

Prospectus Requests

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Four Pillars Charter School (FPCS) will offer a viable and successful educational option for students and their families within the City of Poughkeepsie. The mission of FPCS is to provide significant educational benefit for students in grades K-8 with a thorough and enriched start to their educational careers, ensuring their academic success through high school and beyond into college and/or careers. The FPCS will provide a comprehensive, high quality instructional program that stimulates student achievement and a love of learning. The core program will address academic, social and developmental student needs through a dynamic formula for success. This formula is based on four keystone pillars that respond directly to the essential and historical needs of the children of Poughkeepsie. The four pillars are: literacy in all academic areas; involvement of families; involvement of the community and character education.

The importance of students developing literacy skills is the basis for the school's innovative instructional program. This constitutes the substance of the first pillar. The instructional program will follow the structure of the NYS New Core Curriculum Standards in ELA and Math, as approved by the NYS Regents January 2011. S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering and math) will promote thematically aligned integration of these core standards and will be evident in all grades and subject areas. A balanced literacy approach will be the core of this instruction. Research demonstrates that failure to learn to read and write has lasting consequences. Children who are below grade level in early grades often do not complete high school. If children are poor readers and writers in early grades, they typically remain poor readers and writers. The FPCS is committed to averting and reversing that trend. The Teacher's College Columbia University Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) will guide our work. The goal of the project is to "support expert literacy instruction through research, writing and the professional development of teachers and school leaders."(TCRWP, 2009). Professional development training will begin prior to the arrival of the students, so that all staff members are trained in this methodology. Additional professional development training will be provided to faculty in all areas of the school program.

Family support and family involvement are at the core of the second pillar. The key component is nurturing the relationship between student success and family involvement. Parents will receive training so that they are better able to engage their child in the educational process. As partners, parents will be expected to spend time in the school as one way of supporting their child's program. Other ways for family members to participate include attending field trips, purchasing/donating items for the classroom or school, attending PTO meetings, or assisting teachers with approved projects. Creative options will be provided so that families will not endure hardships in order to meet the participation expectation. The founding members of FPCS have extensive familiarity with parent and family needs in the city of Poughkeepsie. FPCS will respond to these needs by offering family support in a variety of ways. One example is the Parent University Program, a professional conference for parents that will be held twice a year.

Workshops, keynote speakers and opportunities for parent discussion groups are part of this program.

The third pillar is involvement of the community. The Poughkeepsie area is fortunate to have many community organizations and agencies that are interested in collaborating and supporting innovative projects for educational programs for the area's youth. There is also strong interest by municipal programs and retired professionals (educators, scientists, business leaders) and others who are eager to volunteer to work with and support student success. Volunteers will be a large part of the FPCS learning community. The FPCS will recruit volunteers who are members of our parent group, the local community, and college programs. Through meetings with local leaders, links are already being established with nonprofit agencies (Children's Museum, Children's Media Project, Mill Street Loft, businesses & technology entities), environmental groups (Hudson River Clearwater and Scenic Hudson) colleges and universities (Marist, Bard, Mount Saint Mary, SUNY New Paltz, Vassar), to support the Four Pillars Charter School students. The Parent University Program will be a bi-annual event that affords the parents, community organizations, and faculty an opportunity to collaborate on behalf of all students, increasing student support and success.

The fourth pillar employs character education through the teaching of an asset-based program, entitled the Circle of Courage. Character Education improves the educational lives of students and is vital to the mission of the Four Pillars Charter School. The teaching of core character values is important for early elementary students to set a foundation for the development of self-worth and the confidence to succeed academically. It is this component of the school program that binds the pedagogy so that it continuously connects the academic, social and developmental aspects of each child's experience with values that promote individual well-being and happiness while serving the common good of this diverse, multicultural school community. The program is designed to foster self-esteem, a key ingredient for student success. It also promotes confidence, competence and compassion through daily, weekly and monthly activities.

The school day will be enhanced by after school and Saturday morning activities available to all the students enrolled in the Four Pillars Charter School, as well as a select number of students who applied to the school but were not able to attend due to class limits. These activities will include academic tutoring and enrichment, activities led by school faculty and community volunteers, and internships in local community organizations.

The founding group's capacity to effectively launch, oversee and govern the school is significant. Four educators with over 30 years experience each, in teaching and administration in both the public school and private educational sectors are part of the founding group. These educators have written grants, raised funds, developed new programs, effectively managed programs and schools that increased student success, narrowed achievement gaps, and facilitated increased graduation rates in high poverty areas. One founding member has over 10 years experience working with children and youth in the City of Poughkeepsie through a non-profit youth development organization. Two members have had extensive experience and knowledge with students with disabilities while ensuring that opportunities exist for all learners. Each of the founding members is highly skilled and practiced in community development and establishment of Family-School-Community partnerships in the Poughkeepsie area.

II. STUDENT POPULATION

A. Student Enrollment

Applicant Instructions: In the table provided, enter enrollment projections for the school, by year, for the first five years of operation.

Grades	Projected Enrollment Table				
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2017-2018
K	36	36	36	36	36
1 st	36	36	36	36	36
2 nd	36	36	36	36	36
3 rd	36	36	36	36	36
4 th	36	36	36	36	36
5 th		36	36	36	36
6 th			36	36	36
7 th				36	36
8 th					36
9 th					
10 th					
11 th					
12 th					
Ungraded					
Totals	180	216	252	288	324

B. Target Populations

The Four Pillars Charter School will be located in the small city school district of Poughkeepsie, New York. According to the New York State Education Department School Report Card 2008-2009 (2009-2010 accountability status), the Poughkeepsie City School District serves a student population that includes approximately 4560 students. The demographics reflect an impoverished community, with a very large percentage of minority students, alarming youth crime rates, and an extended history of school failure.

Seventy-two percent (72%) of Poughkeepsie students receive free or reduced lunch. Students with disabilities (SWD) comprise nearly 20% of the student population, and 9% of the student population are students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The high school graduation rate in 2008-2009 was 46%. Further analysis of the data indicates graduation rates that are exceptionally sub-standard. In fact, only 26% of SWD, 46% of Economically Disadvantaged, 40% of Latino and 49% of African-American and 44% of White students graduated high school with their cohort.

In grades 3-8, elementary scores in ELA continue to exceed 40% failure rate (levels one and two) and elementary scores in math have a 20-35% failure rate. Students in grades 3-8 who scored level 4 on ELA ranged from 0-6% and 6-14% on math assessments. The Four Pillars Charter School intends to deliver an educational program that provides significant educational benefit for its students. Children need to be able to learn, maintain knowledge and build upon strong skills for continued school success. FPCS Will focus on math skill development and reading literacy in the early grade levels to change the historical trends noted above.

Small city school districts in New York State have similar challenges to those that exist in large urban areas. The city of Poughkeepsie has struggled with issues of poverty, crime and low graduation rates. The level of poverty in Poughkeepsie is evident. The median income is \$29,389 which is slightly below the national poverty level of \$29,530; the violent crime rate is 11.95% compared to the national median of 4.7%; 20% of all households are female led households; the incidents of all crimes have increased over the past 10 years.

The issues of poverty in the community are pronounced. One of the challenges facing students in this urban setting is recruitment of gang members. Young students are often approached, and bullied into joining a gang, as they believe that is the only way to ensure their safety. There are over twelve active, regional and national gangs in the City of Poughkeepsie, as reported by local police authorities. Students attending the FPCS will have a sense of belonging through our character education program and school that will encourage students to help one another participate in positive group activities.

The founding members have experienced first-hand, the impact of poverty on students and families. Between 2002 and 2010, founding members have worked with students in the Poughkeepsie City school district, as school teachers, administrators, board members of community organizations, and employees of a comprehensive youth development program. Supporting students in obtaining work skills, completing GED programs, dealing with court appearances, and engagement in their educational program has been the priority of helping

students succeed. Community Outreach through school officials combined with compelling parent involvement efforts will be a major response of FPCS to the needs of students in the Poughkeepsie community.

Many students entering Kindergarten in the Poughkeepsie School district do not arrive with school readiness skills. Attendance in Head Start or similar programs is minimal compared to student population. Language skills for students are below age expectancy as measured by Kindergarten screening tools for a high percentage of students. Providing a developmentally appropriate, enriched Kindergarten program is a substantial need for children in Poughkeepsie so that they have foundational skills that will assist them in demonstrating school success.

The Poughkeepsie City School District enrolls students from a growing number of Spanish speaking homes. The English Language Learners (ELL)/ Limited English Proficiency (LEP) program teaches students from many areas of the world where Spanish is the primary language. Between 2005-2006 and 2007-2008 school years, the Hispanic/Latino population has grown from 18% to 22% (according to the New York State Report Card). Continued growth in population has occurred, and impacts all measures of student assessment. Data is not available for this subgroup due to lack of minimum numbers for reporting in some grades. However, poor graduation rates and drop-out rates are high for this student population (40% graduated as per 2009-2010 accountability report). The FCPS will address the needs of these students and families through an integral outreach and support program for students and families by providing instruction as per Part 154 of the Commissioner's Regulations for students with limited English proficiency. The goal is to inspire the acquisition of English language skills in order for students to demonstrate successful learning outcomes. Support will be provided by certified teachers who will assess student level of proficiency and progress as per regulations. Training for faculty to ensure compliance with all aspects of requirements will be provided. Coordination with the Mid-Hudson Bilingual Education Technical Assistance Center (BETAC) located at Ulster Community College will also be utilized to ensure that the needs of LEP students are met appropriately. BETACs enhance the development of knowledge and competencies of educators, parents, and local communities needed to support academic excellence of LEP students. BETACs provide high quality technical assistance to promote equity and excellence in the education of limited English proficient students in New York State schools.

The FPCS will not limit admission on the basis of intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, disability, race, creed, gender, national origin, religion or ancestry. The plan for recruitment and enrollment of students will include a marketing plan that will be developed in English and Spanish, and publicized throughout the district in a variety of ways to ensure that communication reaches families that are traditionally less informed about educational choice opportunities. It is important that both verbal presentations and written materials are available, as many family members are not literate. Hispanic media (radio, newspapers and television) will also be used to solicit interested families. FPCS will also use the IBM based "Latin Voices" program which offers volunteer, live translations for local school events.

Informational meetings will be held at churches, community organizations (Family Partnership, Head Start, Children's Media Project, Mill Street Loft) and other locations (Mid-Hudson Civic Center, athletic events, local mall) where families of Poughkeepsie City School District students

attend functions. Informational meetings will be held bi-weekly during the first six months of planning the opening of the Four Pillars Charter School. Families who express an interest in having their children attend the school will receive an information packet with application process, forms and contact information for questions. Bilingual services will be available to interested families.

Each student will be scheduled for a pre-enrollment assessment review, where parents and child will meet with a team that will review student data, complete a parent questionnaire, and assess each student's basic skills and assets. An individualized learning plan will be developed for each student, with an outlined communication plan between student, parent and teachers. This system creates frequent and consistent communication between home and school, outlining student responsibilities, needs and success.

Retaining students and families in the FPCS is a focused goal. Once students enter the school, frequent communication and collaboration with students, faculty and families will encourage all students to be active learners in this school setting. Creating a climate of respect, care, academic success and recognition of that success will support retention and recruitment of students. Mentoring and volunteer programs will identify needs of students and families regarding problem solving issues that may impact retention. Coordination of these programs for continued student and family support will enable the entire school faculty to encourage and sustain student's attendance.

Founding members have over 60 combined years as school teachers and leaders working with SWD and managing district programs for special education, at-risk student populations and ESL/LEP programs. The charter school is deliberately designed to include students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELL)/ Limited English Proficiency (LEP) whose prescribed individual education plan can be appropriately met at FPCS.

Diagnostic screening and assessment based on state regulations and requirements for ELL/LEP students who do not or are at risk of not being able to meet state standards (CR 154) will be addressed. If a student needs assessment, the school district's Title One coordinator will be contacted so that the FPCS works together in identifying student needs. The ability of the FPCS to work individually with student learning plans will assist ELL/LEP students in learning and retaining skills that facilitate student success.

Students with disabilities attending the FPCS will be supported in a proactive manner, in compliance with Federal (IDEA) and state (Part 200) regulations. Students who have educational programs developed by the Poughkeepsie City School District Committee of Special Education (CSE) that include related services only, consultant teacher services, resource room and integrated co-teaching are eligible for admission. Students with disabilities that require more restrictive programs and services will be evaluated and considered in order to determine if the FPCS can meet their educational needs. FPCS leaders and faculty will work closely with the district's CSE to provide information and evidence of progress towards goals so that student's needs are communicated and revised as needed. A certified special education teacher will maintain all special education records in accordance with state and Federal laws, assist teachers in making appropriate curriculum and instructional modifications, act as a liaison between school

district service providers, and organize appropriate training for teaching staff. The teacher will provide quarterly progress reports to the district's CSE coordinator, and attend scheduled CSE meetings. Working collaboratively with the local school district is our goal.

Students that attend the FCPS who are suspected of having an educational disability will be referred through a Response to Intervention (RTI) process. The faculty team at FPCS will follow all required mandates for this process as part of Child Find regulations. If a student is referred to the district's CSE and subsequently classified as a SWD, the student will be able to remain in the school as per the plan outlined above. Every effort will be made to support SWD in achieving the same goals as their non-disabled peers, in the least restrictive environment. By providing individual learning plans for each student with frequent assessment components, students will receive individual guidance, instruction and support that will enable student success.

State reporting requirements of the local school district for SWD, ELL/LEP and all other mandates will be complied with in a cooperative manner. Data will be available to the local school district at least two weeks prior to reporting deadlines.

III. SCHOOL DESIGN

Founding group members have a demonstrated record of closing achievement gaps, increasing student achievement in ELA and math, increasing high school graduation rates and creating successful transition programs for students entering middle school and high school. In three small city school districts in New York, the founding group members have created systemic reform that provided students with alternative ways to successfully meet high school graduation requirements. Success included a middle school changing in status from a school in corrective action for ELA and math to one in good standing; a middle school in SINI 2 status in Math progressing to a school in good standing; successfully revising math and ELA curriculum in elementary classes to match state standards, creating systems for common assessments, benchmark assessments, and faculty training, understanding and use of data to inform practice.

The founding group members have created programs for students with disabilities that expanded opportunities in home schools and districts, commensurate with non-disabled peers, in the least restrictive environment. Secondary students disengaged from the traditional educational program were invited to participate in and demonstrated successful achievement by attending an extended home instruction program for credit recovery. These programs enabled students to graduate successfully from high school.

In order to increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps in reading/language arts and mathematics, the Four Pillars Charter School (FPCS) will provide students with a productive educational environment often neglected in urban school settings. The instructional day will be a minimum of 8 hours. Classroom size will not exceed 18 students per class. Literacy blocks of 120 minutes each day will be scheduled for all students. The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) is research-based, and support literacy-based professional learning communities in classrooms and schools. The shared goal of students becoming independent readers and writers provides power of literacy skills to students who learn to talk, think and write about their reading and use their literacy skills to analyze, synthesize, and

develop inquiry and knowledge as they are involved with academic literacy in all subjects. Students will be involved with integrated literacy projects and assignments, and all students in the school will participate in Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) for a silent and independent reading block of 30 minutes per day.

Increasing high school graduation rates and focusing on preventing at-risk high school student populations (including re-enrolled drop-outs and those below grade level) are important areas of emphasis for the Four Pillars Charter School. Skills learned in K-8 will support a substantial basis for lifelong learning. Providing individual student learning plans for each student, and incorporating small group and individualized instruction to students will occur so that all students believe in their own ability to be successful. Students will visit colleges (there are six in the local area – Bard, Marist, Vassar, Dutchess Community, Mount Saint Mary, and SUNY New Paltz) for academic programs beginning in third grade. This exposure to colleges supports the expectation that all students will be college and career ready and be prepared to pursue their post-secondary aspirations.

The middle school program will provide students with a team approach to instruction. The NYS Core Curriculum Standards adopted by the Board of Regents in January 2011 will provide the course content for each subject. Core subjects will include math content knowledge, math application, English, reading, health, science, social studies, health and physical education. Thematic integration of subject content, vocabulary, written and creative projects will be organized monthly by the teachers for increased learning opportunities for students. Assessment will include project-based activities and measurements of mastery of course standards. It is important that students demonstrate skills in knowledge and application of knowledge on exams and project implementation. In addition, middle school courses will integrate community service learning activities with learning standards.

Teachers and leaders will use reflective practice to create research-based instructional strategies that are outcome focused. A culture of shared leadership for student success will be the core of staff evaluation processes. Accountability based on student success, and data-informed instructional changes will be used as the main factor in staff evaluation.

Teachers of excellence will be the core of every child's experience at the FPCS. Teachers with exceptional qualifications, demonstration of values commensurate with those of the FPCS, and commitment to student success will be solicited through an extensive hiring process. Research (Sanders & Rivers) supports that effective teachers are the most important aspect of student learning. Teachers must commit to attending all offered professional development training, guided by literacy program at Columbia Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, technology, S.T.E.M. and workshops on incorporating core curriculum standards, assessment, data analysis and differentiated instruction strategies. The evaluation process of teachers and school leaders will include these variables, as well as measures in classroom management, family communication, participation in school and community events, and measured student success. Twenty percent of the evaluation shall be based on student growth data on State assessments of comparable measures, and 20 percent shall be based on locally selected measures that are rigorous and consistent and comparable across classrooms and schools, as defined by the

Commissioner of Education. Retention of faculty will be encouraged through collaborative recognition and reward (supplemental compensation), based on student outcomes.

A significant role of FPCS will be to develop a substantial volunteer program that will recruit from local families, community organizations, retired professionals and college students in order to enhance the overall delivery and volume intensity of the daily program at the charter school. This will include tutoring services, classroom assistance, guest teachers, community speakers, technical assistance for technology and classroom instruction, after school homework helpers for students and their parents, Saturday activities as well as basic services such as typing, reception, accounting and school publications.

The intent of the Four Pillars Charter School is to partner with the Poughkeepsie City School District in order to share best practices. We will invite the school district personnel to participate in our professional development activities, offer our classrooms as models for their staff members to visit, and develop a cooperative exchange process for sharing ideas that increase student success. The staff, students and families in the local school district will be invited to participate in our Parent University Programs, our student mentoring programs and our afterschool instructional activities. FPCS teachers will work closely with Poughkeepsie HS teachers and guidance counselors in order to guarantee a seamless transition from FPCS into 9th grade. Students' mentors will also be part of that transition and continue to work with each student throughout their high school career.

One of the key objectives of the FPCS is to provide the necessary skills for student success beyond the walls of the school. When students leave the school, mentors will continue to support students as they transition to the public high school. Mentors will be assigned to work with students, from business, educational and community volunteers. The expectation is that the mentors will continue to support assigned students through their high school graduation. Programs combining community and school personnel, students and families will be offered twice a year, on an annual basis.

The importance of ensuring that students are literate is the basis for student success as measured by high school graduation rates. Young students must develop literacy skills in core subject areas of reading, writing, speaking and math in order to be successful throughout their school careers.

Differentiated instruction techniques will be the basis for the instructional approach in the Four Pillars Charter School. Each student will be exposed to a rigorous curriculum that presents challenging content and skills that will prepare students for college, lifelong learning, and a global economy. The curriculum will be standards based, and student progress will be monitored and assessed by formative and summative assessment measures.

The standards from the New Core Curriculum adopted by the NYS Regents (January 2011) will be organized by scope and sequence into each student's learning plan. A variety of interest-based literacy materials will be utilized in the instructional design for all subject areas.

The instructional approach will be focused on student needs, based on individual learning plans. Measures of accountability will be implemented on a weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis.

Weekly assessment will be part of the communication plan with the family as mentioned above, with student progress checklists completed by the teacher and student during conference time scheduled each Friday. A daily journal will be incorporated as part of the student's learning plan, and summarized each week. The journal will also serve as an additional communication tool with parents.

Modifications for students with disabilities and English language learners will be integrated into all aspects of the school setting. By establishing individual learning plans, using technology (Promethean Boards and, portable computer labs in each classroom) and ensuring ongoing assessment and feedback, student needs will be appropriately met and learning opportunities will be provided in a multisensory manner, to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed. Special education services will be provided to students in accordance with their I.E.P.'s and the Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA), and associated state regulations.

Technology will be integrated into all aspects of teaching and learning. In order for students to be college- and career- ready, they must use technology in the classroom for expanded learning opportunities. Independent projects that serve the community will be expected of all students. This will merge service of the students to the community while creating opportunities for students to develop team building, communication, and community skills. Promethean Boards will be utilized in each classroom daily as an integral part of instruction. Laptops, iPads, and other technology will also be included in the classroom milieu to promote learning and to stimulate student inquiry.

S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering and math) instruction will be a significant focus in the core curriculum. Promethean boards and other classroom technology tools will provide many interactive learning activities that engage students in these areas, both in the classroom and connecting with scientists and other students all over the world. One of the science opportunities our students will have is a link with the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), the international particle accelerator project, located at the European Center for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland. Another partnership afforded to our students is an IBM collaborative in science and math program for girls, which is a Poughkeepsie based program.

Formative and summative assessments will be used to determine monthly and quarterly progress for each student. Student learning outcome measures will assist teachers in adjusting instructional strategies, so that all students demonstrate knowledge commensurate with learning standards. Student portfolios will be created and used in assessing student progress, including written work, participation, classroom assessments, project-based learning activities, and group work. The portfolios will be developed and assessed by the student and primary teacher. Student work artifacts, assessment data, video snapshots, and technology assignments that are most significant in demonstrating student's assets and needs will be utilized to determine the student's learning plan on an ongoing basis.

The FPCS will implement a rigorous assessment component to ensure progress towards goals in meeting and exceeding learning standards. Assessment portfolios, standardized group and individualized assessments (norm referenced and criterion referenced), literacy profiles, standards-based content, concept and knowledge assessments will be utilized with all students.

Utilization of a variety of high-quality assessments to measure understanding and critical application of concepts will be a significant aspect of the educational design of this school. Teachers will be trained in analyzing student data, developing responsive instructional plans based on student data, and using benchmark assessments to determine student progress towards core curriculum standards. A data system will be utilized that measures and records student success on a regular basis, that will then enable teachers to inform instructional practice for increased student achievement. Weekly and monthly assessments of curriculum, based on state standards and core curriculum benchmarks, will be reported in every student's work plan. Parent conferences will be held monthly to ensure communication of needs and challenges and to share instructional practices for the home.

To ensure that FPCS continuously measures and evaluates its mission and goals for the school and each student, a quality improvement plan will be utilized. Led by the school leaders, this plan will clearly outline the goals of the school and create progress measurement tools to maintain current and active assessment of key indicators of success for the school and its students. These measurements will include and exceed the data now provided by the NYSED Report Card for school districts. All members and constituents of the FPCS, including parents, will have a role in this continuous quality improvement plan (CQIP). In addition, the FPCS will utilize the services of the Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach (CRREO) at SUNY New Paltz. This is an organization that conducts and publishes research on regional topics and offers outreach to local governments, local schools, non-profits and for-profit organizations to initiate reforms and enhancements to best service their constituents. Their research also works to foster community collaboration. FPCS has made initial contact with CRREO and intends to utilize their services to design the CQIP, and to publish the results.

FPCS will use the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) to provide frequent and reliable measurement of student literacy in all areas. This tool is designed to begin measurements at the kindergarten level through grade 8. DRAs also provide teachers with key indicators for targeted instruction on an individualized basis for students. A tracking system, AIMSWEB, will be utilized to provide an easy to use and student friendly progress monitoring tool. AIMSWEB can measure ELA skills, math skills, and behavioral development areas.

Technology will be used for instruction, assessment and student practice. Promethean boards and associated professional development training and maintenance will be provided by Logical Choice. This company is committed to the integration of technology, meeting student and instructional needs, and engages the school community, including families, of the learning opportunities available through this technological venue. Assessment of student's learning is immediate, as feedback is provided to teachers and students electronically. This interactive use of technology is well-received by students and staff members, and founding members have been part of school development of this exciting technology.

Character Education improves the educational lives of students and is vital to the mission of the Four Pillars Charter School. The teaching of core character values is important for early elementary students to set a foundation for the development of self-worth and the confidence to succeed academically. The Circle of Courage curriculum is designed to help students to increase their internal and external assets. Based on the research of the Search Institute, the building of

assets helps to mitigate the impact of poverty, insufficient parenting, and negative peer influence. It helps students to critically evaluate their environment and to make decisions that are healthy and resistant to risky behaviors. It also helps to expand the expectations and dreams of children in their unfolding imaginations about adulthood, education, employment and relationships.

The Circle of Courage curriculum is based on the research and writings of Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (*Reclaiming Youth At Risk, Our Hope For The Future*, Augustana College, S.D. rev. 2002) which promote the development of positive school culture through focused emphasis and practice on key values within the classroom and school environment. It features a positive language centered on four core values: a sense of mastery, independence, generosity, and a sense of belonging.

The character development curriculum will be integrated within the academic curriculum, so that the learning and practice of the core values are intertwined with daily classroom activities. The character education lessons are compatible with the content of all subject areas. Students will be taught to identify their own strengths and use them in ways to support their learning and social interactions. The program is designed to foster self-esteem, a key ingredient for student success. It also promotes confidence, competence and compassion through daily, weekly and monthly activities. These activities establish opportunities for students to learn, understand and demonstrate good citizenry. The activities promote service to others, constructive use of time, cultural competence, positive study habits and motivation to achieve. Teachers will have shared planning time to plan, align and map the character education curriculum throughout the school year.

A safe and nurturing learning environment will be provided to students attending the Four Pillars Charter School. Core values of scholarship, respect, honesty, integrity, responsibility, leadership and service to others will guide students and staff in creating and maintaining a quality school program. High academic expectations, character education program, belief in the ability for all to succeed, effective problem solving and peer mediation will be integrated aspects of the FPCS philosophy and practice.

A dress code will be implemented for all employees and students. Students will take pride in wearing uniforms that consist of blue collared shirts and khaki pants, skirts or shorts. Employees will wear school uniforms or business appropriate attire.

The management and leadership for the Four Pillars Charter School consists of public and private educators, higher education and business partners, and community residents that will allow the group to overcome start-up challenges involved in opening a successful school. Funding partners, physical space and legal support for creating a school have been contacted and expressed high interest in working with the founding group in bringing a public charter school to the City of Poughkeepsie. Following the core beliefs of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, the school administrator will be an educational leader who promotes the success of all students, demonstrates and models professional integrity, fairness, values and ethics, facilitates parental and community involvement by building trustful

relationships with all stakeholders, and ensures that operations and resources are used to provide a safe, efficient and effective learning environment for all students. The leadership team has high expectations of student success and adult support for student success. Evaluation of the school leader will be commensurate with the transformation of school leaders proposed by the Regents' in their strategic goals. The evaluation of school leaders will emphasize the correlation between positive student outcomes and performance-based assessment of leadership's impact on student achievement.

The school design outlined is one that is supported by research. Meeting the needs of diverse learners by providing numerous, multi-sensory learning opportunities are supported by the work of many (Tomlinson, McTighe, Blankenstein, and Bloom) through differentiated teaching and learning. Dufour & Dufour research supported that establishing high levels of expectations that all students can and will learn by creating professional learning communities for students and staff. Coleman's landmark studies on self-fulfilling prophecies strongly support the fact that when students are in classrooms where adults believe they can learn, students prove them right. Karen Mapp's (Harvard) work on the importance of connections between families and school strongly support home-school partnership as a way to increase student outcomes. Students who are engaged in the learning process are successful. All staff members of the FPCS will be highly qualified and motivated to be successful as measured by student progress and success.

In summary, the Four Pillars Charter School believes that all children are capable of learning and will succeed in school if they are supported with an academic program that is strongly committed to early mastery of reading and math literacy, an integrated curriculum that reinforces progressive learning, a highly trained core of school leaders, teachers and faculty, strong collaboration with the local community, a deliberate character education program, and positive family involvement. This is true especially in a community such as Poughkeepsie where public school experience has historically been less than successful and where the lack of school choice has obstructed academic pathways to success and relegated most students to a 50/50 chance of high school graduation. Families in the city of Poughkeepsie must have choices as to where their children receive an education, and must have input into that process. Respectful conversations about options for the children and parents of Poughkeepsie are desperately needed. In this urban community, the levels of poverty, the lack of school choice and the uncertain outcomes for students create covert but palpable messages of inferiority and defeat for so many families. The families of Poughkeepsie require an option that brings hope for success for their children's future. The Four Pillars Charter School will provide this option to parents for their children.