



richmond urban collective

METROPOLITAN
PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Charter School Application

Revision: August 28, 2013

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Section I: Executive Summary

1.1 Need for the Charter School.

We discuss the need for the charter school fully in the *Statement of Need (Section 5)*.

1.2 Local Education Authority Meetings.

Over the past year, we have coordinated and participated in three meetings with the Office of the Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools (RPS). We have also met---formally or informally---with eight of nine members of the RPS School Board. Stakeholder feedback regarding our project has been positive.

1.3 Executive Summary.

“Cereal con leche y fresas fresco. ¿usted?” (“Cereal with milk and fresh strawberries. And, you?”, one student tells another.) It’s 6:45 a.m. in the Commons, and breakfast is served. Our boys sit uniformly dressed in blazers and cravats with their respective language clubs. A chorus of French, Spanish, and Chinese resounds as the boys open each morning immersed in global dialogue. *Global focus.*

Later, in English Language Arts, a camera sits on a tripod recording as students, arranged in teams, co-create couplets and quatrains collectively producing a sonnet. Down the hall an elementary school kid on tour asks, “What’s this class?”, as he observes our Physics students, eyes glued to laptops, and actively engaged in digital simulations of centrifugal force. *Interactive learning.*

Tomorrow, in Algebra, students will apply the quadratic equation to determine---given an initial funding level---how long project funding will last for developing a new military tank. According to *Ausubel’s Assimilation Learning Theory*, long-term retention and application of knowledge to new problems requires utilizing real world examples. The theory suggests that when students can see the connection between textbook lessons and everyday life, and when they are informed that solutions exist, then they are motivated to learn. *Meaningful learning.*

The Algebra teacher relates as though he could be one student’s uncle, another’s brother, or yet another’s father. Instructors must have the capacity to empathize with the boys, and to comprehend that low performance in low-income students may signal something other than a learning disability. A poor child’s subpar performance could mean simply that he has a vision or other health challenge that has persisted unchecked. Or, possibly he has a nutritional deficiency which wrap-around services

can correct. The instructors we select should understand what our youth deal with beyond the school gate---the colloquialisms they use; the stars they idolize; their mode of dress. *Predominantly male faculty and administration.*

Metropolitan Preparatory Academy will be a public, nonreligious charter school located in a low-wealth district in Richmond, Virginia and focused on college and career readiness for urban young men. The school will be founded as a collaboration of education, business, civic, and youth development leaders, and established as a nonprofit organization. It will open with 100 sixth grade students chosen by lottery. The school will phase in a grade each year until we are serving grades 6-12.

Extended Time in School. Based on data from similar programs in other states, we expect that up to 85% of the student population will be low-income, 85-90% will enter reading below grade level, and as many as 20% will require wrap-around services. Special programming to address these challenges will include extended days; daily after-school tutoring; year-round school; a 5-week compulsory Summer University program; and Saturday classes to supplement the traditional 180-day school session.

Academic Rigor. Our model also includes “early college high school” and dual-enrollment programs, in conjunction with local postsecondary schools, through which students would have a choice of starting college-level courses in the 10th or 11th grade, and would thereby finish high school with as many as 60 college credits. The challenging curriculum includes double periods of English and Math daily; daily physical education/health classes; compulsory global language classes; and compulsory arts coursework.

Furthermore, Advanced Placement (AP) coursework will be offered for core courses in grades 10 – 12. Regular participation in cognitive training is also a curricular requirement. We are pegging the Academy’s credited curriculum courses to the

Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) content requirements (with Common Core State Standards additions). Students will take SOL/SOL end-of-year assessments during grades 6-12. We are adding ACT Explorer testing for 8th graders and SAT Subject tests for 9th-12th graders in preparation for college entrance examinations.

Tech-infused Model. In a recent article regarding 21st century education, the author asserts that modern learning should be information-rich and media-driven. We share the author's preference for a "tech-infused model" in which digital tools and infrastructure facilitate deep learning, rather than simply enabling dependence on automatic solutions. Our digital vision includes a laptop or tablet for each student and staff member; automated test-taking, performance-tracking, attendance recording, and record-keeping; and online lesson planning.

Beyond Academics---Towards Global Citizen. The program's focus will extend beyond academics. Students will have the opportunity to participate regularly in community service projects through a themed social entrepreneurship program; extra-curricular activities (chess club, student government, etc.); one-to-one personal and academic counseling; and real-world career, trade and college experiences to increase professional awareness, reinforce character, and nurture leadership development. Students interested in a vocational pathway will have the option to elect technical courses, career certification testing, and/or apprenticeships through Virginia's Career Clusters pathways.

Success Services---Healthy Culture. The Metropolitan Preparatory Academy family will focus on the students' overall wellness, and will strive to supplement the academic experience with the necessary wrap-around services to remove financial, academic, social, and psychological barriers, to create an incubator for personal success. The cultural backdrop designed to support holistic growth. Relatively small class sizes (20 students for most core classes); high-quality teachers; family and community

involvement; positive, accessible, onsite male role models; esteem-nurturing culture; post-graduate support through college graduation; behavioral, social, and emotional baseline testing and development; learning styles assessment and planning; uniforms, and a code of conduct, work in tandem to nurture the total young man.

Increased Social Inclusion. Modeling similar successful programs for urban males in Chicago and New York, the school aims to provide youth, traditionally underrepresented in higher education, with a world class tool chest to fulfill their potential. Historically, college preparatory schools for boys have only been available to families who could afford private schools. Metropolitan Preparatory Academy, as a public charter school, will offer college prep programming, tailored for urban boys, as public education.

Uniforms. We believe that school uniforms will contribute to an environ conducive to our rigorous programming. In a survey of parents and teachers regarding school uniforms featured at statisticbrain.com, 86% of teachers agreed that uniforms promoted a sense of security among students; 80% concurred that uniforms increased school pride and created a sense of community; 90% responded that uniforms had reduced the peer pressure to don certain brands; 81% believed they minimized distractions for students; 95% attributed increases in positive student behavior to uniforms.

In a Long Beach survey documented at the same website, implementing school uniforms was connected to a 91% drop in the school crime rate; a 90% drop in school suspensions; a 96% drop in school sex offenses; and a 69% reduction in vandalism incidents.

Furthermore, we aim to employ an interactive learning pedagogy to engender meaningful comprehension so that students can see the connection between textbook

lessons and everyday life, and thereby we increase student engagement, academic achievement levels, growth overtime, graduation rates and matriculation rates.

Public education is important to America and to our city. By employing an innovative model to move economically disadvantaged students along a pathway to success in high school, college, work and life, an urban boys' public charter school can be a key component in forwarding the City's master plan.

Section II: Mission Statement

2.1 Vision and Mission.

We believe the contributions of young urban males to be key to sustainable development in Richmond, in our country and around the globe. Our vision is a city and a world in which urban males from low-wealth backgrounds are significantly engaged in our global community, contributing to sustainable development and benefiting from their skills, knowledge, and gifts to their fullest potential.

To that end, our mission is to help better prepare Richmond's low-income, urban male youth for success in college, work, and life. Consistent with General Assembly, Virginia Board of Education, and Local Education Authority objectives, as articulated in the Virginia Standards of Quality (SOQ) § 22.1-253.13:1 – 22.1-253.13:9, our Virginia SOL-based curriculum with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) enhancements is designed to meet or exceed content and performance standards as described in the SOQ.

In compliance with the SOQ, instructors will follow the Virginia Standards of Learning and its Curricular Framework as the foundation for instruction in core courses, Health and Physical Education classes, Fine Arts classes, and other credit electives and exploratory courses for grades 6 – 12. Furthermore, with Common Core enhancements and additional customized seminar programming, our instructors will reach beyond the SOQ and SOL standards to provide students with extra reinforcement to set them on a clear path to graduation, matriculation, vocation, and global citizenship.

For an overall view of how school practices comply with the Commonwealth's Standards of Quality, please see our Virginia SOQ Chart (*Appendix B-2*) which cross-references state SOQ guidelines with the school's internal SOQ. Please find also attached the Metro Prep SOQ Checklist (*Appendix B-2*). The school SOQ Checklist is an internal audit tool which we will implement as a part of our internal Performance Contract review process.

2.2 Area of Concentration.

The Metropolitan Preparatory Academy, will offer urban males in grades 6-12, for whom a private college preparatory education would be unattainable, the opportunity for a free college and career preparatory education in an interactive learning environment especially designed to mold them into global citizens. Our "minds-on" programming will expand their capacity to learn new things and to develop the higher-level problem solving and critical thinking abilities needed to maximize their academic performance.

As part of its College and Career readiness initiative, the Commonwealth sets rigorous standards in the four core subjects, foreign languages, fine arts, health, physical education, computer technology and driver's education. The Commonwealth's definition of college and career readiness begins with proficiency in the SOL content areas. Furthermore, the state has identified several indicators that contribute to a high probability of enrollment and success in four-year postsecondary institutions of learning. The indicators are:

- ✓ Participating in a college preparatory curriculum that includes Algebra II and Chemistry
- ✓ Earning advanced proficient scores on mathematics, reading, and writing SOL assessments
- ✓ Earning an advanced studies diploma

- ✓ Participation in advanced placement, IB, and dual-enrollment courses
- ✓ Participating in the Virginia Early Scholars program
- ✓ Earning college ready scores on placement tests such as the SAT and ACT

Based on the Commonwealth's college and career readiness model and a standard Virginia public school curriculum model, we aim to assist urban urban males, who are typically underrepresented in postsecondary education, with increasing their chances for graduation, matriculation, and persistence with an instructional model focused on interactive learning, more time in school, remediation, and cognitive training.

2.3 Population.

Federal law, as expressed in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Title IX (as amended in 2006), make room for single-gender schools as innovative approaches for teaching kids. Furthermore, we find in Virginia Code §22.1-212.1:1 that the Virginia legislature has deliberated about the concept of single-sex education and ruled that single-gender schools are "consistent with constitutional principles" and further provides that "...a school board may establish a single-sex school or class in the division, if the school board makes available to pupils substantially equal coeducational schools or classes."

Section III: Goals and Educational Objectives

3.1 Performance-Based Goals and Objectives.

According to RPS district level reporting, the federal 3-year proficiency targets for 2012-2013 (all grade levels aggregated) standardized testing in reading and math are 85% and 61% respectively. Local proficiency pass rates for black male 6th graders per the divisional data were 60% and 28.85% in reading and math respectively. Our goal is to attain or surpass the federal AMO targets within 3 years.

As a curricular model, we will employ the Virginia Beach Public Schools framework as the basis for curriculum and instruction for grades 6-12 core, elective and exploratory credit courses. All credit courses standards will meet or exceed state Standards of Learning goals.

With respect to performance goals particularly---and in an effort to provide charter school leadership, the RPS School Board, the VBOE, and other stakeholders with data which is transparent, helpful, and appropriate for making key academic and operational decisions---we combine the Charter School Quality Consortium's (CSQC) model frameworks for academic and operational quality as the starting point.

[The CSQC model results from a collaboration of four industry-leading organizations---including the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. The U.S. Department of Education's Charter Schools Program funded the effort.]

The CSQC *Framework for Academic Quality* focuses on 4 primary indicators of academic success: (1) student achievement, (2) student growth overtime, (3) student postsecondary readiness, and (4) student engagement. The related *Framework for Operational Quality* is built on 3 pillars of operational effectiveness: (1) financial performance and sustainability, (2) board performance and stewardship, and (3) parent and community engagement. For each academic and operational indicator, we have established related goals, objectives, and targets.

To align the model with our school's design and with Virginia Board of Education and RPS School Board educational goals and objectives, we have customized it with goals, metrics, objectives and targets reflective of state and local requirements and specific to our programming. Please see the *Performance-Based Goals and Objectives Chart* attached for school performance-based goals (*Appendix B-3*).

Additionally, to facilitate compliance with the SOQ and other state and LEA requirements and charter school performance commitments, we have drafted a Charter School Performance Contract. Commonwealth law, of course, provides that an approved charter application constitutes an agreement, and its terms are the terms of a contract between a public charter school and its authorizer.

Encapsulating our charter arrangement in two separate agreements---a charter performance contract and the charter application---facilitates developing open and clear communication between our school and the authorizer. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive, clear and transparent process through which the charter school can be successful in planning and implementing a high quality program which consistently meets performance targets and thereby produces positive academic outcomes for its students. We attach a draft of the proposed *Charter School Performance Contract* herein (*Appendix B-3*).

Consistent with General Assembly, Virginia Board of Education, and RPS School Board objectives, as articulated in the Virginia Standards of Quality (SOQ) § 22.1-253.13:1 – 22.1-253.13:9, instructors will follow the Virginia Standards of Learning and its Curricular Framework as the foundation for instruction for credit courses including the core courses (English, Mathematics, Science, and History and Social Science), Health and Physical Education, Fine Arts, Economics and Personal Finance, Foreign Language, Computer Technology, Family Life and Driver Education for grades 6-12. Additional school exploratory electives will either be delivered in brief symposium format or

through dual-enrollment arrangements with local universities. Common Core State Standards enhancements will be added, where applicable, for curricular reinforcement.

In addition to performance-based goals discussed in this section, we address SOL content-based goals and related objectives at Section VI, Educational Programming. For each performance-based goal, we have delineated quantifiable objectives that will constitute charter school success. All classroom lesson plans and instructional resources will align with the performance objectives and specific skills and knowledge expectations expressed in the SOL curricular frameworks. Our Performance-Based Goals Chart and Performance Contract serve as tools for year-round in-house compliance tracking and mid-term internal audits. Please see the *Performance-Based Goals and Objectives Chart* attached (*Appendix B-3*).

3.2 Educational objectives.

To align the model with our school's design and with Virginia Board of Education and RPS School Board educational goals and objectives, we have customized it with goals, metrics, objectives and targets reflective of state and local requirements and specific to our programming. Please see the *Performance-Based Goals and Objectives Chart* (*Appendix B-3*).

At the course-level, student performance measures derive from both classroom and standardized assessment results. We discuss assessments further in Section VI, Educational Programming. Consistent with Virginia Board of Education requirements, in addition to classroom quizzes, projects, etc., students will participate in annual SOL and alternative assessments for core subjects which provide information on student achievement levels.

High school students, in particular, will complete and pass at least 6 applicable end-of-course Standards of Learning (SOL) tests following courses of instruction. High school

students who successfully complete a course and who achieve a passing score on an end-of-course SOL test or a substitute test for that course shall receive verified credit. The chart below indicates the numerical grading scale we will use for the school:

A 93-100

A- 90-92

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D+ 67-69

D 64-66

E below 64

Section IV: Evidence of Support

4.1 Community Engagement.

Beginning during fall of 2013, our Board of Directors will conduct community Town Hall Meetings throughout the City to raise awareness and share information about the school. Most of the Town Hall events will be at neighborhood Boys & Girls Clubs ("BGC") in voting districts around the city.

4.2 Evidence of Support for the School.

In March of 2012, we began contacting several local organizations to spread the word about our charter school idea and to recruit talent for an initial project development team. The vast majority of the calls yielded favorable reactions, and resulted in 25 community leaders participating in the first urban boys' charter school concept meeting. From that group, emerged the initial board of directors.

We then held informational meetings with 8 of the 9 Richmond Public School Board members, a local councilwoman, and the assistant of a General Assembly delegate. We continued stakeholder pow-wows including the city's Economic and Community Development Office, the Richmond Public Schools Superintendent's office, the director of RPS School Nutritional Services, and the Virginia Board of Education.

The Urban League-Richmond agreed to a proposal for a free space-sharing arrangement, metropolitan area Boys and Girls Clubs are lending space in their clubs to hold community Town Halls beginning this autumn. WTVR Radio talk show host, Jimmy Barrett, featured us on his morning spot in June. And, St. Christopher's School, a posh local private boys' school, reached out to include us among guests for the annual International Boys Schools Coalition Conference hosted on their pristine campus in early July.

In addition to gathering supporter signatures and letters, we host an informative website, www.richmondurbancollective.wordpress.com, which features a one question poll asking simply, "Would you support a boys' charter school for Richmond's inner-city?". Furthermore, our Facebook page updates the public on project news and has collected more than 200 fans. Supporters can also rally to our cause in two clicks by electronically signing our Change.org petition. Please find attached a Supporters' Petition (*Attachment 4-1*) which evidences support for the school from parents, educators, youth, and other key community stakeholders. Additionally, we provide a list of organizational *Community Partners (Attachment 4-2)*.

4.3 Parental Involvement.

We recognize that parents are the student's "first teachers" and that they can: ensure that students enter classrooms ready to learn; support academic work at home; promote a positive attitude toward school; provide a cultural context for understanding a student's behavior; and, recommend strategies that are specific to the student and will likely be reinforced at home. Consequently, attempts to involve them will be an important agenda item. We need parents and families to be strong advocates of our students' educational experience. Although the school is the primary formal learning environment for core coursework, parents and communities can make important contributions to the school's educational programs.

We plan to provide our staff and teachers with training on techniques for meaningfully engaging diverse parents. Our engagement strategy will focus on establishing good relationships with parents that promote trust and shared goals centered on supporting

the student. We recognize that some parents will require support from the school to assist them in their efforts.

We will engage parents to ensure they know the specific academic standards their children are expected to meet; that they understand the importance of closely monitoring their children's performance and how to interpret assessment information; and, that they know the process for acquiring additional help for them as needed. The school will impress upon parents the trickle-down value of projecting a positive attitude towards learning.

We will consider the many ways in which parents can be involved, and as a team, decide which type of involvement will be prioritized for the school. For example, Joyce Epstein (psychology's expert on parental involvement) specifies 6 types:

Parenting. Involves assisting families with parenting and child-rearing skills. In return, school personnel gain deeper understanding of families.

Planned Activity: As an integral part of the school's focus on creative conflict resolution, the Parenting Association will plan an annual interactive creative conflict resolution symposium for parents.

Communicating. School personnel share information to families about school programs and student progress.

Planned Activity: The governing board will host an Annual Town Hall series at several area Boys & Girls Clubs (and other community locations) for prospective new students and their families. Invitations will be extended to parents of age-eligible students city-wide through the Boys and Girls Clubs and area elementary school guidance counselors. Also, the Parents Association will host quarterly meetings. Additionally, the school will produce a quarterly newsletter and Annual Report for stakeholders.

Volunteering. Design activity recruitment, training, tasks, and schedules to involve families as volunteers.

Planned Activity: Through the school's social entrepreneurship program, students and their families will engage twice annually in themed area charitable events.

Learning at Home. Involve families with their children in learning activities at home.

Planned Activity: Parents' Association will organize a bi-annual focus group to ascertain parental feedback regarding ways in which the school may assist with improving their home learning experiences.

Decision Making. Include families as participants in school decisions.

Planned Activity: The Advisory Board will invite at least 1 parent from the Parents' Association and at least 1 student member as member.

Collaborating With the Community. Coordinate community, business, and agency resources and services for families.

Planned Activity: The school's Success Services Director will be tasked with establishing a closely-knit network of providers to facilitate an effective wrap-around services program.

Beyond these planned activities, our leadership team will select a strategy for maximizing parental involvement, and remain flexible and open to better ideas as we aim to maintain a cooperative working environment in which parents know that their participation in their children's education is valued.

Section V: Statement of Need

5.1 Targeted Population.

Data below on underachievement, disciplinary exclusion from school, special education, unemployment, incarceration rates and poverty for the Commonwealth's urban males is a clear and present statement of need for a solution. According to 2010 Schott Foundation data, the graduation rate for black males in Richmond was, for example, 40%. We aim to locate the school on Richmond's East End due to the historic concentration of public housing projects---Fairfield, Mosby, Whitcomb, Creighton, and Gilpin Courts---in that community. The aim is to make the school accessible to young men from low wealth communities throughout Richmond.

5.2 Summary of Quantitative Data.

The public charter school is being formed to provide an opportunity for better academic and career outcomes for urban males in Richmond. We amassed a group of community business, education, civic, and youth development leaders to examine whether a public charter school would be a viable solution. Below we provide supporting data.

5.3 The Charter School Solution.

Given the crisis facing Richmond's urban male youth and the positive outcomes other single-gender schools for urban youth have attained, we have concluded that a public charter school would be a most effective vehicle for addressing the need for better academic and vocational outcomes for our urban male youth. The insular environment is conducive to concentrating resources to combat the challenges of academic engagement, achievement, graduation, matriculation, and life preparedness facing at-risk boys. Quantitative data follows.

5.4 Statement of Need.

Indore, commercial capital of Madhya Pradesh, India, had an attrition crisis. Local information technology and business process outsourcing companies were bleeding employees---in some cases at rates as high as 25-30% annually. Losing experienced staff is costly.

Business leaders rose to the challenge. To halt the retention crisis, companies implemented 9-month appraisals, flexible working hours, added comp time, and office gaming zones.

Nationally and locally America also faces a pandemic attrition challenge: our school districts are hemorrhaging talent, as a third of our nation's students---1 million each year---drop out of school. More poignantly, 50% of American dropouts are of African-American, Hispanic, or Native American descent. That is bleak. However, the dropout data and related social trends for African-American young men, as a group, sound a Code Orange.

According to S.J. Venette, "crisis is a process of transformation where the old system can no longer be maintained---it demands change." Indeed, with nearly 25% of Black male dropouts incarcerated on any given day nationally, we face a dire crisis.

Then, what do we do? Well, what would a Fortune 100 Company do if it were similarly situated? Big businesses strategize now to protect their stakeholders against disruptions that may occur in the future. A decades-old John F. Kennedy adage offers inspiration: "The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word "crisis". One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger ---but recognize the opportunity."

The First Brush Stroke: Dangers

Underachievement. Reading competency, of course, indicates student overall academic preparedness because all core school courses require reading, and most require composition, of some sort.

At the national level, in 2011 only 10% of Black males were proficient in grade 8 reading as assessed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress ("NAEP"). As for Virginia, on the same 2011 NAEP Grade 8 reading assessment, only 11% of black males in the state scored proficient or better. While the state score betters the national average, the Virginia number forecasts a myriad of present and future educational challenges for these rising 9th graders.

Disciplinary Exclusion from School. A nationwide report based on an analysis of Federal government suspension data from the 2009-10 school year representing 85% of students in grades K-12, and providing a first-ever breakdown of nearly 7,000 districts, found 17% of African American students nationwide received an out-of-school suspension compared to about 5% of White students. The comparable rate for Latinos was 7%.

Most U.S. cities outshine Pontiac City, Michigan, which has the nation's highest suspension rate for Blacks (67.5%). However, it remains riveting that nearly 45% of Virginia's African-American male students were sanctioned to a three-day out-of-school suspension for acts of disobedience, while for the same acts, 18% of white males received less punitive sanctions of restricted recess and in-school suspension. Data shows that frequent use of out-of-school suspension results in increased dropout rates and instances of youth incarceration.

Dropping Out. The Schott Foundation for Public Education reports that in 2009-10, nationally, only 52 percent of black males graduated from high school with a regular diploma within four years. Black males had the lowest graduation rates in 38 of 50 states among Black, Latino, and White, non-Latino male and female students.

The four-year graduation rate for White, non-Latino males during the same period was 78 percent. The gap between black and white males has closed by only 3 percentage points in 10 years---at that rate it would take more than a half-century for black males to attain the graduation rates of their white, non-Latino male peers.

The Schott study reports an estimated black male on-time graduation rate for Richmond for 2009 and 2010 of approximately 40%.

Special Education. African-American males are disproportionately routed to special education tracks. In Virginia, schools classify African-American male students as intellectually-disabled nearly 3 times more often than their white male counterparts.

Unemployment. In November 2009, the Washington Post reported 34.5% of young Black males, aged 16–24, were jobless — a rate three times the national unemployment level of 10 percent. Nationally, black male dropouts suffered a 69% jobless rate in 2008.

Incarceration. Experts have connected the dots between high dropout rates and incarceration rates. Overall, high school dropouts comprise 68% of the nation's prison population. Nationally, male dropouts of all races were 47 times more likely to be incarcerated than their peers of similar age who had graduated from a four-year college or university. Overall, one in four young black male dropouts is incarcerated or otherwise institutionalized on any given day. And, the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice revealed in a 2006 study that black youth compose 60% of all juveniles with life-without-parole sentences. Of the 2.2 million aggregated total prison and jail populations, 41% or 900,000 are African-American.

Poverty and Public Assistance. Poverty produces dropouts, and dropouts often produce poverty. A student within the age range of 16 to 24 years who comes from

the lowest quartile of family income is about 7 times more likely to have dropped out of high school than his or her counterpart who comes from the highest quartile.

According to 2007 data, dropouts earn a mean annual income of \$8,358. The mean earnings for their young peers with bachelors or advanced degrees was three times higher at \$24,797. Nearly 37 of every 100 dropouts live in poor or near-poor families. For Richmond, one source places the poverty rate of high school dropouts who are not in families at 44.8%.

Poor Health Outcomes. High school dropouts live shorter lives generally than do graduates; studies place their life expectancy at 3 - 5 years shorter. According to National Institutes of Health research, individuals with lower income, less education, and lower-status occupations have poorer health.

Child-Parenthood/Single-Parenthood. During interviews of dropouts for the *Silent Epidemic* study, Civic Enterprises found that of the personal reasons young people cited for leaving school early, 26% of all participants in the nationally representative sample said they became a parent. Moreover, in 2002, 19% of sexually experienced 15- to 19-year old black males reported having caused a pregnancy, versus 13% of all sexually experienced white males aged 15 to 19. And, in 2006, 97% of non-Latino, black teens aged 15 to 19 who gave birth were unmarried (83% of all teens who gave birth were unmarried).

Regarding African-American male dropouts in particular, a Schott Foundation executive broadly speaking was quoted as having commented, "None of these guys can afford to own a home, they just don't have any money. And as a result, any time they father a child it's out of wedlock." Broad generalization, but true for a large contingent.

Disenfranchisement. Nationwide, the Sentencing Project reports that 1 of every 13 African-Americans of voting age is disenfranchised, and in Virginia, an arresting 1 in 5 Blacks cannot vote. Of the total disenfranchised ex-offender population, about 45% or 2.6 million people, have completed their sentences, but reside in one of the 11 states that disenfranchise people post-sentence. Sentencing Project concluded that punishing people with felony records hits African-Americans harder than other races.

The Second Brush Stroke: Opportunities

The economic benefits of investing in higher achievement and dropout-prevention for urban, at-risk males are impactful. Research has shown that each student who graduates from high school, instead of dropping out before getting a diploma, will save states an average of \$13,706 (in 2005 dollars) in Medicaid and expenditures for uninsured care over the course of his lifetime. Virginia would experience a lifetime savings for Medicaid and Uninsured Medical Coverage Costs of \$15,523 per student---\$396,903,408 total---if all students in the class of 2005–2006 graduated from high school.

Based on Rouse's calculations in *Labor Market Consequences of an Inadequate Education*, converting a dropout to a graduate increases his/her income and federal and state tax contributions by \$320,000 over a lifetime. Converting dropouts to graduates nationwide, from the Class of 2010 alone, would add more than \$337 billion in wages back to the national economy over the course of their lifetimes.

By all estimates, many experts would agree that raising graduation rates would expand the economy, save taxpayers money, greatly expand tax revenues, boost employment, reduce crime, enhance family stability, and improve citizenship. We believe that establishing a public charter school for urban young men provides a viable route to a world class education and on-time graduation while adequately preparing them for success in school, career, and life.

Why is a public charter school the appropriate vehicle to address the needs?

Most-Favored Pupil Status. The Charter School environment offers significant competitive advantages with respect to producing students who are academically engaged and successful. Three critical components that lend a competitive advantage in educating urban at risk young men stand out. Firstly, we can create in a charter a place---outside of home---where the academic, professional, and personal success of the urban male youth ranks top priority.

"Today's urban youth suffer an unprecedented risk of social exclusion." More accurately, the urban, at-risk child has been blanketed by social exclusion. The force of social exclusion severely undermines his ability to achieve. In psychological terms, social inclusion means "accepting someone into interpersonal interactions and social networks." Being socially included nurtures self-esteem. Social rejection---which is more typically the urban male societal experience---when prolonged and consistent can lead to low self-esteem, aggression and depression.

Jim Moorehead, co-founder of a crisis management practice for a D.C. Law firm, advocates "being selfish" as the first step in crisis management. Selfishness, he says, makes the crisis shorter. The charter school environ is more conducive to giving urban boys the "most-favored pupil" status required to build the trusting student-teacher-administration relationships data shows students need to have a fair chance to maximize performance. The charter school will become an incubator where students feel valued and therefore better equipped to participate fully in school and community life.

Customizable Format. Next, the adaptability inherent in the charter school format provides the best opportunity for administrators and instructors to control factors within their reach to facilitate effective learning. We will be implementing an Interactive Learning Pedagogy. The ability to tailor curriculum, culture, policies and procedures is key to nurturing active learning classrooms.

In a doctoral study of Virginia black male dropouts, the researcher identified four practice areas which contribute to relatively higher dropout rates among young black men: exclusionary discipline sanctions, retention in grade, limited access to advanced coursework, and the lack of positive student-teacher relationships.

Furthermore, in a 2012 analysis prepared for the Virginia Commission on Youth, data regarding "Influences on Student Achievement" identifies a student's home, school, and peers, combined, as having only 20-30% of the total influence on performance. The report attributed students, themselves, as the most influential factors in their own achievement (50%), but highlighted that teachers possess 30% of the influence on student performance.

Behind the force-field of a charter school setting, one has the leverage to deposit 100% of school resources into strategies to push change with customized interventions - a higher percentage of male instructors and administrators, alternative disciplinary measures, advanced coursework, longer school weeks, to name a few.

Increased Academic Outcomes for Urban Youth. Our choice for a charter format is data-driven. Our research highlights the relative effectiveness of single-gender, customized programs for improving academic and life outcomes for urban youth.

Outcome 1: Single-gender schools better nurture preparedness for success in post-secondary study and the global workplace:

- The literature review for a 2008 U.S. DOE study revealed single-sex education had relatively more positive impact on post-secondary test scores in 50% of cases.
- 100% of the data from literature sources in the U.S. DOE study attributed single-sex schools with greater impact in choice of college major.

- 100% of results related to college satisfaction in the U.S. DOE study favored single-gender schools.
- Graduates of single-sex schools are more likely to go to prestigious colleges.
- Graduates of single-sex schools are more likely to aspire to graduate or professional school.
- 67% of results in the U.S. DOE literature review attribute educational aspirations to students of single sex schools.
- Single-gender programs better nurture career aspirations according to results from 100% of research literature sources in the 2008 U.S. DOE study.
- Students in single-sex schools develop better organizational skills and are more active in classroom activities.
- Political involvement is more closely associated with students of single sex schools according to 100% of research sources in the literature review for the 2008 U.S. DOE study.
- In 1989, the principal of an elementary school in Rochester, N.Y., established single-sex classrooms for both boys and girls. At the time, the school was one of the lowest achieving schools in the state of New York and enrolled predominantly very poor Hispanic and African-American students. In the following years, students in the single-sex classrooms showed greater gains on reading and mathematics tests, higher attendance rates, lower suspension rates, and higher parental participation rates than students in the coed classes.

Outcome 2: Single-gender schools improve academic achievement:

- With regard to "all subject achievement test scores", 67% of results from the U.S. DOE literature review favored single sex schools.
- Regarding "time spent per week on homework" 50% of results from the U.S. DOE research literature review favored single sex schools.
- Students in the single-sex middle schools were more likely to be engaged in academic activities and to complete homework than students in the comparison

middle school. The study team found that students in the single-sex elementary schools were more likely to complete homework than were students in the coed comparison elementary school.

- Single-sex school teachers and principals listed decreased distractions to learning, improved student achievement, and the ability to address the unique learning styles and interests of boys and girls to be among the top five benefits of single-sex schooling. Generally, both teachers and principals embraced the concept of single-sex schooling.
- Both principals and teachers believed that the main benefits of single-sex schooling are decreasing distractions to learning, and improving student achievement.
- Students at single sex schools had superior academic achievement, higher educational aspirations, more confidence in their abilities, more positive attitudes toward higher achievement.
- Cambridge researchers in 2003 found that "using single-sex groups was a significant factor in establishing a school culture that would raise educational achievement."
- Fairhurst High School, Essex, England switched from coed to 2 single-sex schools. 2 years later, the percentage of boys achieving high scores on the state exam increased by 26%.
- When Thurgood Elementary in Seattle moved from coed to single-gender classes, boys' scores on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning increased from the 10 to 30 percentile to the 73 percentile. Their reading scores moved from an average of about 20 to 66%. Boys' writing scores went from a low 20 something percentile to 53%---outperforming the whole state.
- According to research by Marlene Hamilton, Jamaican students attending single-sex schools outperformed students at coed schools in almost every subject tested.

- According to a study of British boys in grades 9-12 by National Foundation for Educational Research, boys did significantly better in single-sex schools than in traditional coed programs.

Outcome 3: Single-Gender schools improve graduation and matriculation rates:

- Chicago's Urban Prep Academy boasts of some remarkable statistics: In 2006, only 4 percent of the inaugural freshman class at the school — a public all-male, predominantly black high school located in one of the city's most beleaguered neighborhoods — could read at grade level. Yet in May 2010, 100 percent of the school's seniors had been accepted to four-year colleges or universities, many on full academic scholarships.
- Eagle Academy's (New York) 2010 high school graduation rate of 87% is more than double the citywide rate for Black and Latino male students (43%). 95% of Eagle Academy graduates go on to college.
- Incidentally, Montgomery County, Maryland children from public housing who attended the county's affluent elementary schools performed substantially higher in math and reading than public-housing peers in schools with higher poverty rates. Those children also halved the initial achievement gap between them and their more affluent schoolmates, according to a report by The Century Foundation, a progressive think tank.
- The U.S. DOE reports that public single-sex schools in its 2008 study served primarily nonwhite, high-poverty students in urban areas. Consequently, the successes associated with the single-gender schools in the study are primarily from an economically disadvantaged, minority demographic. Additionally, 60% of single-gender schools in the study were either all-boy or dual academy. The majority of students in single-sex schools in the study were African-American.

Outcome 4: Single-gender schools are experiencing more positive outcomes with student behavior:

- An Australian Council for Educational Research fiscal year 2000 study covering 6 years, 270,000 students, and 53 academic subjects reported boys more likely to be better behaved, find school more enjoyable, and curriculum more relevant in single-gender programs.
- In the eight elementary and middle schools visited in the 2008 U.S. DOE study, site visitors observed more positive academic and behavioral interactions between teachers and students in the single-sex schools than in the comparison coed schools.
- The site visitors observed more positive student interactions for the single-sex schools than for the coed comparison schools. Compared to students in the coeducational schools, students in elementary and middle single sex schools exhibited a greater sense of community, interacted more positively with one another, showed greater respect for their teachers, were less likely to initiate class disruptions, and demonstrated more positive student role modeling than students in the coed comparison schools.
- Thurgood Elementary in Seattle experienced 30 referrals a day, 80% of them were boys. After transitioning to single-gender classes, discipline referrals dropped from 30 per day to 1 or 2. Same kids, same teachers.

Based on our research, a public charter school would be a most effective and proven vehicle for concentrating resources to intensely focus on and implement solutions for the challenges of academic engagement, achievement, graduation, matriculation, and life preparedness facing at-risk boys. A public, quality college and career preparatory program will bring to life the world-class citizens that live within Richmond's urban, at-risk young men.

Section VI: Educational Program

6.1 Synopsis of the public charter school's educational program.

Key features of our educational framework are increased learning time and deep study. We accomplish increased learning time through year-round school, extended days, daily after-school tutoring, a 5-week Summer University program, and Saturday schooling. Our strategy for creating a deep-learning culture includes double periods of English and Math and an interactive learning pedagogy.

During summer school (prior to 7th grade) students will select academic and career paths of study. We will participate in the Commonwealth's Career Clusters Pathways initiative for curriculum and instructional standards. The program offers 16 possible career areas for student exploration and access to partnerships between education and industry. Also, the Virginia program is aligned to the National Career Clusters framework. The Career Clusters Pathway leads to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate or bachelor's degree. It includes the opportunity for high school students to participate in dual enrollment courses in which they earn postsecondary education credits before going to college.

Year-Round School. We plan to implement a single-track, extended-year program. School will be in session approximately 41 weeks---the first 36 weeks will coincide with the normal RPS district schedule. We are adding Summer University, an additional 5-week summer remediation and enrichment program. The 5-week summer sessions amount to a total 35 weeks over the students' seven year cycle---virtually one additional school year. According to research data reported by statisticbrain.com, school implementation of year-round education increased 544% between 1987 and 2003. Approximately 10% of public school children receive year-round schooling.

Year-round education restructures the traditional school calendar to maximize learning. The method is based on a balanced academic calendar. The theory is that, with shorter breaks, students forget less and teachers win too because consequently

they will require less time for review. The overall result is increased time for new learning. Primarily, for our projected student population, the model builds-in extra time for remedial catch-up, tutoring, and the program's bold academic rigor and ambitious special programming.

Students in year-round schools show more improvement in achievement scores than those on traditional schedules. The U.S. Department of Education currently advocates for extended school years. A 1994 study of three year-round schools showed a substantial gain in academic achievement for at-risk students. Other studies show that 50% of parents favor year-round schooling in the concept stage, and 80% prefer the method after the first year.

Extended Days and Saturday School. In order to close the knowledge and achievement gaps, we will implement extended schedules daily and mandatory Saturday school at least once monthly. Our school day runs from 6:45 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.---11.25 hours. The expanded day affords the time needed to furnish double periods of English and Math while maintaining well-rounded coursework. Based on data for similar programs in other states, we expect that up to 85% of the student population will be low-income, 85-90% will enter reading below grade level, and 20% or more will have special needs.

The Huffington Post reported last year that five states---Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and Tennessee will add at least 300 more hours to their respective school calendars beginning this year. The initiative encompasses 20,000 students and 40 schools. Federal, state, district, The Ford Foundation, and the

National Center on Time and Learning are funding the pilot. Expanded days and Saturday school are proven effective features in some other charter school programs.

Daily Onsite After-School Tutoring. Studies identify tutoring as a strategy which can improve the performance of at-risk students and those with learning challenges on quizzes and in overall achievement. Furthermore, the same studies show that residual skills the students learn during tutoring stay with them after tutoring ends. Additional data shows that 25% of adults nationally are functionally illiterate; the concentration may be higher in low wealth communities, and may impact the amount of homework assistance available to students in their abode.

5-Week Summer University Program. As a part of our year-round schooling segment, we would operate a 5-week enrichment program, Summer University. The additional 5 weeks of study amount to an additional school year for students over the seven year matriculation cycle. During the first year, instruction focuses on grammar and reading remediation and cognitive training in preparation for the transition from elementary school to grade 6.

Early College-High School. Metropolitan Preparatory Academy aims to be an early college high school combining some college coursework during high school years to compress the time required to earn a college degree. With an early college program, students have the opportunity to simultaneously complete coursework for an Associate's degree or up to two years of college (tuition-free) along with the high school diploma. Approximately 75,000 students across 28 states and the District of Columbia participate presently.

Career and Technical Training. Researchers indicate that combining career and technical education classes with academic courses lowers the dropout rate. During summer school (prior to 7th grade) students will select academic and career paths of study. We will participate in the Commonwealth's Career Clusters Pathways initiative for curriculum and instructional standards. The program offers 16 possible career areas for student exploration and access to partnerships between education and industry. Also, the Virginia program is aligned to the National Career Clusters framework.

The Futures Planning Director will serve as the school's CTE Administrator. Students will participate in requisite courses via classroom, online, dual-enrollment, and Early College program options. To expand student alternatives, we will seek a partnership with Richmond Technical Center. The Career Clusters Pathway leads to an industry-recognized credential or certificate at the postsecondary level, or an associate or bachelor's degree. It includes the opportunity for high school students to participate in dual enrollment courses in which they earn postsecondary education credits before going to college.

A 1998 University of Michigan study found that high-risk students were eight to ten times less likely to drop out if they enroll in an academic program which includes career and technical education (CTE). Acquiring certifications or other job training during high school broadens student options for employment opportunities during the college years to lessen dependence on loans to fund their degrees. We will showcase the program annually with a career event.

Individualized Coaching. Each student will be assigned a faculty or administrative team member as Success Coach to guide them through grades 6 - 12, to help them transition to college, and to assist with student persistence through college graduation

6.2 Curriculum.

Consistent with General Assembly, Virginia Board of Education, and Local Education Authority objectives, as articulated in the Virginia Standards of Quality (SOQ) § 22.1-253.13:1 – 22.1-253.1, instructors will follow the Virginia Standards of Learning and its Curricular Framework as the foundation for instruction in core courses, Health and Physical Education classes, Fine Arts classes, and credit electives and exploratory courses for grades 6 – 12.

With Common Core State Standards (CCSS) enhancements, our framework is designed to meet or exceed state content and performance standards objectives. All students will take the Virginia SOL, SOL end-of-course or approved alternative tests. As a curricular model, we will employ the Virginia Beach Public Schools framework as the basis for curriculum and instruction for grades 6-12 core, elective and exploratory credit courses. All credit course standards will meet or exceed state Standards of Learning goals.

The curriculum for grades 6-12 including core courses, Health and Physical Education, Fine Arts, Foreign Languages, and select electives and exploratory courses is attached. With respect to foreign language, the concept is to encourage students take a 4-exploratory course medley of languages and culture in grade 6, including French, Spanish, Chinese, and German---to maximize global exposure. Course descriptions follow (*Appendix B-1*).

For additional information related to pupil performance standards, please see Section III, *Goals and Educational Objectives*. The following core components are the building blocks for our Interactive Learning curriculum and culture:

- ✓ Common Core State Standards
- ✓ Virginia SOL Curriculum Framework
- ✓ Cast UDL lesson planning tools
- ✓ ACT Benchmark Testing (Grade 8)
- ✓ SAT Subject Testing - Grades 9 - 12 (in tandem with SOL end-of-year testing)

- ✓ [SRA Number Worlds Mathematics](#)
- ✓ Learning Styles Assessment
- ✓ Learning Rx/Cognitive Calisthenics
- ✓ ACT Engage/CASEL - Behavioral, Social, Emotional development
- ✓ ACT Workforce - Career readiness knowledge and skill development and testing
- ✓ Data-driven Instructional Decision-Making
- ✓ [Pearson My Reading Lab](#)
- ✓ [Pearson Data Solutions](#)

The bell Schedule for grades 6 - 12 conveys a rigorous, though relatively simple core curriculum. Modifications to the typical grammar school curriculum include: double-periods of English and Math; an emphasis on global studies and the arts, AP courses during grades 10 -12, and daily physical education/health classes. (*Bell Schedule, Attachment 6-2*)

Armed with a comprehensive curriculum for the course, instructors will access Cast UDL planning tools, ACT, and SAT Subject Test study questions (or other quality lesson planning tools) to build lesson plans and select study materials suitable for the interactive learning environment. [The purpose of administering the ACT Explorer program for 8th graders is to nurture in middle school students the preparedness for the rigor of high school AP testing, SAT Subject tests, and ACT/SAT college entrance examinations.](#)

The ultimate goal of our interactive learning pedagogy is to nurture a meaningful learning culture. The distinguishing features of our school's design are the pedagogies, culture, systems, and the people that will make it run.

Pedagogical Framework.

Interactive Learning. Our pedagogical model, Interactive Learning, commences with the end in mind: an academically, socially, and emotionally competent child, aware of and informed about the world around him, and adequately equipped to boldly choose his place in it. Ultimately, we aim to develop a meaningful learning culture which will inspire our students to evolve into lifetime learners. Meaningful learning results in: (1) the long-term retention of concepts, (2) differentiability of related materials, (3) expanded capacity to learn unrelated subjects, (4) increased ability to apply the lessons in new situations, and a passion for life-time learning.

Interactive Learning describes "anything that students do in a classroom other than merely passively listening to an instructor's lecture." Experiential learning dominates the active learning classroom---the emphasis is on learning through doing. Under this overarching learning philosophy, teachers move beyond lectures to use multiple, diverse approaches. In the interactive learning process students engage in activities, such as focused listing, 10-minute paper, a debate or discussion, simulations, real-world story-telling, and mini-case studies that promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class content. Teachers will plan hands-on projects to exhibit essential concepts.

For Physics instruction, for example, we will implement the SOL-content based curriculum utilizing instructor-guided Problem-Based Learning (PBL) as the primary interactive learning style. Research shows that Problem-Based Learning---an instructional method where relevant problems are introduced at the beginning of the instruction cycle and used to provide the context and motivation for the learning---

enhances the absorption, comprehension, and retention of information for university medical and engineering students. However, unlike traditional PBL which places the primary responsibility for learning on the student, we will utilize a modified approach which incorporates lecture into the format to orient students before they lunge into the physics activities.

We have selected the "Interactive Physics Curriculum Workbook" by Stanford University's Dr. Paul Mitiguy and the corresponding Online Interactive Physics Simulation Software. The simulation software provides physical, interactive examples which illustrate the "enduring" or essential understandings---the big ideas---that students most need to retain. Instructors will also utilize Aplusphysics.com for additional hands-on projects and AP Examination preparation. Additionally, instructors will have access to SAT Subject Test and Cast UDL instructional materials.

Neuropsychology and Interactive Learning. Neuropsychological data supports interactive learning as an effective technique for improving long-term meaningful learning. *Ausubel's Assimilation Learning Theory* holds that in order to achieve meaningful learning of new concepts, an instructor must accomplish 4 things: (1) clearly define the concepts, (2) provide prototypical (real-world) examples, (3) integrate the concepts within the students' knowledge, and (4) motivate the students to want to learn. "Research shows that active learning improves students' understanding and retention of information and can be very effective in developing higher order cognitive skills such as problem solving and critical thinking." Our model incorporates "hands-on" classroom activities to produce "minds-on" learning experiences.

Mathematics Pedagogy.

We have selected SRA Number Worlds as the framework for math instruction. Number Worlds helps students bring numbers to life. Using practical, real-world examples, the methodology gets students beyond the concept that math is merely a myriad of rules, definitions, and procedures to memorize, to the place where they see connections between numbers, mathematical operations and the everyday-world around them.

Global Language Partial Immersion.

Attaining grade level proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking in at least one world language other than English will be prerequisite for graduation. Outside the classroom, world language immersion will be extended into school meal times. Students will take lunch and dinner with their respective language clubs four days each week.

Cast UDL Lesson Planning.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles for lesson plan development. The system features flexible approaches which can be customized for teacher-student needs. UDL furnishes instructors with tools for designing, providing, and accommodating multiple methods, materials, means of presentation, engagement, and student expression.

Cognitive Calisthenics.

Building students' underlying cognitive skills is an important way to support their content-based learning. A set of cognitive skills known as executive functions are particularly important for learning, and include the ability to reason, plan ahead, multi-task, sustain attention, delay gratification, and problem solve. Recent advances in

cognitive science show that these executive functions can be enhanced with regular training, and that the benefits of training exercises can transfer to reading and math outcomes. Moreover, students with better cognitive skills tend to be better behaved and more attentive, and therefore more likely to benefit from their classroom experiences.

We have selected LearningRx as the base of our cognitive training program. LearningRx is a brain-training program that consists of standardized tasks that address specific cognitive skills, including processing speed, working memory, attention, visual and auditory processing, as well as logic and reasoning. The levels of the training tasks progressively increase in difficulty and the program attempts to keep the student moving at a pace just below failure so that the tasks remain challenging.

Specific strategies are used to supplement the training exercises and increase students' motivation to put forth effort and persist on cognitive tasks that can be repetitive and challenging. These strategies support a growth-mindset as opposed to a fixed mindset among students. A growth-mindset is the belief that success is associated with effort rather than talent or natural skill, and that failure is an opportunity to get better rather than an indication of a lack of ability.

We will implement regular cognitive workouts to increase student potential for meaningful learning. Commencing during the student's first summer session, and continuing intermittently during morning seminar sessions, Saturday school, and Summer University through grade 12.

Research shows that cognitive ability impacts academic performance. Department of Education data reveals 69% of our nation's fourth graders are remedial readers, 71% of eighth graders are remedial math students, and 76% of high school seniors are remedial writers. Based on informational interviews with a similarly-situated, out-of-state charter school, we expect that prospective students for our school may be reading 3 grades below level on average. The cognitive training will facilitate building the necessary underlying skill set to facilitate student learning and retention of content-based work.

6.3 Virginia SOL Additions with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Adds.

Consistent with General Assembly, Virginia Board of Education, and Local Education Authority objectives, as articulated in the Virginia Standards of Quality (SOQ) § 22.1-253.13:1 – 22.1-253.1, instructors will follow the Virginia Standards of Learning and its Curricular Framework as the foundation for instruction in core courses, Health and Physical Education classes, Fine Arts classes, and credit electives and exploratory courses for grades 6 – 12. With Common Core State Standards (CCSS) enhancements, our framework is designed to meet or exceed state content and performance standards objectives. All students will take Virginia SOL, SOL end-of-course or approved alternative assessments.

Embracing SOL as an integral part of the curricular backbone, ensures that students will receive instruction in the required content necessary to succeed on the state standardized exams. In addition to taking SOL assessments during grades 6-12, students will participate in ACT Explorer testing during grade 8 and SAT Subject tests during grades 9-12. The purpose of administering the ACT Explorer program for 8th graders is to nurture in our middle school students' preparedness for high school AP testing, SAT Subject tests, and ACT/SAT college entrance examinations.

The CCSS rubric enhances the state SOL framework in some key ways. For example, the 6th grade CCSS include a distinct Language strand for grammar and usage, whereas as the SOL format examines grammar indirectly through the Reading and Writing strands. We will feature grammar and usage in a separate unit within our English curriculum and lesson design to give the area focus as the foundation of reading and writing skills.

6.4 Assessment.

In addition to the Virginia SOL, we will incorporate the following additional assessment tools:

ACT Testing. The ACT test, the curriculum and standards-based examination that assesses academic readiness for college, is typically administered during the junior year of high school. However, we will administer ACT testing twice --- at the 9-week mark and at the 27-week mark, alternating with SOL testing --- for grade 8. Teachers will collect and analyze data from test results to inform individual and class instructional decisions. Students will utilize ACT's EXPLORE tool during grade 8.

SAT Subject Tests. High school students will take both SOL end-of-year tests as prescribed by the Board of Education, and SAT Subject tests. As most area public school students will use the SOL tests, the SOL end-of-year tests serve as a more uniform indicator of performance for benchmarking. SAT Subject Tests will serve as the standardized assessment for grades 9 - 12. Virginia, of course accepts substitution of the SAT Subject Tests in lieu of SOL testing for high school students. To prepare for SAT Subject testing, the curriculum will include SAT practice questions available through the College Board. We choose SAT Subject testing for high school to prepare

for college entrance examinations. ACT/SAT success will be a student performance standard.

Learning Styles Assessment. How does a student learn best? Identifying and triggering each learner's proclivity for receiving, processing, and retaining and applying new and difficult information ameliorates his or her ability to absorb data, make associations, and transfer information to long-term memory.

ACT Engage/CASEL - Social/Emotional Assessment. Alongside the pursuit of academic competency, the curriculum framework includes a focus on social and emotional competencies. Data shows that social and emotional learning enhances academic success. CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) and ACT Engage have useful resources for nurturing soft skills.

CASEL's programming helps students develop self-management, self-control, and social skills. ACT Engage measures student psychosocial attributes to identify academic risk and possible interventions to keep kids on track. We will select either CASEL or ACT Engage, or use both tools in tandem. Data shows that the frequent use of out-of-school suspension results in increased dropout rates and instances of youth incarceration. We expect that by focusing on the development of healthier social/emotional skills, we will stem behavioral challenge tendencies.

ACT Workforce Career and Technical Training. Through ACT Workforce, students can prepare and test online to gain technical and soft career skills for multiple industries, and can also earn the National Career Readiness Certificate.

6.5 Performance Data: Tracking, Monitoring, Driving Achievement.

Assessment informs about student progress, areas of low and high achievement, and school accountability for raising student achievement. Assessment begins with the teacher's evaluation of student progress based on class work, homework, and interactive activities. Formal assessments, such as quizzes, tests, portfolio assessments (special projects) and standardized testing integrated with the curriculum, will indicate overall achievement levels. Assessment results allow teachers to determine which students would benefit from additional help or additional challenge.

We plan to collect and warehouse individual student data from classroom assignments (homework, quizzes, tests, and projects), standardized testing (SOL, ACT, and SAT test results) and even attendance records. Instructors will access the data warehouse to track progress, identify trends, and identify areas for improvement. Classroom assessments and state test data will be available on a concept level. Having individualized data readily available empowers our teachers to provide differentiated instruction, design individualized learning plans, apply grouping strategies, and use alternative instructional approaches tailored to different student needs. Presently, we are exploring a tool by Pearson Data Solutions. The goal is a system with the capacity to collect, integrate, analyze, report, and store student data for long-term usage.

Beginning in the opening summer school session, we will implement the data warehousing system to commence building individual student academic data profiles. Benchmark data gathered during the summer session will include: (1) individual student 5th grade SOL assessment results for the 4 core subjects, (2) Pearson remediation benchmark reading and math assessment scores, (3) the student's learning styles assessment, (4) benchmark cognitive testing results, (5) and benchmark behavioral/social/emotional development data (either ACT Engage or Casel). By graduation, we anticipate having a complete electronic academic profile of each students' status and progress over time.

Administrators will aggregate individualized data into our *Framework for Academic and Operational Quality* (Section 3, Goals and Educational Objectives) to inform school academic and operational decisions, and to perform stakeholder reporting. The *Framework for Academic Quality* focuses on 4 primary indicators of academic success: (1) student achievement, (2) student growth overtime, (3) student postsecondary readiness, and (4) student engagement. For each indicator, we establish related goals, objectives, and targets. With the Academic Quality Framework, leadership can monitor and improve student achievement overall and measure program effectiveness overtime. The information captured in the Academic and Operational Quality Frameworks will form the backbone of our Performance Contract reporting.

Reading and Math Remediation. Since we expect that the vast majority of our students will enter reading several grades below level, effective remediation is key to their success. Consequently, we have constructed a three-prong remediation strategy to move students from remediation to mastery: (1) students in grades 6-12 take two periods of English; (2) cognitive training exercises which research shows improves meaningful learning capacity; and (3) a daily regimen of reading and related exercises via My Reading Lab by Pearson.

Regarding the two periods of English, one will be dedicated exclusively to reading remediation for grades 6-8. The second daily English session will cover grammar, writing, media literacy, and communication. The remediation performance target is to improve student reading by 1 grade level per middle school year. The long-term target is to have 100% of students reading on grade level by the end of grade 8.

My Reading Lab (Pearson), the leading online reading remediation product, includes more than 1,200 readings across 26 topic areas, practice exercises, assessments, and

electronic progress tracking. Students begin with a diagnostic pre-test which records individual student's strengths and weaknesses.

Summer school cognitive training orientation and plan for continuous cognitive strengthening exercises throughout the school year will also positively impact student remedial work.

For math remediation for the middle school years, we have selected SRA Number Worlds, a research-based product which has gained notoriety as an intensive intervention program for students who are one or more grade levels behind in elementary mathematics. It provides mechanisms to assess students' abilities, individualize instruction, and to build foundational skills and concepts. "Every Number Worlds activity is tied to a Key Common Core State Standard, providing the instructional support necessary to get struggling students back on track." (Number Worlds, Mheonline.com). Development of the program is supported by Clark University.

Focusing on more classroom time for math instruction (two math periods daily), the remediation performance target is to improve student math skills and knowledge by 1 grade level per middle school year. The long-term target is to have 100% of students performing and comprehending math on grade level by the end of grade 8. Please see the sample Pre-Algebra diagnostic test attached (*Appendix B-4*).

6.6 Timeline for Achievement of SOL Pupil Performance Standards.

By the end of year standardized testing for grade 8, we expect that overall test results will be in compliance with the RPS federal performance benchmarks. We address the timeline in more detail in the Goals and Educational Objectives section herein. We commit not only to improving the overall learning experience for our students, but also to demonstrating the results.

6.7 Corrective Actions.

In the event that the School fails to meet local, state or federal academic accountability requirements, the Principal will coordinate with the LEA to create a plan to correct deficiencies. The school Principal and governing board will coordinate to comply with recommendations for interventions to raise performance. The School will continue with corrective action until performance improves. During the improvement period, the Principal and a member of the governing board will meet with a representative of RPS leadership team at least twice annually to keep the LEA abreast of the school improvement progress.

6.8 Enrollment, Class Size, Class Structure.

Projected enrollment is 100 students per grade level for grades 6 - 12, aiming for a full-house enrollment of 700 pupils within 7 years. [Maximum enrollment during the contract period is 100 students year 1, 200 students year 2, 300 students year 3, 400 students year 4, and 500 students for year 5. Minimum enrollment, allowing a margin for transitioning students due to attrition, is 90 students for year 1; 180 students for year 2; 270 students for year 3; 360 students for year 4; and 450 students for year 5.](#)

Student attrition rates plague some charter schools. A recent article regarding charter schools in Boston, Massachusetts cites attrition rates of between 30% and 60% across a citywide sample. The attrition rates for minority students are reported as being higher for chain-charters.

Admission is via public lottery for prospective students, zoned for the RPS district, who have timely completed an admittance application. Lottery results will determine class structure. Applicants must be ready for Pre-Algebra or a higher mathematics course in

the sixth grade. A math placement form indicating that the student is prepared for Pre-Algebra or higher level math course and signed by the current math teacher, completes the application.

Metropolitan Preparatory Academy admits urban young men without regard to race, disability, color, religion, or national or ethnic origin. By federal guidelines, qualified siblings of current students, qualified children of founding-parents, and qualified children of the principal, teachers, and teacher assistants have preferences for admission. The school is proposed as a boys' academy.

6.9 Proposed Calendar, Sample Schedule, Holiday Openings.

We will adhere to the RPS Calendar for the regular school year excepting furlough days. Additionally, we expect to operate Saturday school for at least one Saturday per month. We will also operate Summer University for 5 weeks during the months of July and August annually. Summer University will end 2 weeks before the commencement of the new school year allowing students additional vacation time before school re-opens. School will recommence after Labor Day in synchronization with the RPS calendar. Please find attached the proposed *School Calendar (Attachment 6-1)* and *Daily Bell Schedule (Attachment 6-2)*.

RPS Transportation has affirmed accommodating our 11.25 hour school day, so all students will have the option of school bus transportation when afterschool activities (tutoring and dinner) end at 5:50 p.m. daily. We will approach RPS Transportation services regarding summer school and Saturday transport.

6.10 Identifying and Serving Special Needs Students.

Students with learning challenges. Based on the experience of similar boys' schools in urban environments and local standardized test scores for 6th grade urban males, we expect that between 20% and 40% of our freshman class will enter with significant learning gaps in English Language Arts and Math.

Experienced Instructors. The first step in our strategic plan for successfully serving our students begins with hiring teachers skilled in applying creative instructional methodologies, learning materials, and tools to deliver the curriculum successfully to urban males.

Assessment. Secondly, frequent student assessment is key to uncovering knowledge gaps in core disciplines. Assessment results will be analyzed to pinpoint weaknesses. Group and individual instruction will focus on remediating specific weaknesses while simultaneously continuing the students' academic progress.

Diagnostic Teaching. The third key to the school's special needs strategy will be diagnostic teaching. Instructors will use a combination of assessment, observation, and differentiated instructional methods in the classroom to identify and manage learning difficulties. Of course, factors contributing to learning challenges might include lack of foundation skills; limited English skills; inadequate or inappropriate previous instruction; or an undiagnosed learning disability. Through frequent assessment and observation, our teachers can determine whether and which instructional interventions might prove effective, or whether to refer the student for outside learning support or specialists. Experts identify three groups of special learners: the benchmark group, the strategic group, and the intensive group.

Benchmark Group. Challenged students in the Benchmark Group experience temporary or minor difficulties with coursework, but continue making progress overall.

Repetition and extended time on topics will generally correct imbalances for Benchmark students.

Strategic Group. Students in the Strategic Group typically score one or two standard deviations below the mean in standardized testing, however, their learning difficulties can be addressed in the classroom with minimal intervention. Teachers may use repetition, study groups, supplemental assignments for additional drilling, may recommend tutoring or extended study time in after school tutoring, or Saturday school.

Intensive Group. Students in the Intensive Group chronically experience extremely low scores in multiple areas on standardized testing, and are at high risk of academic failure. Such students score well below the mean. A referral to special Education Services may be advisable. If determined eligible for special education services, the students may receive an individualized education program, a qualified specialist, tutoring, a classroom assistant, specialized materials or equipment, changes in assessment procedures, curriculum and instruction modifications.

Our teachers will have expertise in employing differentiated instruction. They will nurture a classroom culture in which students feel comfortable discussing ideas, asking questions and requesting help. Alternatives available at the school for ensuring the success of students with special needs include:

Strategies for Successfully Teaching Students with Challenges

1. Setting high standards. Research shows that having high expectations of all students positively impacts performance.
2. Fostering universal access to learning by using a variety of ways to explain concepts. Through Cast's Universal Design for Learning (UDL) programming

- teachers will have online access to curriculum and assessment resources designed to create instructional materials which can be customized to individual needs.
3. Arrange tutoring with a qualified teacher/volunteer or peer.
 4. Extend the learning time by requiring after-school tutoring, Saturday school or summer programs.
 5. Enlist the help of the student's family.
 6. Challenge students to communicate verbally their understanding of topics.
 7. Assess student knowledge frequently and allow students the opportunity to express their comprehension of topics in multiple ways.
 8. Utilize pacing. Instructors can slow down or accelerate instruction to accommodate student needs.
 9. Focus on complexity. Teachers, at their discretion, may opt to focus more time on key concepts, thereby eliminating lesson details of lesser significance.
 10. Employ grouping. Grouping can be used to efficiently review concepts for students with similar needs.

With respect to access to the state educational assessment process, the school will follow state procedures outlined in *Procedures for Participation of Students with Disabilities in Virginia's Accountability System* to determine student eligibility and appropriate accommodations.

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). All Metropolitan Preparatory Academy students will have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), written statements

setting reasonable educational goals for the child and stating special services that the district will provide to meet each child's individual needs. Of course, a student who qualifies as a special needs child under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 and receives special education services must have an IEP.

The school's goal is to develop all IEPs during the 5-week summer session prior to commencement of the school year. However, in accordance with IDEA, an IEP meeting will be held no later than within 30 calendar days after it is determined, through a full and individual evaluation, that a child has one of the disabilities listed in IDEA and needs special education and related services. The child's IEP will also be reviewed at least annually thereafter, in compliance with IDEA, to determine whether the goals are being achieved, and will be revised as appropriate.

Each child's IEP will contain specific information which includes (but is not limited to):

- ✓ the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance. In the case of a disability, the IEP will describe how the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum.
- ✓ annual goals for the child
- ✓ any special education and related services to be provided to the child, including supplementary aids and services
- ✓ how much, if any, of the school day the child will be educated separately from nondisabled children or not participate in extracurricular or other nonacademic activities such as lunch or clubs

- ✓ how (and if) the child is to participate in state assessments, including test modifications the child needs
- ✓ when services and modifications will begin, how often they will be provided, where they will be provided, and how long they will last
- ✓ how school personnel will measure the child's progress

Students will be integrally involved in developing their IEPs. In addition to the student and parents, in compliance with IDEA (at §300.321), the IEP team for special needs students will include the following members:

- ✓ one or more regular education teacher(s) of the child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment)
- ✓ one or more special education teacher(s)/provider(s) of the child, or where appropriate, not less than one special education provider of the child
- ✓ a representative of the public agency who is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities;
- ✓ an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results; and
- ✓ other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, (invited at the discretion of the parent or the agency)

Also in accordance with IDEA, we will engage the Virginia Department of Education's Transition Services planning process to improve the outcomes of students identified for special education. Through the Transition Services process, the school can connect

students and families with organizations, college planning information, vocational resources, and rehabilitation services.

Reading remediation will be key to academic success for our learning-challenged students. We will apply a three-prong remediation strategy to move students from remediation to mastery: (1) students in grades 6-12 take two periods of English; (2) cognitive training exercises which research shows improves meaningful learning capacity; and (3) a daily regimen of reading and related exercises via My Reading Lab by Pearson.

Regarding the two periods of English, one will be dedicated exclusively to reading remediation for grades 6-8. The second daily English session will cover grammar, writing, media literacy, and communication. The remediation performance target is to improve student reading by 1 grade level per middle school year. The long-term target is to have 100% of students reading on grade level by the end of grade 8.

My Reading Lab (Pearson), the leading online reading remediation product, includes more than 1,200 readings across 26 topic areas, practice exercises, assessments, and electronic progress tracking. Students begin with a diagnostic pre-test which records individual student's strengths and weaknesses.

Our summer school cognitive training program and plan for continuous cognitive strengthening exercises throughout the year will also positively impact student remedial work.

English Learners (ELLs). The strategy for successfully teaching English Language Learners begins with proper assessment of their levels of proficiency and literacy in the primary language as well as in English.

Generally, the assessment will yield two groupings: (1) students who have strong literacy skills in their primary language, and (2) those who have limited prior schooling and or literacy in their primary language. The first grouping usually transfers the learned literacy skills from their primary language to English and progress rapidly learning English.

The second group will require intensive support in learning English.

Limited English learners will enter an English immersion program as soon as possible after accepting admittance to the school, but at the latest, in summer.

The school will coordinate with RPS to leverage the materials, individualized instruction, and additional resources to help the students develop English proficiency.

Advanced Learners ("Gifted and Talented" Students). Advanced Learners can be described as students who demonstrate or are capable of demonstrating a performance level in core courses which is significantly above that of their peers. Data shows that the keys to successfully educating advanced students are acceleration and complexity.

Advanced students respond affirmatively to progressing more quickly through concepts to higher levels. Advanced students also respond positively to opportunities for deep learning. Research shows that advanced students perform better when grouped together than they do in a heterogeneous setting. The finding indicates the difference occurs because of the increased instructional attention these students receive in homogenous grouping. The school's interactive learning pedagogy affords

teachers the format and resources to create opportunities for advanced students to work together.

6.11 Description of Learning Environment, Class Size and Structure.

Students will learn primarily in a traditional classroom environment. We plan an average class size of 20 students. Aesthetically speaking, to stimulate creativity, the space will be bright, well-lit, and open. We are considering theatre-styled seating for the students, and workbenches built for two or more students in lieu of chairs. To facilitate interactive learning and depending on space limitations, our tentative classroom floor plan includes an open creative-laboratory space---set apart from the desks---conducive to hands-on projects and team discussions.

A potential school site has emerged as vacant school properties have become available since we initially filed the charter application. While we have not yet engaged in negotiations, securing a recently used vacant school property would afford us traditional school operating space with minimal investment in additional construction and/or leasehold improvement. A vacant elementary school property would have ample space available for upgrading for science laboratory use.

Remediation Strategy. Since we expect that the vast majority of our students will enter reading several grades below level, effective remediation is key to their success. Consequently, we have constructed a three-prong remediation strategy to move students from remediation to mastery: (1) students in grades 6-12 take two periods of English; (2) cognitive training exercises which research shows improves meaningful learning capacity; and (3) a daily regimen of reading and related exercises via My Reading Lab by Pearson.

Regarding the two periods of English, one will be dedicated exclusively to reading remediation for grades 6-8. The second daily English session will cover grammar, writing, media literacy, and communication. The remediation performance target is to improve student reading by 1 grade level per middle school year. The long-term target is to have 100% of students reading on grade level by the end of grade 8.

My Reading Lab (Pearson), the leading online reading remediation product, includes more than 1,200 readings across 26 topic areas, practice exercises, assessments, and electronic progress tracking. Students begin with a diagnostic pre-test which records individual student's strengths and weaknesses.

This is how Pearson describes the process: "My Reading Lab is powered by Metametrics™ Lexile Framework for Reading, the premier readability-improvement system. After completing an initial readability diagnostic, students work with the readings (300 readings total) within their Lexile measure. As a student moves from one Lexile range to another, the list of available readings also changes so that students are constantly working at level, for maximum learning and improvement."

Our tool of choice for math remediation is SRA Number Worlds, a research-based product which has gained notoriety as an intensive intervention program for students who are one or more grade levels behind in elementary mathematics. It provides mechanisms to assess students' abilities, individualize instruction, and to build foundational skills and concepts. "Every Number Worlds activity is tied to a Key Common Core State Standard, providing the instructional support necessary to get struggling students back on track." (Number Worlds, Mheonline.com). Development of the program is supported by Clark University.

Focusing on more classroom time for math instruction (two math periods daily), the remediation performance target is to improve student math skills and knowledge by 1 grade level per middle school year. The long-term target is to have 100% of students performing and comprehending math on grade level by the end of grade 8. Please see the sample Pre-Algebra diagnostic test attached (*Appendix B-4*).

Our summer school cognitive training program and plan for continuous cognitive strengthening exercises throughout the year will also positively impact student remedial progress.

6.12 Virtual Learning. Student virtual learning centers around the Pearson Data Solution portal. Two systems compose the centerpiece: (1) a data warehouse and (2) a data analysis tool. The data warehouse records and stores student information from the classroom (including attendance records) and standardized testing.

The analysis tool crunches the data to facilitate instructor and administrator interpretation of individual and group results to inform decision-making. Teachers can also design custom tests using the analysis tool. Students will also access My Reading Lab virtually. As another Pearson tool, it interfaces naturally with the Pearson Data Solution.

SRA Numbers World also relies largely on virtual games and other interactive activities in its approach to math remediation. Finally, many (if not most) of the lessons teachers create using Cast UDL and the cognitive training tasks require computer interface often for assessments.

6.13 Not applicable.

6.14. Not applicable.

Section VII: Enrollment

7.1 Description of lottery and application process.

Prospective students complete an application for admission to Metropolitan Preparatory Academy. Applications will be available on the website for one month from the end of January until the end of February 2014 and each year thereafter. The lottery is to be held in March of 2014 and each year thereafter. Applications must be completed by hand and must be submitted within the application window. The specific dates of this window will be announced each December for the lottery the following

March. All urban male students who live in the City of Richmond are eligible for our lottery.

On a predetermined date each March, numbers are randomly drawn during a public lottery, and openings are filled at each existing grade level. Prospective students and their parents are welcome to attend the lottery. Initially, there will only be openings for 6th graders. However, a new class will be added each year for 7 years until we are serving 7 grade levels (6th through 12th grades).

7.2 Process for establishment of the waiting list.

A numbered waiting list for each lottery pool is then established to fill slots that become available at later dates. We draw 30 names for each waiting list.

On the next business day following the lottery, information about acceptances, waiting lists, and denials will be posted (only the lottery ID numbers of those accepted and wait-listed).

The school requires student acceptance of admission by letter. The due date for acceptance letters will be sometime in May and will be provided with lottery results. All applicants selected must sign and return their acceptance letters by the designated date in May. Enrollment forms will be mailed to all students once they submit the acceptance form. Students from the waitlist will be notified of acceptance on a rolling basis. Applicants have two weeks from the time of notification to return their acceptance letters.

Students can apply for openings in upper grades. However, based on the experience of similar programs, student retention is high. Consequently, the upper grade

openings occur rarely. At the lottery, we will draw students applying for grades 7 through 12 to form waiting lists. Students will be admitted from those waiting lists over the course of the summer as families let us know that their student does not plan to return for the following year.

7.3 General Admissions Policy and Information.

Metropolitan Preparatory Academy is a public college and career preparatory school that serves students in Richmond, Virginia. Admission to the school is by public lottery. A lottery is a random selection process by which applicants are selected for the charter school. Consistent with federal and state laws and regulations and constitutional provisions regarding inclusion applicable to public schools, our state-mandated lottery process results in a random sampling of applicants. All applications for the coming school year are assigned a lottery identification number.

Prospective students complete an application for admission to Metropolitan Preparatory Academy.

Metropolitan Preparatory Academy admits urban young men without regard to race, disability, color, religion, or national or ethnic origin. By federal guidelines, qualified siblings of current students, qualified children of founding-parents, and qualified children of the principal, teachers, and teacher assistants have preferences for admission.

Alumni must be enrolled for one year before sibling benefit status is granted. Siblings must complete an application, submit it on time, and demonstrate readiness for at least Pre-Algebra in the sixth grade like all other applicants.

We hold community Town Halls to give prospective students and parents a chance to view the school campus, to visit staff members, to pick up an application and information packet, and to hear about our school's programs.

7.4. Admissions Timeline.

December 2013 Announcement of dates for application availability and the application window for the 2014-2015 year. Application availability and the application window will occur during the same period for subsequent years.

January – February 2014 Applications will be available on the school's website for entering sixth graders for the 2014-2015 school year and during the same period each year thereafter.

March 2014 The lottery is to be held in March of 2014 and during succeeding years.

April 2014 Admissions Open House for students admitted in the lottery for the 2014-2015 school year. Open House will be held during the same period for future years.

May 2014 Due date for signed acceptance letters for the 2014-2015 school year. Acceptance letter due dates will occur during the same period for each year thereafter.

August 2014 Freshman Orientation for new students for the 2014-2015 school year and their families. Orientation will take place during the same period for subsequent years.

7.5 Special Situations.

By federal guidelines, qualified siblings of current students, qualified children of founding-parents, and qualified children of the principal, teachers, and teacher

assistants have preferences for admission. Student alumni must be enrolled for one year before sibling benefit status is granted. Siblings must complete an application, submit it on time, and demonstrate readiness for at least Pre-Algebra in the sixth grade, like all other applicants.

7.6 Community Outreach.

During the year prior to commencement of the application process, our Board of Directors will conduct Community “town hall” meetings at various Boys & Girls Clubs and other locations city-wide to raise awareness and share information about the school. [Invitations will be extended to parents of age-eligible students city-wide through the Boys and Girls Clubs and area elementary school guidance counselors. Additionally, the governing board will produce an orientation video which parents can access from our website or Facebook page. All inner-city elementary school guidance counselors and principals will be among the local stakeholders receiving our quarterly newsletter via email.](#)

[In succeeding years, the Board of Directors will continue the area “town hall” Meetings. The Academy will also host Open Houses in January and February so that families have the opportunity to tour the school. In April, we will also hold an Admissions Open House for students who were admitted in the lottery to meet teachers and gather information. In August annually we will hold Freshman Orientation for new students and their families.](#)

7.7 Scholastic Records Management.

For a description of how the transfer of student records and other materials to and from the public charter school will be accomplished. See *Attachment 7-1, Policy and Procedure for Scholastic Records Management, Acquisition, and Confidentiality*.

Section VIII: Displacement

8.1 Point of Contact.

In the event of voluntary or involuntary closure, the charter school's leadership will facilitate an orderly closure process providing for continuity of instruction until the closure date, identifying new school options for students, and meeting the school's financial, legal, and operational obligations in the best interest of all parties. In the event of closure, the school's Principal will be the primary point of contact. The school's board will also designate a board member as the secondary point of contact. The following checklist of tasks will assist us with carrying out an efficient closure process.

The charter school board and principal will meet with the appropriate representative of the RPS system immediately after the initial closure decision to determine who will send letters to the school's parents notifying them of the decision. Ideally, all parties will agree on the content of the letters. Additional letters will be sent to parents and school districts updating them about the timing and outcome of any appeals. To the extent practicable, the charter school will advocate for an end-of-year closure which is usually in students' best academic and social interests. End of year closure also simplifies the financial issues associated with the change.

There are three primary goals to be accomplished in the winding up of the school's affairs:

1. Providing educational services in accordance with the charter contract until the end of the school year, or the agreed upon date when instruction will stop.
2. Reassigning students to schools that meet their educational needs.

3. Addressing the school's financial, legal and reporting obligations.

The School's leadership will meet with representatives of the LEA prior to starting closure proceedings and agree which tasks will be necessary and how the authorizer wants to manage the closure. During this meeting, responsible parties and completion dates should be agreed upon to ensure a transparent and smooth closure.

The closure process has many tasks: 1) notification to affected school districts and families; 2) developing and monitoring the closure plan; 3) winding up the school's affairs in governance and operations, finance, and reporting; and 4) dissolution. In the event of closure, the School's management team will utilize the closure template below to facilitate the process. The Principal will oversee the insertion of responsible parties and dates of completion. We address application questions 2 through 8 regarding parental notification, student records transfer, employee placement, and

resolution of financial matters, audits, and asset disposition in the *School Closure Plan* detailed in *Attachment 8-1*.

Section IX: Transportation

9.1 Provision of Student Transportation.

The School will offer transportation for all students.

9.2 Contract with RPS Transportation Division.

School bus transportation will be provided to students by way of school contract with the RPS Department of Public Transportation. Bus transportation will be provided at the beginning and end of a full school day on weekdays that RPS are open. This school bus transportation policy does not apply to the Saturday school program, special

events, summer program, etc. We will approach RPS Transportation services regarding summer school and Saturday School transport for the Metro Prep.

Network buses will pick-up charter students from their neighborhoods. Existing neighborhood bus stops will be used for our school pick-ups and drop-offs. Students living outside the zone where the school is located will transfer at a hub site (another school) and ride another bus to the charter school. There will be one designated morning pick-up and one afternoon drop-off site for a student. Parents must complete a school transportation form for each child attending. Bus stops will be set by mid-August.

9.3 Transportation Services for students with Disabilities.

The school will coordinate with RPS Department of Transportation to arrange the transport of disabled children in coordination with applicable law. In accordance with Code of Virginia Section 22.1-221 and other federal and state laws and regulations governing the education of students with disabilities, disabled students are entitled to be transported to and from school/class and home at no cost in order to enable the student to obtain the benefit of educational programs and opportunities.

Section X: Residential Facilities. Not applicable.

Section XI: Economic Soundness

11.1 Financial controls policy.

Please see *Attachment 11-1*.

11.2 Proposed start-up and three year budget projections.

Please see *Attachment 11-2*.

11.3 Proposed start-up and three years cash flow projections.

Please see *Attachment 11-3*.

11.4 Evidence of anticipated fundraising contributions.

We have developed a Capital Campaign and had the concept reviewed by a third-party for feasibility, efficacy, and marketability. The capital campaign plan has received positive feedback. [We have also applied for the federal charter school implementation grant.](#)

11.5 Description of funding agreement with RPS.

Funding Process. In accordance with Section 22.1-212.14 of the Code of Virginia, the per pupil funding provided to the charter school by RPS shall be negotiated in the charter agreement and shall be commensurate with the average school-based costs of educating the students in the existing schools in the division. We expect to have more substantive meetings about school funding after the charter application is submitted to the Virginia Board of Education.

RPS shall participate in any required processes to ensure the appropriate and timely reporting of data and the transfer of funds to the charter school. Furthermore, RPS shall disburse to the charter school an amount of city, state, and federal funds for middle and secondary school students that are commensurate (and in accordance with the state board formula) with the amount disbursed to other public schools in the city. For the 2012-2013 year, the approximate local per pupil amount was \$13,700. [The state and local portion of the per pupil funding amount is approximately \\$10,000.](#) The RPS District may also give surplus equipment, supplies, furniture, and educational materials to the charter school.

District per pupil revenues (“PPR”) shall be defined as set forth in section 22.1-212.14 of the Code of Virginia. In each fiscal year during the term of the Contract, the district shall provide 100 percent of PPR to the School minus the following: the actual amount of the School’s per pupil share of the central administrative overhead

costs (up to five percent of PPR), as provided by law or as agreed to, in writing, by both parties in any subsequent written agreement, less deductions for purchased services, less other deductions as provided herein and adjusted as provided herein. Any subsequent audits of district pupil counts and per pupil revenue that impact the funding received by the School shall be reflected as an adjustment to subsequent payment from the district to the School.

The district, upon request of the School, shall allow the School to contest any adverse audit in the name of the district through the administrative appeals process. The district may make financial adjustments effective as of the date of any final audit report, notwithstanding an administrative appeal.

Each year the district shall provide to the School the School's proportionate share of applicable federal funding (e.g. Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV and Title V) received by the district for which the School is eligible.

On or before _____ of each year, the district shall provide to the School the School's proportionate share of applicable state categorical aid received by the district for which the School is eligible.

On July 15 of each district fiscal year, twenty-five percent (25%) of the district funding provided for projected pupil membership on October 1 of that year shall be allocated and made available to the School. On October 15 of each year, twenty-five percent (25%) of the funding provided for projected pupil membership on October 1 of that year shall be made available to the School. The remaining per pupil funding adjusted as provided below payable under this Contract shall be disbursed on or before January 15.

The district's disbursement of funds shall be adjusted as follows: each year, funding may be revised based on the number of pupils actually enrolled at the School as determined at the October 1 count and included in the official membership count, and to reflect any change in PPR, positive or negative, so that the overall funding for the year is equal to the PPR provided for in the district and not otherwise deducted.

Funding may also be adjusted for services provided by the Contract.

In addition, to the extent that the district experiences any reduction or increase in state equalization support by a legislative rescission or other action, proportionate reductions or increases shall be made to the School's funding. Any adjustments to funding after payment so that funding is equal to the PPR provided for in this Contract shall be made by direct payment to the School or the district.

Section XII: Management and Operation

12.1 Discussions with RPS District and School Board.

Over the past year, we have engaged in substantive and productive informational meetings with the LEA. The informational meetings included three with the RPS Superintendent's Office, formal and informal meetings with eight of nine current school board members, and an informational meeting and a teleconference with the Virginia Board of Education.

Surplus RPS school properties have recently emerged. Two of the properties operated as elementary schools during the past school year, and are potential locations. Official discussions would evolve as the charter application process progresses.

12.2 Oversight functions of School Leadership.

The charter school's leadership is composed of its foundation, an advisory board, and its administration, faculty, and staff.

Local Education Authority. Under Virginia law, the Richmond Public School (RPS) Board authorizes Richmond charter schools. Once the RPS Board approves our charter application, it will hold us accountable to state and local laws, and applicable regulations and monitor us to ensure success. Ultimately, the RPS School Board will be responsible for our operational and educational integrity, closing us if we fail to function responsibly.

The Board of Directors. Legally, the Board of Directors, as the governing body of the school, oversees school operations and ensures the school is financially sound and complies with the law. Comprised of experts in education, business, and youth development, civic and other community leaders---and ultimately, a representative of the Parents' Organization, and a student volunteer---the Board also will ensure that the school adheres to the mission and vision. Further, the Board will monitor student and school performance and practices to ensure alignment with stated goals and objectives.

The Board also is responsible for addressing major matters including: setting the school's general policies and overall curriculum policies; approving and monitoring the annual budget and financial procedures; hiring and evaluating the school's principal; approving personnel policies and monitoring their implementation by the principal; assuring that the charter school fulfills its charter contract; and, strategic planning. Finally, the Board will lead school capital enhancement, management, and investment; image branding; community partnering; and oversight of our educational *Institute*.

The Advisory Board. Led by experts in education, youth development, civic and community leaders, parents and a student volunteer, the advisors will assist the school in achieving and maintaining community roots, awareness, impact through service, and philanthropic support.

The Institute. The Institute, a separate entity, will ultimately manage and report the school's data and conduct research pursuant to a Memorandum of Agreement with the school. Specifically, the Institute will track, manage, and report student-level data as directed by the school Principal, helping the Principal ensure the school's administration, curriculum, policies and instructional practices are data-driven. The vision for the organization includes leading educational research projects.

Administration, Faculty, and Staff. The school's Principal will run daily operations and serve as the administration's liaison to the board of directors. He will manage the school's faculty and staff. Our goal is to recruit a predominantly male instructional team that is 100% "highly qualified" by federal *No Child Left Behind Act* standards. And to maintain a high quality staff, we will provide instructor and administrator continuing education and opportunities for staff to attending conferences.

Metropolitan Preparatory Academy Parents' Association. Involvement of the community, particularly our parents, is critical to our mission. Our Parents' Association is integral to furthering the school's mission and will support the school's administration, faculty, staff, students and parents in so doing. It will suggest opportunities within the school community for supporting classroom and extracurricular activities, foster relationships in support of the students, sponsor parent informational and educational programs, interact with counterparts at other schools, provide a mediating function to assist with healthy resolution of complex school issues, and recruit parent volunteers and raise funds to support all of the

foregoing. All parents and/or guardians of students at Metropolitan Preparatory Academy shall automatically become members of our Parents' Association.

International Boys' Schools Coalition. We will collaborate with other boys' schools to maintain a fresh, capital program and perspective. The International Boys' Schools Coalition (IBSC) is a not-for-profit organization of schools dedicated to the education and development of boys worldwide. The goal of the IBSC is to support, advance and celebrate boys' schools as learning environments uniquely focused on the achievement, engagement and well-being of boys in their care. We will apply for IBSC membership to broaden our support network and to share best practices to ensure that we are continually providing a high quality education in a nurturing and developmentally supportive environment.

12.3 Support Services Funding and Delivery.

School Nutrition Services. The School shall provide free and reduced priced meals to eligible students, and regularly priced meals to all other students and personnel, in accordance with RPS District guidelines and federal and state regulations and laws. We have selected RPS School Nutrition Services as the food services provider for the regular school year. We have met with the Director of RPS School Nutrition Services, Susan Roberson, and have secured ballpark pricing for breakfast, lunch, and dinner services, and discussed plans for food transport and proper storage. The Director has also advised regarding the school's in-house kitchen equipment, staffing, and sanitation compliance requirements.

The cold breakfast menu will consist of cereals, yogurt, breakfast breads, i.e., bagels, spreads, cold beverages, and fruit. Lunches will also be cold and will include a variety of sandwiches, desserts, salad bar, and fruit. Dinner will be re-heatable and include salad bar and fruit. Meals will be transported twice weekly, from the Armstrong High School kitchen, and will be safely stored, regulated, and served by in-house staff. RPS

would provide summer meals as well for Metro Prep under the RPS Summer Feeding Program.

We will coordinate with RPS School Nutrition Services to obtain proper certification for internal school food service staff. Student meals will be funded in whole or in part through federal school meal plan funds for students eligible for free and reduced price lunch. Students' families are responsible for funding the gap for reduced-price meals and for totally funding meals for students who do not qualify for the federal meal program.

School Health Services. Based on the experiences of similar programs, we can expect that approximately 25% or more of our students will require wrap-around services. Consequently, our best chance for success depends on establishing a full-service health program and coordinating with third-party local organizations to form a support network to facilitate referral to competent service providers. We will collaborate with RPS School Health Services to create a world-class, comprehensive healthcare program. Student health services will be funded out of the per pupil allocation.

Transportation Services. We have selected RPS School Transportation Services to furnish bussing for our students. Director, Todd Phillips, has given a cost estimate and confirmed that RPS Transportation Services can work within the parameters of our extended day and small population of students by leveraging the existing network of buses servicing the East End. Transportation services for routine student daily school bus commutes will be funded out of per pupil amounts.

Extracurricular Activities. Due to the exhaustive daily bell schedule, presently there are no plans for regular onsite after-school extracurricular activities. The bell schedule includes daily after-school tutoring and an optional dinner after the normal school day. As a part of our interactive learning experience, we will likely have quarterly off-site field trips, and an annual learning excursion for each grade. We will solicit a combination of parental funding and private sponsorships for the trips. Virginia law is silent regarding whether charter school students and employees are eligible to participate in interscholastic leagues, competitions, awards, scholarships, and recognition programs available to non-charter public school students and employees through affiliation with other non-charter schools. School leadership will further explore with RPS allowing students to have access to extra-curricular activities at non-charter public schools.

Security Services. Security Services will, in all likelihood, be outsourced to a third-party provider, and be funded by student per pupil allocation amounts.

Custodial Services. The school will contract with the LEA for the provision of custodial services. The services will be funded via the per-pupil amount. In the event of a successful application process, pricing will be finalized post-award.

12.4 Contractual Arrangements.

The School will utilize Memorandums of Agreement to govern support services provided by divisions of the RPS District. The School will employ either contracts or Memorandums of Agreement to govern third-party servicing arrangements.

12.5 Proposed Start-Up Timeline.

See *Attachment 12-1*.

12.6 Proposed Organizational Chart.

See *Attachment 12-2*.

12.7 Recruiting and Developing Teachers & Staff.

In addition to using traditional resources such as classified advertising and university sources, we will seek assistance for recruitment of our initial team---administrators and faculty---from an education headhunter. The firm will be charged with identifying a strong pool of candidates who meet the 100% highly-qualified standard and are primarily male, and screening them, including doing background checks. A firm like Carney, Sandoe and Associates has the experience, however, we may use a local source. Please find more details regarding recruitment and development at *Section 13, Employment Terms and Conditions*.

Section XIII: Employment Terms and Conditions

13.1 Recruiting Qualified Administrators, Faculty, and Staff.

The school aims to hire and retain 100% highly-qualified team members who can thrive and produce in a world-class interactive learning, urban male school, and who are in compliance with Virginia board of education licensing requirements. Human resources management is the process through which we attract, develop, motivate, evaluate, compensate and retain our important people---the faculty, staff and administrators who run the programs that educate and support our students.

The School's leadership team aims to build and judiciously maintain a human resource management system that meets legal requirements. Also, we aim for personnel

policies and practices which are based on a commitment to fair and just treatment of staff toward creating a work environment that supports our mission and encourages our employees to develop and thrive.

By law, our charter school must, at a minimum, employ or contract with teachers and administrators who hold valid licenses to perform the particular service for which they are employed in the school. The charter school's state aid may be reduced if the school personnel are not appropriately licensed. The school may employ personnel who are not required to hold teaching licenses to perform duties other than teaching, and may contract for other services. The school may also discharge non-licensed teachers and employees.

The Board is responsible for setting policy in areas related to human resources management, including policies governing salaries and salary schedules, terms and conditions of employment, fringe benefits, leave, and in-service training. The Board hires the Principal and delegates to him the tasks of recruiting, hiring, evaluating, promoting, and disciplining staff (in accordance with established board policy).

13.2 Professional Development Program.

"Teachers have a more significant influence on student achievement than any other school factor, and they vary widely in their impact ". Furthermore, "Poor and minority students are more likely to be assigned teachers who have less experience and who are teaching out of their field or without full certification, which likely negatively influences their ability to produce high levels of student learning." (Clotfelter)

Consequently, in addition to hiring quality instructors, we intend to provide them with continuous quality professional development. A successful professional development

program begins with expanding the role of teachers to include increased teacher-teacher interactions, peer reviews, and teacher research. We will integrate professional development into the daily activities of our instructors, staff, and administrators.

Through our Board of directors and community connections, the school will formed partnerships with local universities and college departments of education. The community partners will gain real-time access to the knowledge and classroom experience of teachers. Teachers use college campuses for workshops, seminars, and educational instruction. Student-teachers gain opportunities for practical instruction by teaching classes.

According to the Virginia Department of Education guidelines for "High-Quality Professional Development Criteria", high-quality professional development is defined by several factors:

- Rich content that is specifically chosen to deepen and broaden the knowledge and skills of teachers, principals, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other key education staff; based on substantive, well-defined objective.
- Requires structure reflecting well-thought out delivery; efficient use of time; varied and effective styles of pedagogy; discourse and application; and the use of assessments to promote understanding.
- Demands the guidance of experienced educators and other professionals who have a thorough and up-to-date understanding of the content themselves and who can fully engage the participants in the desired learning.

Furthermore, the VDOE establishes criteria. High-quality professional development should:

1. improve and increase teachers' knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach, and enable teachers to maintain their "highly qualified" status;
2. be intensive, and classroom-focused;
3. be based on, aligned with, and directly related to Virginia's Standards of Learning; provide teachers with the opportunity to learn effective instructional strategies that are based on research;
4. be structured on scientifically based research;
5. be sponsored by entities experienced in providing professional development activities to teachers and instructors;
6. be delivered by individuals who have demonstrated qualifications and credentials in the focus area of the professional development;
7. support the success of all learners including children with special needs and limited English proficiency, and advanced students;
8. provide training for teachers in the use of technology so that technology and technology applications are effectively used in the classroom;
9. promote the use of data and assessments to improve instruction; and, be evaluated after completion to determine if the intended results were achieved.

All instructors and administrators will attend at least one 30-hour or more training institute which meets Virginia's High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE), as required in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The overall program will include training experiences with complex formats including problem solving, issue

analysis, research, and investigation. The activities will engage participants in the application of concepts learned.

Based on a literature review, high-quality professional development exhibits the following five characteristics:

- Alignment with school goals, state and district standards and assessments, and teacher evaluation.
- Focus on core content and modeling of teaching strategies for the content.
- Inclusion of opportunities for active learning of new teaching strategies.
- Provision of opportunities for collaboration among teachers.
- Opportunities for follow-up and continuous feedback.

Research has shown that teachers rank professional learning activities that involve active learning (e.g., conducting demonstration lessons; leading group discussions; and reviewing student work with colleagues) as most effective.

Another feature of high-quality professional development is the use of group learning activities. In group learning, teachers develop expertise as members of interdisciplinary teams. Such activities can be built into the work day, for example, presenting to their colleagues what they learned in a professional training on alternatives to off-site disciplinary exclusion. Utilizing the capacity within the everyday work environment to ameliorate instructional and content expertise is an effective way to generate high-quality professional learning.

Specifically, our professional development program will encompass at least 10 days of professional learning time in the summer for in-depth training. We also aim to fund participation for teachers and administrators in the Eagle Academy Foundation's

Annual Professional Development Institute which is held annually in May. The Professional Development Institute (PDI) offers several days of professional development activities to increase public discourse of the educational needs of at-risk boys. Sessions focus on the educational, economic, and social issues affecting urban young men.

13.3 Staff Evaluation.

Provisions for staff evaluation will be detailed in the School's Human Resources Policy.

13.4 Human Resources Policy.

We have developed policies for recruiting and hiring staff. Please find the *Human Resources Recruitment and Hiring Policy (Attachment 13-1)*. Over the next six months, we will round out the employee recruitment, hiring, and staff development policies to finalize a comprehensive school Human Resources Policy. Reviewing the human resources policy draft will be on the short list for the school Principal, once hired.

13.5 Terms of employment.

Employee job offers will be made by written contract in the form of an offer letter. The offer letter will notify new personnel of the terms of employment. The terms of employment will also be reiterated in the Employee Manual which will encapsulate the School's Human Resource Policy.

13.6 Staffing Chart and Staffing Plan.

The *Organizational Chart, Attachment 12-2*, shows proposed staffing for year 1. The plan is to open with a class of 100 sixth graders, and subsequently to add a new class of 100 students each year. At full-capacity, the school roster will include 700 students.

Given the projected annual addition of 100 students, sustaining the favored student-to-teacher ratio of 20:1 would require recruiting at least 5 additional teachers a year, presuming 100% employee retention. The annual growth in students, will also impact support staff---administrative support, security, cafeteria services, janitorial services. We project each new class will necessitate hiring three or four additional support staff. We anticipate growing the administrative team (Principal's support and directors) when the student head count surpasses 300.

We are exploring the prospect of contracting with the LEA as vendor providing human resource services.

Section XIV: Liability and Insurance

14.1 Types of Coverage and Minimum Levels.

The charter school will maintain appropriate insurance coverage. At a minimum, we estimate the following insurance coverage and levels will be maintained:

- a) Comprehensive General Liability (including property) - \$2,000,000

- b) Directors, Officers, and Employees Errors & Omissions Insurance - \$1,000,000
- c) Property Insurance - (business interruption, etc. Amount to be determined)
- d) Motor Vehicle Liability - \$1,000,000
- e) Workers Compensation - (as required by state law)
- f) Bonding (if required) - Minimum: \$25,000; Maximum: \$100,000
- g) Crime Insurance
- h) Professional or Director's Liability
- i) Catastrophic Student Accident Insurance

School leadership will contract with a third-party school insurance professional specializing in charter schools to secure adequate coverage in a comprehensive package. The leadership team will schedule a semi-annual review of all coverage to update the policy as necessary.

The charter school also shall contribute to the state Unemployment Insurance Fund in accordance with applicable law. The School shall provide certificates of insurance to the District's Risk Manager by _____ annually.

14.2 Justification of Coverage Sought.

The coverage sought consists of the standard types of insurance required for most charter schools.

14.3 Indemnity for Local School Division.

The charter school does hereby agree, to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the Richmond Public Schools District ("RPS") ---including the Richmond Public School Board ("the RPS Board") and their members, officers, directors, agents, representatives, employees and volunteers from and against any and all claims, damages, losses and expenses including but not limited to attorney's fees, brought by any person or entity whatsoever, arising out of, or relating to this charter agreement.

The charter school's indemnification of the District and the RPS Board includes claims, damages, losses and expenses arising from or relating to acts or omission of acts committed by the charter school, and their officers, directors, employees or volunteers. Moreover, the Charter School agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the District, including the RPS Board, for any contractual liability resulting from third party contracts with its vendors, contractors, partners or sponsors.

The charter school also will secure insurance, to the extent of foreseeable losses, for property and liability loss, and any other type of insurance necessary to provide coverage for the potential losses described in this paragraph.

Section XV: Disclosures

The School's *Conflict of Interest Policy, Attachment 15-1*, addresses questions 1 - 3 of the charter application regarding (1) the disclosure process for insiders; (2) the anticipated frequency of insider disclosures; and (3) disclosure of details regarding school ownership, and insider relationships with the School's vendors.