission of the school in encouraging civic participation, the school council will include student members.

Preliminary Organization Chart



Recruitment, selection, and development plans for board members.
Board of Trustee members will be recruited from a wide area of professional expertise including law, finance, government, education and business. Emphasis will be placed on members with the expertise needed who are parents, community volunteers, and citizens with a proven commitment to higher education. In order to stagger the terms, the initial board will consist of 9 members, three with 3 years terms, three with 2 year terms, three with 1 year terms. Subsequent boards will be selected by a majority vote of the then current board. The Board will be expanded as needed. All Board members will be expected to attend an orientation retreat, during which the mission will be emphasized, and roles and responsibilities outlined. "The Board Member's Book" by Brian O'Connell [The Foundation Center] will serve as required reading for all board members. In addition to regular meetings, a strategic planning process and retreat will take place every four years, led by the Board. We will draw upon existing resources for Board issues, for example use materials from national organizations with resources such as the Support Center for Nonprofit Management and the Drucker Foundation, and use local resources such as the Charter School Resource Center.

Members will attend a self-evaluation sessions every year. With input from the principal, COO, the school community and an independent facilitator, members will evaluate progress towards educational goals and their own contributions to that success.

Additional information

Cambridge environment
We recognize the challenge of seeking to start a school in Cambridge, especially in light of needing to secure space in a city with very high rents and a saturated building climate. We hope to be able to secure an underused facility owned by the Catholic church, of which there are several. Alternatively, especially for the first few years when the size will be smaller, there is currently space available in a number of developments owned by MIT and Harvard which we would seek to lease on favorable terms. Failing that, we would seek space in a commercial building. One advantage of the dot-com bust is that for the first time in several years, the trend has been to higher vacancy rates, which should help the school. Cambridge, which two years ago had a close to 0% vacancy rate now has a vacancy rate close to 20%.[27]

It is expected that securing a long-term facility will require receiving a charter, and working with the city and the large institutional players in the city to identify appropriate space. As the project moves forward, we will be in touch with real estate professionals we contacted on a preliminary basis to get more specific information. Assuming the school gets started, future strategic direction will be set by the board, and implemented by staff. If it is determined that the school needs a permanent facility, then a major campaign would have to be launched to fund it. Currently, we are expecting only to raise money to fund the initial start-up period, covering both the time prior to opening, and the first year, when staffing will be relatively high compared to the number of students due to the staggered nature of the enrollment.

On the overall financial viability, assuming that most students come from Cambridge, we expect for the high reimbursements to continue for at least a few years. Our preliminary financial plan shows that the school will be able to cover expenses with a reasonable level of fundraising. The toughest years will be the first two, as enrollment builds. The relatively high reimbursement for Cambridge as a sending district will help the school be able to pay the rents potentially required without sacrificing too much on the staffing side. Prudent financial planning means that we will not assume that all students will come from Cambridge, or that the high levels of reimbursement will continue indefinitely.

Measure of Success: Replicability
We believe strongly that the ultimate success measure is the degree to which other public schools can learn from CCHS. To that end, we have deliberately designed the school to be a replicable model. Much about the school that will lead to its success will be able to be replicated.

Size as a key element that cannot be stressed enough. And we believe that both size of the overall school and class size are important.

While we hope and expect to attract excellent teachers, we know that a school staffed entirely with the state's best teachers is not replicable. Similarly, a school that attracts the state's best students is not replicable. We expect to attract a range of teachers and students. A key difference with teachers is that we will work closely with them to identify what type of support is needed by each. If the fit is not right, though, we will have the courage to let those teachers go. We believe that this alone will encourage and inspire the teachers who stay. They will realize that the school cares deeply about education by not tolerating poor instruction or a mismatch between school demands and individual attitudes.

[27] Grubb & Ellis' Q2 2002 overview of the Cambridge real estate market showed 2.8 million square feet of available space, including 1.2 million for sublet, which might be leasable for less than the going market rate.

Accountability and respect are not difficult to say; they are difficult to execute and develop. But, again, they are necessary ingredients of a successful school AND eminently replicable. By designing a school with the goal of embedding these into the structure, we hope to serve as a model for other public schools.