

# YORK ACADEMY REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL PROJECT NARRATIVE

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## Application Requirements

(a) A description of the roles and responsibilities of the eligible applicant, partner organizations, and <u>charter management organizations</u> , including the administrative and contractual roles and responsibilities of such partners (Section 4303(f)(1)(C)(i)(I) of the ESEA);	6-7, 45-46
(b) A description of the quality controls agreed to between the eligible Applicant and the <u>authorized public chartering agency</u> involved, such as a contract or performance agreement, how a school's performance in the	45-46, 50-51

State's accountability system and impact on student achievement (which may include student academic growth) will be one of the most important factors for renewal or revocation of the school's charter, and how the SEA and the authorized public chartering agency involved will reserve the right to revoke or not renew a school's charter based on financial, structural, or operational factors involving the management of the school (Section 4303(f)(1)(C)(i)(II) of the ESEA);

- (c) A description of how the eligible applicant will solicit and consider input from parents and other members of the community on the implementation and operation of each charter school that will receive funds (Section 4303(f)(1)(C)(i)(IV) of the ESEA); 25, 29-32
- (d) A description of the eligible applicant's planned activities and expenditures of funds to support the activities described in section 4303(b)(1) of the ESEA, and how the eligible applicant will maintain financial sustainability after the end of the grant period (Section 4303(f)(1)(C)(i)(V) of the ESEA); 39-45, Bdgt Narr
- (e) A description of how the eligible applicant will support the use of effective parent, family, and community engagement strategies to operate each charter school that will receive funds under this program (Section 4303(f)(1)(C)(i)(VI) of the ESEA); 29-32
- (f) A description of how the eligible applicant has considered and planned for the transportation needs of students for each school that will receive funds (Section 4303(f)(1)(E) of the ESEA); 32

- (g) A description of how each school that will receive funds will support all students once they are enrolled to promote retention, including by reducing the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom; 27-28, 30-31
- (h) A description of how each school that will receive funds will have a high degree of autonomy over budget and operations, including autonomy over personnel decisions (Section 4303(f)(2)(A) of the ESEA); 6-7, 45-46
- (i) A description of how the applicant will ensure that each charter school that will receive funds will recruit and enroll students, including children with disabilities, ELs, and other educationally disadvantaged students, including the lottery and enrollment procedures that will be used for each charter school if more students apply for admission than can be accommodated, and, if the applicant proposes to use a weighted lottery, how the weighted lottery complies with section 4303(c)(3)(A) of the ESEA; 5-6, 8-12, 25-27
- (j) A description of how the applicant will ensure that all eligible Children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education in accordance with part B of the IDEA; 5-6, 8-10, GEPA Form
- (k) A description of how each school that will receive funds meets the definition of charter school under section 4310(2) of the ESEA as well as how the autonomy and flexibility granted to each charter school that will receive funds is consistent with the definition of a charter school; 6-7, 45-46, App.E
- (l) If an applicant proposes to open a new charter school (CFDA number 84.282B) or proposes to replicate or expand a charter school (CFDA number 84.282E) NA

that provides a single-sex educational program, the applicant must demonstrate that the proposed single-sex educational programs are in compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681, et seq.) (“Title IX”) and its implementing regulations, including 34 CFR 106.34.

- (m) A request and justification for any waivers of Federal statutory or regulatory requirements over which the Secretary exercises administrative authority, except any such requirement relating to the elements of a charter school in section 4310(2) of the ESEA, that the applicant believes are necessary to implement its proposed project (Section 4303(d)(5)); NA
- (n) A complete logic model for the grant project. The logic model must include the applicant's objectives for implementing a new charter school or replicating or expanding a high-quality charter school with funding under this competition; and 39-43, App.G
- (o) If available, the applicant’s most recent independently audited financial statements prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. App.F

Additional Federal Requirements:

- (a) For each charter school currently operated or managed by the applicant, provide-- App.E
- (1) Information that demonstrates that the school is treated as a separate school by its authorized public chartering agency and the State, including for purposes of accountability and reporting under Title I, Part A of the ESEA;
  - (2) Student assessment results for all students and for each subgroup of students described in section 1111(c)(2) of the ESEA;

- (3) Attendance and student retention rates for the most recently completed school year and, if applicable, the most recent available four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates and extended- year adjusted cohort graduation rates; and
- (4) Information on any significant compliance and management issues encountered within the last three school years by the existing charter school being operated or managed by the eligible entity, including in the areas of student safety and finance.

# **YORK ACADEMY REGIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL PROJECT NARRATIVE**

## **Background: York Academy Regional Charter School – Founding, Context, Expansion**

“My day goes fast. It doesn’t even feel like school.”

(a seven-year-old student at The York Academy Regional Charter School, York PA).

The York Academy Regional Charter School (York Academy), now completing its seventh year of operation, has been chartered by three Pennsylvania public school districts. The school opened in August, 2011, serving K-2 students and has added a grade level each year since (K-8 in 2017-18). The student body is drawn primarily from three contiguous public school districts (York City, Central York, and York Suburban) and, during 2017-18 that student body included 60% from low-income households (eligible from free or reduced cost meals under federal guidelines). The school has been created specifically to improve student achievement and to increase high school graduation and college enrollment within the under-performing, predominately low-income student population of York City. A strong majority of York Academy’s enrollment (60% during 2017-18) has been drawn from the School District of the City of York, and recruitment for future students will continue to include that urban focus within a multi-district, urban/suburban strategy as elaborated below and throughout this application.

The school’s creation and design, including its offering of the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum (elaborated in “Quality of Project Design” below), emerged out of a long-term regional economic and community development process. The York Academy venture is unique on three counts: (1) we have established the only three-district charter school in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, (2) we have established the only charter school in the Commonwealth which combines students from three different school districts with dramatically different racial and socio-economic profiles, and (3) we have created a

charter school that is managed and funded locally. There is no management company that financially supports the school.

York Academy's student population is drawn primarily from those three economically and ethnically distinct chartering school districts. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the students in The School District of the City of York are low-income, eligible for free/reduced lunch. That number is about 31% in both the York Suburban School District and the Central York School District. The City School District's population is comprised of about 13% white (non-Hispanic) students with a majority of the remainder a minority population divided almost evenly between African-American and Latino students. Central York School District is 70% white, York Suburban School district is more than 75% white. The drop-out rate in the City School District, at 8.92%, is approximately eight times that of either of its chartering partners.

The York Academy project grew out of YorkCounts, a community-wide initiative begun to stabilize and improve the economy of York City, the urban heart of York County, after publication in 1996 of the results of a study conducted by David Rusk, an internationally-recognized urban policy expert. The Rusk Report yielded several recommendations stemming from a central analysis that the nature and location of York's municipal and school district boundaries, "little boxes," have created an isolated urban population with both city government and schools facing the daunting challenges of a shrinking tax base and a rising concentration of an impoverished population. York Academy is a direct outgrowth of Rusk's recommendations. York Academy's multi-district, urban-suburban structure is designed to breach those political boundaries and reduce urban isolation, simultaneously contributing to city and regional economic development.

York County is located in South Central Pennsylvania. It is an agricultural and manufacturing center blessed by a location attractive to business and industry. The county population continues to grow steadily (2010 census estimate – 450,000) while the population of the city has declined to about 40,000 from a 1960 high of 60,000. Race riots in the City of York in the summer of 1969 marked the beginning of rapid white and middle-class flight from the city. The City school district maintained excellence in education for many years. However, the last 20 years have witnessed increasing dropout rates, a higher concentration of impoverished and at-risk students, declining levels of academic achievement and decreasing numbers of city families involved in their children's education.

Education experts tell us that any school district with a poverty level exceeding 40% is practically doomed to failure. Associated with the emerging 78% poverty level in the City school district and the inevitable social problems which go along with a high-poverty population, schools in the School District of the City of York have failed regularly to make adequate yearly progress since the inception of the federal No Child Left Behind and Every Child A Success acts. Several District schools have been in Corrective Action and Focus Schools status for more than a decade. The absence of a student population from middle-class families has had widespread effects not just on the school district but also on the general civic life of York.

YorkCounts charged a newly established committee to develop alternate education programming which could serve to keep young middle-class families in the city and also provide a first-rate education to students whose families lack the financial means to move out of the city. The committee grappled with how to address the City's concentration of poverty and its attendant problems. It was not (and is not) politically viable to rework school boundaries to achieve favorable ethnic and socio-economic balance in individual school districts.



After 2 ½ years of study and planning led by 25-30 community volunteers, including the school superintendents from the City of York and the four first-ring suburbs, consensus was developed that the most effective solution was the formation of a regional/multi-district charter school offering a world-class educational program that would be attractive to families and students from all participating school districts. A design was developed for a K-12 school framed by the curriculum and standards specified for recognition by the International Baccalaureate organization (see “Quality of Project Design” below for elaboration about the nature of an International Baccalaureate (IB) educational program). The charter school organizing committee’s charter application was approved by three York County school districts in 2010: The School District of the City of York, York Suburban School District, and Central York School District. Students were first enrolled in 2011-12 in grades K-2. The school has expanded to include grades K-8 in 2017-18 with current enrollment of 675 (January 2018), and has experienced a growing waiting list for entry for the last five years. The current student population is 33% White, 31% African American, 22% Hispanic, 13% Multi-racial, 1% Asian. Sixty-one (61%) percent of students qualify for free/reduced lunch, 11% require special education services, 4% require English-as-Second Language services.

York Academy proposes to expand access to high-quality educational choice through two prongs: (1) adding grades 9-12 in a new 8-12 Upper School over a four-year period to provide a full K-12 choice, and (2) expanding its Lower School capacity by increasing its K-7 enrollments, adding a 25-student class at one grade-level annually, beginning with Kindergarten in 2018-19. We are confident that programming of IB’s rigor and prestige will continue to entice suburban parents to send their children into the City of York daily for school.

**COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITIES: NUMBERS 1 & 3****Competitive Preference Priority 1: Supporting High-Need Students by Increasing Access to High-Quality Educational Choice**

The application proposes the expansion of an existing charter school, York Academy Regional Charter School, from its current K-8 configuration to a K-12 school and to expand enrollment at the Lower School grades, in accord with charter agreements with its three chartering school districts. York Academy currently provides a high-quality educational choice for high-need students in two of the categories of students targeted in this Priority, children with disabilities and English learners (ELs). (Our region is too distant from “rural” districts to make attendance at our school possible; to our knowledge, there are no local students from federally-recognized Indian Tribes). Our project will increase access to high-quality education for children with disabilities and English learners in two primary ways:

(1) Expansion of the school will increase school enrollment capacity, and, thus, will directly increase access to our high-quality educational choice for more children with disabilities and English learners, in accord with the application, selection (including possible lottery) and enrollment procedures outlined in the “Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged” and “Quality of Project Design” sections below.

(2) Addition of educational programs for grades 9-12 and addition of an IB-authorized Middle Years Programme and Diploma Programme will bring into existence an internationally-recognized high-quality program that does not exist as an option at these grade levels within our region. York Academy’s early grades program is already operating as an IB-authorized Primary Years Programme. Middle Years Programme recognition is in the midst of a multi-year process.

The Diploma Programme will be addressed with the International Baccalaureate organization as those grade levels are added. (See “Quality of Project Design” below)

As we will elaborate below (see “Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students” below), York Academy intends to improve achievement and graduation rates of students with special needs addressed in special education Individualized Education (11% of current students have IEPs) and English Learners (4% of students). As outlined below, both of these sub-groups of students are supported by York Academy in making progress towards meeting State academic content and achievement standards through their full access to the rigorous, PA-standards-aligned International Baccalaureate curriculum.

### **Competitive Preference Priority 3: Single School Operators**

York Academy is a public charter school, chartered by three public school districts and recognized by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a separate local educational agency and school under Pennsylvania’s Charter School Law. York Academy has a distinct state identifying code and is allocated its own share of state-controlled federal funds in accord with federal regulations and the state plan for each funding source.

Under PA law, the relationship between the charter school and its chartering school district(s) is defined in terms of the charter school’s accountability to those districts for student results as defined and measured on the state’s system of school assessment (PSSA) and overall school performance as defined in the charter agreement between the charter school and chartering district(s). The chartering local educational agency relinquishes control over the fundamental systems of the charter school – curriculum and instruction, budget and expenditures, personnel decisions and daily operations. The Board of Trustees

and the administration of the charter school assume control of those elements of the program, subject to state law and the parameters set out in the charter agreement. The Board of Trustees of the charter school has ultimate responsibility to determine general, academic, financial, and personnel policies deemed necessary for the administration and development of the school, in accordance with its stated purposes and goals.

A Pennsylvania charter school is afforded significant flexibility from State rules in that the PA Charter School Law releases charter schools from any state education regulations that do not specifically state their application to charter schools. This exempts charter schools from a number of program-specific prescriptive regulations and enables the charter school to maintain a sharp focus on its own program vision. A PA charter school is also afforded significant flexibility from local rules (i.e., is exempted from abiding by the rules and program decisions of the chartering school districts). Within the parameters laid out in the charter agreement between the charter school and chartering district(s) and state law, the charter school may structure its own curriculum and instructional focus, set its own budget, manage its own expenditures within that budget, hire and manage school faculty and staff and set personnel policies, and manage daily operations.

State law presumes that an approved charter school will have its charter renewed by the original chartering local school district(s) unless the school has been clearly demonstrated to have failed to meet the objectives and commitments laid out in its chartering agreement. Upon completion of the Federal grant period, York Academy will continue to receive fund transfers from local school districts following a student-count-based formula and reporting/invoicing procedures developed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

**SELECTION CRITERIA**

In what follows, we have used the Selection Criteria section of the application guidelines to structure our responses to the Application Requirements. We address each below:

**(i) Contribution in Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students**

As noted above (Background), the impetus for creation of this regional (multi-district) charter school grew out of community discussions of the negative impact of a growing concentration of poverty in the City of York, PA. Concentration of poverty and associated isolation of significant portions of the region's non-white populations continue to plague regional development.

Since the inception of No Child Left Behind as the nation's guiding educational law in 2001 (and continuing under the Every Student Succeeds Act), student performance on state assessments aligned with state academic content and achievement standards has regularly fallen far short of "adequate yearly progress" in the School District of the City of York. Many approaches to school improvement have been undertaken by the school district over the course of more than a decade with little progress.

York Academy, a regional charter school, is designed to break the stranglehold that concentrated poverty seems to have on academic progress for students residing in the city school district, as it fosters economic integration of poor students from the city with economically more well off students from participating suburban districts (61% of the school's students qualify for free or reduced lunch – nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's of those students, 73%, are residents of the School District of the City of York; only 7.6% of York Academy's low-income students are residents of either of the two suburban chartering school districts). Elsewhere, this strategy of economic integration is associated with significantly improved academic performance by students from poor households

while showing no negative impact on the performance of students from higher income families (cf. Gerald Grant, 2011, Hope and Despair in The American City: Why There Are No Bad Schools in Raleigh, and Richard Kahlenberg, 2009, Turnaround Schools That Work, New York City, NY: New Century Foundation, [www.tcf.org](http://www.tcf.org)).

Three key groups of educationally disadvantaged or at-risk students are found within the York Academy student population: economically disadvantaged students (61% of the 2017-18 student body), students with special needs addressed in special education Individualized Education Plans (11% of the school's students have IEPs), and English Language Learners (4% of students are identified as ELLs). All of these students are supported in making progress towards meeting State academic content and achievement standards through their full access to the rigorous, PA-standards-aligned International Baccalaureate curriculum described in the Quality of Project Design section. The IB curriculum and delivery model are designed to appeal to students of all ethnicities, genders, needs, ability levels and socio-economic statuses. IB Programme Standard C.3.3 requires that “teaching and learning builds on what students know and can do” – i.e., that the program of instruction begin with students ‘where they are.’ The student-centered, inquiry-based, multi-faceted instructional methods and associated formative assessment methods (see the sub-sections on assessment and instructional practices below – Quality of Project Design) lend themselves well to differentiation of each learning activity to accommodate the special needs of each student and student at-risk sub-group.

After monitoring York Academy's special education services in 2014, the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, commended the school stating:

“The [York Academy Regional] Charter School is commended for its International Baccalaureate (IB) framework and school-wide positive behavior supports provided to ALL students supported by comprehensive academic and behavioral data.” (cited in PDE BSE Report of Findings transmitted to the school in a letter dated June 12, 2014, based on findings during the “cyclical monitoring” conducted during the week of March 24, 2014).

The International Baccalaureate framework and school-wide positive behavior supports noted by the Bureau structure a learning environment based on several principal strategies used to assure that all students are provided opportunities and reasonable accommodations to support achievement of academic goals. These strategies, elaborated below, include:

- use of standards-aligned curriculum and research-based instructional methods;
- provision of individualized and small-group interventions to identified students within regular classroom settings;
- implementation of a school-wide positive behavior support plan;
- use of child study meetings to monitor progress of targeted individual students;
- use of a Child Find program to identify students who may require special education;
- provision of instructional support to identified students by qualified (certified) special education teachers and therapists;
- administration of a Home Language Survey and classroom teacher input to screen students to identify those who may require an English-Language-Learner (ELL) program;
- use of “push-in” services by certified ELL staff during reading and mathematics classes;

- when appropriate, contracting with outside providers for specialized placement of students with special needs.

The school employs special education and English-as-Second Language staff who partner with the regular classroom teachers for instructional design, team-teaching and in-class support for targeted students. York Academy's Child Find process draws on the expertise of both the school's full-time Special Education teachers (2) and a contracted PA-certified School Psychologist. The school employs a full-time, certified English-As-Second Language Teacher. York Academy uses an inclusive, team-teaching model as its primary method for delivery of special education and English-as-Second Language services, subject to conditions set in specific IEP's and individual ELL student needs (pull-out instruction is provided to students identified as needing that level of intensity of support). In addition, the school contracts with the Lincoln Intermediate Unit #12, a PA public regional educational service agency, for specialized Special Education services of the School Psychologist and an Instructional Advisor and contracts for part-time or full-time classroom services from the Intermediate Unit for students, as appropriate (Currently, 22 York Academy students receive off-site instruction under IU-provided classes within its Emotional Support, Hearing Impaired, and Neurologically Impaired programs). Since 2013-14, York Academy has participated in the Intermediate Unit-coordinated English Language Learners Consortium which provides consultation and professional development in support of the schools services to its EL students.

Additional support services to educationally disadvantaged students are provided on an individual, as-needed basis by the school's educational support professionals, including a school psychologist, guidance counselor, reading specialist/librarian, speech therapist and school nurse.



York Academy seeks to comply with all federal and state laws and regulations associated with the education of educationally disadvantaged students and with receipt of funds and/or services, including (not limited to) the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the transition to Every Student A Success Act (ESSA), the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504).

### **Improved Academic Performance**

Pennsylvania combines three student sub-groups (students with disabilities, English Learners, and Economically Disadvantaged students) into one unduplicated category for federal reporting purposes. In 2017, “historically underperforming” York Academy students outpaced the sub-group statewide in all three state assessment areas: English Language Arts; Math; and Science (percentage of students scoring Advanced or Proficient). (We do not have statewide data on traditional sub-groups. In all assessed subjects, York Academy students in sub-groups of Black, Hispanic, and Multi-racial also matched or exceeded statewide “historically under-performing” student performance, except York Academy Black students in Math).

York Academy students who receive special education services are meeting their IEP goals, are instructed in the least restrictive environment (mostly in regular classrooms) with progress monitoring, appropriate instructional modifications and accommodations, and appropriate related support services. As noted, the school’s program has been commended by the Commonwealth.

Annually, more than 75% of English Learners have increased their English Language reading performance as defined and assessed in accord with state guidelines – 25+% increasing two or more reading levels, 50+% increasing one. (See also “Quality of Eligible Applicant”)

**(ii) Quality of the Project Design**

The proposed project supports expansion of York Academy's enrollment in two dimensions: (1) addition of grades 9-12 to the current K-8 offering, to be offered within a newly opened Upper School (8-12); and (2) increasing enrollment in the Lower School (to be K-7), adding a 25-student class at Kindergarten in 2018-19 and increasing grade-level enrollment by 25 as that cohort moves through the grades (1-5 during the project period). At all grades, York Academy's educational program will follow International Baccalaureate (IB) principles and gain/retain IB authorization. In what follows, we elaborate the design of the existing program and its expansion into the upper grades, as that design frames our expansion design, as well.

The York Academy Regional Charter School is designed to provide students with an engaging, challenging learning environment that opens doors for growth, opportunity, and academic excellence. The overarching goal of York Academy is to develop citizens of the world - students who are inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who will help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. Students are encouraged to become active, compassionate life-long learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right. The rigorous academic program is based on authentic learning which is relevant to the real world and transdisciplinary. Learning is not confined to individual content areas but is supported and enriched by them. Students engage in creating their own learning in developmentally appropriate ways.

The foundation of the design for this challenging academic program is based on the International Baccalaureate philosophy and curriculum plus application of evidence-based teaching strategies and effective, appropriate, and on-going assessment. The International

Baccalaureate organization ([www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)) works with more than 3,500 schools serving over 1,000,000 students in 144 countries. IB World Schools pursue a common mission: “The International Baccalaureate® (IB) aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.” York Academy is currently authorized by IB at the Primary Years Programme (PYP) level (achieved in January, 2015). It is a “candidate school” for the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP application submitted, review in process). We will apply for authorization as a Diploma Programme as those last years of schooling are added at York Academy ( we anticipated DP accreditation before June, 2022). The IB framework is elaborated below in the Curriculum sub-section of this Project Design section.

Since the school’s inception, the vision for development of the York Academy program has included a K-12 design, receiving IBO authorization, that incorporates several recurring features: study across a broad and balanced range of knowledge domains that use educational content from around the world; special emphasis on providing language acquisition and development; opportunities for engaging in multi-disciplinary learning; a focus on developing skills of learning, culminating study of the Theory of Knowledge in the Diploma Program; opportunities for individual and collaborative planning and research; and, a community service component that requires action and reflection. The development of the “whole child” is addressed throughout the IB curriculum including intellectual growth, personal growth, emotional growth and social development through all domains of knowledge.

In characterizing our design below, we will address: Curriculum; Assessment; Instructional Practices; Student Recruitment and Enrollment; Discipline, Positive School Climate, & Student Support; Parent and Community Involvement; and Transportation.

## Curriculum

In designing and delivering its curriculum, an ongoing work of development as grades are added annually, York Academy addresses both the standards-centered curriculum regulations of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the curricular principles and guidelines of the International Baccalaureate Organization. Curriculum has been directly aligned with the Pennsylvania Academic Standards to assure that all students receive instruction that addresses these challenging state academic standards. In addition, the current York Academy curriculum is designed in accord with the general principles that characterize all IB programs and the more specific design specifications for an IB Primary Years and Middle Years Programmes (PYP, MYP). All IB programs are designed “to develop internationally- minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.” IB learners strive to be “inquirers, thinkers, communicators and risk-takers who are knowledgeable, principled, open-minded, caring, balanced and reflective.” In pursuit of this IB Learner Profile, all IB programs:

- are designed to address five essential elements of learning – acquisition of knowledge, understanding of concepts, mastering of skills, development of attitudes, and making decisions to take action
- require study across a broad range of subjects drawing on content from educational cultures across the world
- give special emphasis to language acquisition and development
- encourage learning across disciplines
- focus on developing the skills of learning
- include, to a varying extent, the study of individual subjects and of transdisciplinary areas

- involve students in both individual and collaborative planning and research
- include a community service component requiring action and reflection.

In all IB Programme levels, subjects are taught in alignment with state academic standards. Students see them articulated, however, within and across grade levels, through the consistent annual encounter with six interdisciplinary (or, per IBO, “transdisciplinary”) themes that reinforce the global nature of our society and where each individual fits within it. Use of these transdisciplinary themes as the core of curriculum is a distinctive feature of the IB Primary Years program: Who we are; Where we are in place and time; How we express ourselves; How the world works; How we organize ourselves; and, Sharing the planet. In MYP and DP, students study distinct disciplines, but are well-prepared for interdisciplinary study and connections.

## **Assessment**

In this section, we address: (a) the guiding frameworks of standards and practices which are the context for objective-setting and assessment; (b) a summary of the school’s building of a comprehensive system of assessment of student achievement in an IB context – the heart of assessment in an educational setting.

**Guiding Frameworks:** The process of setting York Academy school objectives and of monitoring and assessing their achievement is driven by two guiding frameworks within which the school operates. York Academy Regional Charter School is both a public school chartered within the Pennsylvania public school system and an IB-recognized World School operating within the International Baccalaureate system. Each bears brief elaboration as a guiding system for school goal-setting and accountability.

First, as a public charter school operating in Pennsylvania, the school must pursue student development and achievement within the framework of standards-based accountability defined by Pennsylvania's federally-approved ESSA accountability plan – a system that defines standards for student achievement, sets performance targets defining a school's "adequate yearly progress" on state assessments, and sets requirements for key elements of a public school's educational programming. At the elementary and middle levels at which York Academy currently operates, statewide assessments are centered in the PA System of School Accountability, or PSSA, including: English Language Arts and Mathematics assessed at every grade level from 3 through 8, and Science assessed at grades 4 and 8. As upper grades are added, students will participate in required state assessments, Keystone Exams, scheduled as end-of-course exams in Algebra 1, Literature, and Biology. Proficiency on these state exams is slated to serve as a graduation requirement, effective in 2019-20.

Second, as a school pursuing recognition and authorization to operate as an International Baccalaureate school as defined and certified by International Baccalaureate (an internationally recognized nonprofit organization defining and monitoring IB delivery worldwide - [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)), York Academy must also abide by the guiding IB Program Standards and Practices framework, a framework that defines consistency of practice and coherence of program across the three educational program levels recognized and defined by the IBO – the Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, and Diploma Programme (defining high school education). The IB framework drives the authorization process through which a school (1) commits to development of an educational program that meets the standards, (2) applies for recognition as a Candidate School in the operation of one or more of the levels of program noted above, (3) operates an educational program under provisional status as Candidate School with

monitoring and feedback from the IB Organization, (4) applies for full authorization and submits to a rigorous, on-site review of the local program and its alignment with and fulfillment of the IB Standards and Practices framework, and (5) upon recognition, continues to operate its IB program and to participate in continuous program improvement and maintenance of alignment as a member school of the IB community of World Schools. The IB Standards and Practices framework includes seven standards, each elaborated by a number of specific descriptors of school practice that provide the full framework for assessing school performance. The standards include: Standard A: Philosophy – *The school’s educational beliefs and values reflect IB philosophy (9 practices)*; Standard B1: Leadership and Structure – *The school’s leadership and administrative structures ensure the implementation of the IB programme(s) (7 practices)*; Standard B2: Resources and Support – *The school’s resources and support structures ensure the implementation of the IB programme(s) (12 practices)*; Standard C1: Curriculum - Collaborative Planning – *Collaborative planning and reflection supports the implementation of the IB programme(s) (9 practices)*; - Standard C2: Curriculum - Written Curriculum – *The school’s written curriculum reflects IB philosophy (11 practices)*; Standard C3: Curriculum - Teaching and Learning – *Teaching and learning aligns with the requirements of the programme(s) (16 practices)*; Standard C4: Curriculum - Assessment – *Assessment at the school aligns with the requirements of the programme(s) (9 practices)*. IB notes that full implementation of programs in accord with these standards and practices is “a journey” with varying levels degrees of compliance “along the way.” However, implementation must be demonstrably “in progress” for all practices at the time of authorization, and certain specified practices and program requirements must be “in place” at that time, including: Philosophy – 5 practices; Leadership and

structure – 5 practices; Resources and support - 6 practices; Collaborative planning – 2 practices; Written curriculum – 1 practice; Teaching and learning – 1 practice; Assessment – 1 practice.

**Building a comprehensive system of assessment of student achievement in an IB context:**

At the heart of the York Academy educational program is a growing, comprehensive system of assessment of student progress and achievement. Within the school's assessment system:

- Student performance is assessed in accordance with curriculum standards and practices, the overall learning outcomes tied to Pennsylvania State Standards, and subject- specific expectations. On-going needs and interest assessments and formative and summative assessments are used to determine student progress.
- Students are involved in planning for their own learning and assessment.
- Assessment includes assessment of problem solving through analysis and critical thinking, creativity, intuitive thinking, and reasoning in comparative and interdisciplinary study, as well as participation in community service.
- Students achieve a variety of levels of language competency in at least one language beyond the student's native tongue, emphasizing both written and verbal fluency.
- Attention is given to students who do not meet their individual learning goals through the collaboration of teachers, parents and students to refocus on specific assessments and learning strategies for continued support of the student.

At York Academy, assessment is integral to all teaching and learning. It is central to our goal of thoughtfully and effectively guiding students through the five essential elements of learning described in the International Baccalaureate Charter School model program: the acquisition of knowledge, the understanding of concepts, and the mastering of skills, the



development of attitudes, and the decision to take action. The prime objective of assessment in this program is to provide feedback on the learning process. Assessment involves the gathering and analysis of information about student performance and is designed to inform practice. It identifies what students know, understand, can do, and feel at different stages in the learning process. Students and teachers are actively engaged in assessing the students' progress as part of the development of their wider critical-thinking and self-assessment skills.

Student learning is promoted through planning and refining the teaching and learning process to meet individual or group needs. Assessing the students' prior knowledge and experience as well as monitoring their achievement during the teaching period enables teachers to plan and refine their teaching accordingly. The York Academy Regional Charter School utilizes both formative and summative assessments.

Formative assessment provides information that is used in order to plan the next stage in learning. It is interwoven with learning and helps teachers and students to find out what the students already know and can do. Formative assessment and teaching are directly linked and function purposefully together. Formative assessment aims to promote learning by giving regular and frequent feedback. This helps learners to improve knowledge and understanding, to foster enthusiasm for learning, to engage in thoughtful reflection, to develop the capacity for self-assessment, and to recognize the criteria for success. There is evidenced that increased use of formative assessment particularly helps those students who are low achievers to make significant improvements in their understanding.

Summative assessment aims to give teachers and students a clear insight into students' understanding. Summative assessment is the culmination of the teaching and learning process

and gives the students opportunities to demonstrate what has been learned. It can assess several elements simultaneously: it informs and improves student learning and the teaching process; it measures understanding of the central idea, and prompts students towards action.

Assessment strategies and tools form the basis of a comprehensive approach to assessment. At York Academy, teachers use a variety of strategies to gather and record information about student learning using a variety of tools which are the instruments used to collect data. Our assessment strategies include:

- Observations: All students are observed often and regularly with the teacher taking a focus varying from whole class observation to observing one student.
- Performance Assessments: Performance assessments are assessments of goal-directed tasks with established criteria. They provide authentic and significant challenges and problems. In these tasks there are numerous approaches to the problem and rarely only one correct response. They are usually multimodal and require the use of many skills. Audio, video, and narrative records are often useful for this kind of assessment.
- Process-focused Assessments: Students are observed regularly, and the observations are recorded by noting typical as well as non-typical behaviors, collecting multiple observations to enhance reliability, and synthesizing evidence from different contexts to increase validity. Checklists, inventories and narrative descriptions (such as learning logs) are common methods of collecting observations.
- Selected Responses: These are one-dimensional exercises such as texts and quizzes.
- Open-ended Tasks: These assessments are situations in which students are presented with a stimulus and asked to communicate an original response. The answer might be `a

brief written answer, a drawing or a solution. The work, with the assessment criteria attached, is included in a portfolio.

The assessment strategies are being put into practice using as tools an array of rubrics, exemplars, checklists, inventories, anecdotal records, and continua. In addition, York Academy uses two recognized curricular benchmarking tools – the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Systems for determining reading skills, and NWEA’s Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments in Math and Literacy.

The International Baccalaureate Charter School model recognizes the importance of assessing the process of inquiry (see Instructional Practices below re: IB’s focus on this approach to instruction) as well as the product(s) of inquiry, and aims to integrate both. The teacher is expected to record the details of inquiries initiated by students in order to look for an increase in the substance and depth of the inquiry. The teacher needs to consider:

- if the nature of students’ inquiry develops over time, whether they are asking questions of more depth that are likely to enhance their learning substantially;
- if students are becoming aware that real problems require solutions based on the integration of knowledge that spans and connects many areas;
- if students are demonstrating mastery of skills;
- if students are accumulating a comprehensive knowledge base and can apply their understanding to further their inquiries successfully;
- if students are demonstrating both independence and an ability to work collaboratively.

Reporting on assessment includes communicating what students know, understand and can do. It describes the progress of the students’ learning, identifies areas for growth, and

contributes to the efficacy of the program. Assessment without feedback is merely judgment. In all approaches to assessment at York Academy, performance is reported to students and families in forms supporting development of student capacity for self-management of learning.

### **Instructional Practices**

In order to deliver the curriculum characterized above, the York Academy Regional Charter School program provides instruction focused through structured, purposeful inquiry that engages students actively in their own learning. Students are guided to investigate significant issues by formulating their own questions, designing their own inquiries, assessing the various means available to support their inquiries, and proceeding with research, experimentation, observation, and analysis that helps them in finding their own responses to the issues. The starting point is students' current understanding, and the goal is active construction of meaning by building connections between that understanding and new information and experience, derived from the inquiry into new content.

Based upon the International Baccalaureate Charter School model, inquiry, as the leading pedagogical approach, allows students to be actively involved in their own learning and to take responsibility for that learning. Inquiry allows each student's understanding of the world to develop in a manner and at a rate that is unique to that student. Inquiry is the process initiated by the students or the teacher that moves the students from their current level of understanding to a new and deeper level of understanding. This can mean exploring, wondering and questioning, experimenting and playing with possibilities, making connections between previous learning and current learning, making predictions and acting purposefully to see what happens, collecting data and reporting findings, clarifying existing ideas and reappraising perceptions of events,

deepening understanding through the application of a concept, making and testing theories, researching and seeking information, taking and defending a position, and solving problems in a variety of ways.

An explicit expectation of the International Baccalaureate Charter School model program is that successful inquiry will lead to responsible action initiated by the students as a result of the learning process. This action may extend the students' learning, or it may have a wider social impact. Teachers provide students with learning experiences that are engaging, relevant, challenging and significant, using stimulating and provocative learning environments in which:

- adult facilitators empower students to value their learning and to take responsibility for it;
- students are seen as competent and are listened to;
- students are encouraged to be curious, be inquisitive, ask questions, explore and interact with the environment physically, socially and intellectually;
- explicit learning outcomes and the learning process are made transparent to the students;
- students are supported in their struggle for mastery and control on their journey to become independent, autonomous learners;
- the learning experiences are differentiated to accommodate the range of abilities and learning styles in the group;
- collaboration on the part of all the teachers is high, and there is a commitment to the transdisciplinary model at the core of this program of international education.

In the context of the inquiry-based program, teaching methods include, as appropriate, a range and balance of teaching strategies, grouping and regrouping of students for a variety of

learning situations, viewing students as thinkers with emerging theories of the world, pursuing open-ended inquiry and real-life investigations, maintaining constant awareness of the needs of additional-language learners, and addressing the needs of students with different levels and types of ability.

In support of accessing curriculum and inquiry-based instruction, York Academy has adopted a one-to-one computing program enhancing personalization of instruction and learning. The initiative allows flexible, integrated use of online text, video, problems and puzzles, and formative assessment. It frees teacher-time for individual student coaching and support and enables collaborative research and group projects in and out of the classroom.

### **Student Recruitment, Selection and Enrollment**

Parental Involvement and Recruitment: The York Academy Regional Charter School benefits from the conscious choice that parents make to enroll their child in this special public school. Educational research clearly indicates the favorable impact of parental concern for and involvement in a child's education.

Parental involvement begins with the process of recruitment and choice for school enrollment. It is vital that York Academy provides and is perceived to provide an equitable opportunity to all interested families and students for enrollment into the school family. School Board and staff members have created marketing information brochures, held public forums about the school, conducted outreach activities to and through community-based organizations, pre-schools, churches and other religious organizations, youth organizations, and related local audiences. In addition to printed advertisements, the school has distributed and posted flyers, gone door-to-door, provided information requested through word-of-mouth referrals, and conducted telephone

solicitations in the days of the school's initial information and recruitment phase. The school has continued related parent/community outreach activities since its inception and operates currently with a student waiting list for enrollment. (York Academy has maintained a waiting list for admission since its third year of operation, with 67 students on the list that year. The list has grown in number each year. In 2017-18, the waiting list is 241 students).

Admission Procedures: Annual admission is conducted with an open enrollment plan consistent with state law and Board policy on admission of students. Any child who is qualified under the Laws of Pennsylvania for admission to a public school is qualified for admission to the York Academy Regional Charter School. Applications are solicited on an annual basis. Subject to space availability, applicants are enrolled in accord with the following priority ordering:

1. Students who reside in one of the Central York, York City or York Suburban School Districts and who have siblings already enrolled in the school;
2. All other students who reside in one of the Central York, York City or York Suburban School Districts;
3. Students who do not reside in one of the three districts, but are siblings of students who are enrolled in York Academy;
4. All other students who do not reside in the three districts.

Once a student is enrolled, the student remains enrolled until he or she graduates from the school, withdraws from the school, moves to another state, or is expelled. Removing a student when his or her parents move from the school district would be equivalent to expelling the student. There is no basis for expelling a student based on the parents moving from the district. (If the student/parents move from Pennsylvania, the student is not eligible to attend a

charter school in Pennsylvania.) A student who moves to another district no longer provides in-district sibling priority to any of his or her siblings. However, the siblings still have out-of-district sibling priority.

Lottery Procedures: If the number of applicants exceeds the seats available, an admissions lottery is conducted to fill open spaces. In addition, spaces in existing grades are filled by lottery in subsequent years. The lottery may be conducted by using specialized computer software or publicly at a scheduled event. All students who apply have equal chance for admission. A drawing is held with each applicant child's name entered. The lottery drawing rotates through the grade levels, beginning with the lowest grade. The first student is selected from the school's lowest grade; the next student is selected from the next lowest grade; and so on, through every grade level. The process is then repeated until all spaces have been filled. The waiting list is developed in accordance with the above procedures.

### **Discipline, Positive School Climate, & Student Support**

York Academy employs a full array of programs, services, and strategies to foster and maintain a safe and supportive learning environment. The school is in compliance with all aspects of Regulations of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education pertaining to "Students and Students Services" (Chapter 12 of the regulations). In addition to the two special education teachers and one English Language Learners teacher noted above, the school employs a full-time counselor, reading specialist, and certified speech teacher and contracts for part-time services of a school psychologist and a special education instructional advisor from the regional educational services agency (Lincoln Intermediate Unit #12).

York Academy provides academic counseling, integrates guidance curriculum and health and



wellness curriculum into instruction, employs bullying prevention strategies, conducts health screenings and wellness appraisals, and monitors attendance. The school operates a student assistance program, a schoolwide positive behavior program (see below), peer helper and conflict resolution strategies.

Parents and staff have expressed clearly that one of the most important facets of York Academy's performance is in the area of discipline and protection of learning time. There has been wide support within the school community for the development and implementation of an effective and consistently administered approach to discipline and fostering of a positive learning environment. In order to foster a positive learning environment and to increase the amount of classroom time focused directly on learning, York Academy has revised Board policies, adopted a Code of Conduct, and, in 2015-16, initiated a schoolwide positive behavior intervention and support program that will continue to grow and strengthen over a multi-year period. PBIS focuses on system-wide, consistent teaching and reinforcing of positive behaviors associated with successful learning. Alignment of behavioral support and disciplinary practices in and out of classrooms is building common expectations among staff and students. York Academy provides ongoing professional development and implementation support led by specialists from the PA Department of Education regional support system. Implementation continues to be a focus of ongoing administrative and staff collaboration.

Expectations for student behavior and discipline are clearly detailed in the school's "Student/Parent Code of Conduct" that is provided to each student and family. The Code of Conduct, written in accord with State Board Chapter 12 regulations, Section 12.3(c) regarding the adoption of a code of student conduct that includes policies governing student discipline and a listing of student rights and responsibilities, outlines expectations and consequences that may

be imposed for a breach of the code. It includes, too, a clear description of the due process rights and procedures afforded to students whenever exclusion from school is to be involved. A set of policies of the school's Board of Trustees, based on Pennsylvania School Board Association models, support implementation of the school's Code of Conduct.

### **Parent and Community Involvement**

Parent Involvement/Engagement: Beyond the recruitment/admissions phase of school operation (see above), the Board of Trustees has recognized the vital role parents/guardians and family play in the education, welfare and values of their children and believes that the education of students is a joint responsibility that is shared with parents/guardians. To ensure that the best interests of each student are served in the educational process, the school pursues a strong program of communication and encourages parental involvement. The Board has adopted policies mandating activities to support positive school-parent relations and active promotion of parent involvement. Written policy provides parents information about the school's academic standards, instructional materials and assessment strategies. In addition, Board policies provide written procedures for bringing public complaints and suggestions to the attention of the Board.

The school provides opportunities for parents to be actively involved in their child's education and in their school. Parents must know they are welcome partners in their child's education and volunteerism is encouraged at every level of school operations. York Academy incorporates into its parent outreach expectations a variety of voluntary service options designed to engage parents directly in some aspects of their child's education at the school, at least once per month. Parents are encouraged to volunteer six hours per academic school year in various ways such as volunteering in their student's classroom, doing projects at home for the

teacher, serving on the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) or on a PTO committee, volunteering at the school to help out during lunch periods or in the office, attending school functions and attending student-led conferences.

Parents are informed of students' progress using: student report cards (at least 4 times per year), parent conferences (at least 3 times per year), and authentic assessments using portfolios (as appropriate). Student-led parent/teacher conferences are held twice per year, coinciding with the distribution of report cards, for the purpose of reviewing their child's/student's progress. Approximately 90% of parents have attended those conferences. The remaining parents have completed individually-scheduled parent-teacher conferences at times more accommodating to their schedules and family circumstances. In addition, teachers use technology to communicate with parents. Through its website, the school provides parent access to materials prepared by the national Parent-Teacher Association. The materials characterize what the student will be expected to know and be able to do by the end of the grade and how parents can help their children master the standards for the grade level.

York Academy has structured formal participation of parent and community representatives in its governance system in a variety of ways: direct representation on the Board of Trustees; representation on the Parent Advisory Committee monitoring school operations and performance from parents' perspectives (and through it, representation in the development of the school's Comprehensive Plan); through the Parent/Teacher Organization; through provisions for public comment at each regular meeting of the Board of Trustees; participation in development of the school's Title 1 plan; and in the process of school review and improvement through such tools as the school report card, survey information, and solicitation of parent feedback through written and verbal communication.

As an extension of family involvement, under direction of Board policy, York Academy invites students to participate in activities appropriate to their maturity and competency that contribute to administrative decision-making in such areas as Student Code of Conduct, Strategic Plan, Curriculum Planning, Systems of Assessment, and Safety Program.

Community Involvement: Since the school's founding, the process of engaging and retaining supporters of the school has been ongoing and broad based. York Academy has established partnerships with the surrounding communities, school districts, social service agencies, community organizations and local businesses linking their services, insights and commitment to providing a world class education for all students. Program components stress community service items that will require outreach into the community to provide the varied opportunities for engaging in trans-disciplinary learning involving a diverse population. The school faculty, staff and Board are open to ongoing input and seek out the advice and expertise of the community. York Academy Regional seeks to be a welcoming and engaging center for lifelong learning, dedicated to home, school and community service outreach.

The Board of Trustees itself is a symbol of ongoing community support for York Academy Regional Charter School. Its membership consists of a multi-stakeholder representation of the York area community (see Board Bio's in Appendix B). It acts transparently as a public institution and has incorporated as a non-profit and tax-exempt corporation. In addition, the Board may appoint committees to include non-Trustee community representatives.

Community support is demonstrated further by start-up contributions provided by the York County Community Foundation and the local Women's Giving Circle. Both continue to support the school through grants and contributions. YorkArts, a local art gallery, provides art instruction

through a grant from the York County Community Foundation. Several local firms have contributed funds under PA's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Program. Numerous local contributors donated a total of \$360,000 to a Community Campaign to build a Public Arts Playground for students. The public library system has provided in-school library support and related school programming (see Martin Library/York County Library System's letter of support).

### **Transportation**

Under state law, Pennsylvania students who attend a charter school located in their school district of residence or a regional charter school of which the school district is a part are provided free transportation to the charter school by their school district of residence. The districts need not provide transportation to those residing within specified distances of the charter school unless they provide transportation for their own students within the same circumstances (different for elementary and secondary students). The three participating school districts provide transportation to York Academy's students consistent with their own transportation services (many of our students from York City walk or are transported by their parents, as the district provides limited transportation serving a small geographic portion of its residents).

### **Design Guides Expansion Project Objectives**

The proposed Charter School Expansion project will follow the design framework outlined above, describing the design of our present K-8 program. As the new Upper School opens and grows by one grade annually, and as we expand our Lower School student capacity by adding a new Kindergarten class and allowing annual, grade-by-grade expansion to follow the expanded, rising 2018-19 Kindergarten cohort, we will both complete the establishment of the K-12, high-quality educational option envisioned at the inception of York Academy, and we will begin the

steady growth of our overall student capacity in a planful, well-managed fashion. The Objectives for this expansion project are laid out below in the “Quality of the Management Plan” section.

**(iii) Quality of Project Personnel**

Key personnel overseeing the proposed project and expansion of York Academy Regional Charter School include: Dr. Dennis Baughman, Chief Executive Officer; Dr. Michael Lowe, current Supervisor of Instructional Development and designated Head of the new Upper School; David Goodwin, current Dean of Students and designated Head of the Lower School; and Monik Johnson, Business Manager. As the proposed project is wholly integrated within the operations of York Academy, each will play a leadership role within project implementation within their respective roles. No grant funds will be used to support their time and effort. Their resumes are included in Appendix B. In brief:

- Dr. Dennis Baughman, Chief Executive Officer: Dr. Baughman is a founding member of the Board of Trustees of York Academy Regional Charter School. Dr. Baughman began his teaching career in 1972 with the School District of the City of York (from which he graduated in 1968). Within that district, he served later as Principal and as Assistant Superintendent, overseeing operation of seven elementary schools, managing special education for the entire district, and managing professional development throughout the district. He served as Superintendent of Northeastern School District in York County for 14 years before retiring in 2007. He continued his leadership in educational services as an Assistant Professor and Masters program coordinator at Penn State – York, and as an educational leadership consultant with the PA Department of Education. When York Academy was created, Dr. Baughman was named President of the Board of Trustees, and

served in that capacity until 2015. Following the departure of the previous head of the school, The Board of Trustees asked Dr. Baughman to return to direct leadership, naming him Chief Executive Officer. He has provided leadership and management in that role since, including management of the planning and acquisition of a new Upper School facility to allow expansion into upper grades through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. He will manage this project directly, assisted by the newly designated Heads of the two buildings.

- Dr. Michael Lowe, Head, Upper School: Dr. Lowe serves currently as the Supervisor of Instructional Development for York Academy, providing professional development, leading data analysis and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support teams, overseeing New Teacher Induction, Comprehensive Planning, IB orientation, and linking students with local businesses in support of the school's career awareness programming. He served previously as an Elementary Principal in the School District of the City of York, as Supervisor of Elementary Education in York County's Red Lion Area School District, and as Assistant Superintendent of the Cheltenham Township School District, before returning to York and York Academy. He has been designated by the Board of Trustees to become Head of the new Upper School upon its opening in Summer, 2018.
- David Goodwin, Head, Lower School: David Goodwin serves currently as Dean of Students for York Academy. In this role, he has observed and evaluated staff, led professional development and professional staff meetings, provided data and technology support to instructional staff, created academic schedules, managed special events, implemented discipline policy, and related duties. He served previously as a York Academy classroom teacher, as well as a teacher in the School District of the City of

York. Mr. Goodwin has been designated by the Board of Trustees to become Head of the Lower School upon opening of the new Upper School in Summer, 2018.

- Monik Johnson, Business Manager: Monik Johnson has served as Business Manager of York Academy since 2011, overseeing the schools operations in Finance, Human Resources, Administration, and Information Technology. She manages and maintains fiduciary oversight of daily operations, checking, line of credits, and restricted fund accounts, including monthly reconciliations. She is responsible for the annual audit process. She is Board-authorized to submit applications for federal, state, and local grants on behalf of the school. Under Ms. Johnson's management, York Academy has operated with financial 'good health' and clean audits. Management of the fiscal administration of the grant will be incorporated into her responsibilities.

As a small charter school with a small administrative staff, the Board of Trustees of the school, established in accord with PA state charter school law, plays a key role in this project and in all elements of school development. We characterize below the training, experience, and leadership that the members of the Board of Trustees bring to the project.

The Board of Trustees plays a crucial role in maintaining the school's strategic focus during its growth. Together, the members of the Board of Trustees bring strong training and experience in educational leadership (administration and curriculum/instruction), nonprofit management, Board governance and Board-Administration relations, and fiscal management (see Board Bio's in Appendix B). The Board of Trustees brings together a rich combination of educational "insider-" and "outsider-" knowledge and experience, providing both challenging outside-the-box insights and ideas and pragmatic, effective educational implementation strategies. Through York Academy's seven years of operation, the Board of Trustees has demonstrated its capacity



to support the school's successful growth.

The working partnership of key project staff and the Board have demonstrated the following capacities for operation and development of the charter school in their combined training and experience:

- Launching and growing a high-quality charter school: Several members of the Board of Trustees have served since the launching of York Academy. They have built community support, continue to have a waiting list for enrollment, and have guided the school through its ongoing “change” process – the addition of a grade each school year.
- Developing an innovative school design: During creation and initial launch of York Academy (per above), several members of the Board played critical leadership roles in conducting research and site visits exploring alternative school designs during the earliest development of the school model and in adoption of the IB model framework after research and site visits. The Board and CEO have worked to shape a school culture that supports students in their pursuit of high achievement. The school's continuing affiliation with IBO also provides significant support in instituting an innovative school design.
- Relevant non-profit organization management and leadership: In addition to the creation of York Academy Regional Charter School and seven years of successful operation, Business Manager Monik Johnson brings 12 years of prior experience in management of a local non-profit health education center, Board member Robert Lambert has been employed by the York County Library System for twenty-five years and is now its President. Dr. Dennis Baughman, CEO, has managed schools and school districts for 30 of his 35 years of previous public school service, including serving as Superintendent of the Northeastern School District for the final 14 years of that career. Dr. Nancy Ahalt,

Board President, served for 20 years as a public school administrator at the building and district levels, including 10 years as Assistant Superintendent of the Spring Grove Area School District. Several Board members have significant experience serving in leadership positions on Boards of Directors of other non-profits and as elected officials in local government. This management and leadership experience continues to serve York Academy as it solidifies its successful start-up.

- Sound board governance: The Board and staff bring extensive participation and leadership experience to bear from their many involvements on community and state-level Boards in nonprofit and quasi-governmental settings.
- Effective curriculum development: In addition to the key personnel, two of whom, in particular, have played leadership roles in curriculum development and standards-alignment, two Board members bring particularly strong training and experience in this area. Dr. Nancy Ahalt, Board President, has served many years in public school roles as leader of the curriculum development process, especially as Assistant Superintendent in a York County school district. She has served in that role throughout the national (and state) transition into a standards-based educational system. In addition, Board member Ellen Johnson brings 33 years of experience training leaders and practitioners in early childhood education settings and guiding their curriculum improvement activities. These Board members have contributed directly to the curriculum development activities at York Academy.
- Strong fiscal management: Key staff and Board members have significant training and experience in stewardship of public funds and strong fiscal management. In addition to the years of experience as Business Manager and Operations Management provided by

Monik Johnson and the school management experience of the other Key Project Personnel, members of the Board of Trustees bring a wealth of experience in funding management in both public and private organizational settings – public school districts, city and township government, and private sector businesses.

Instructional Staff/ Encouraging Employment Applications From Members of

Traditionally-Underrepresented Groups: Key to the success of any charter school project is the quality of the instructional staff and instructional support staff. All members of the York Academy instructional staff and its professional instructional support staff are highly-qualified PA-certified educators, recruited from the region and from across the state and nation. New teachers are provided Teacher Mentors (through Central York School District, a participating, chartering public school district), assuring that staff will be supported in understanding the PA-standards-based-education and the PA school accountability system context within which York Academy operates. All staff are provided training about teaching in an IB context (provided by the International Baccalaureate Organization) and in the implementation of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) approach to discipline and building school climate. Teachers participate in a traditional “observation/ evaluation” process prior to achieving tenure, and, post-tenure, enter a four-year teacher development and evaluation cycle entailing one year of traditional observation-based evaluation followed by three years of a “growth” phase, planned in collaboration between teacher and administrator. An “assistance” phase is available to more directly guide teacher growth and evaluation in individual cases of need.

York Academy is committed to modeling diversity and positive inter-ethnic relations among its staff. York Academy experiences the same challenges in attracting staff from traditionally under-represented groups as do other educational organizations in the region. Competing with

major national urban centers for candidates for professional positions, our application pool (and, thus, our staff) does not closely reflect the racial/ethnic mix of the students we serve. York Academy continues to address this issue. Recruitment of staff from under-represented groups is conducted under the guidance of policies adopted by the Board of Trustees. Posting notices regarding available positions are sent to many colleges and universities (e.g., Penn State, Columbia, Shippensburg, Millersville, York College of Pennsylvania, and including institutions of higher education that are among the nation's traditionally-black colleges – Howard, Lincoln). In addition, postings have been sent to the National Charter School organization seeking to broaden and diversify our pool of applicants. The school will continue to seek ways to be more effective in hiring a workforce reflective of the student population.

**(iv) Quality of the Management Plan**

**York Academy Expansion Goals:** Expansion of York Academy requires adding new student enrollment capacity during the project period at both the lowest grades of our existing program and at the traditional high school level. The latter requires the opening of a second facility and incurring of operational costs that will not be covered by fee-based-recovery until the new building is at full student complement. We seek federal support to enable us to meet the following expansion project objectives (we also propose performance measures and targets and elaborate our management plan for accomplishing each objective). The goals and tables below are adapted from the more highly elaborated Project Logic Model included in Appendix G.

1. **Expand Lower School PYP Student Enrollment:** (Project Target: Increase enrollment by 125 students) Expand Primary Years Programme student enrollment capacity by adding a fourth classroom (expanding by 25 students) to the existing three-classrooms (75 students) per grade structure, beginning with Kindergarten 2018-19, and expanding each grade as that

cohort rises one grade annually. In each of the project years, following the monthly calendar outlined below, **the CEO, Lower School Head, and Business Manager will:**

<b>Responsibilities</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
Purchase second semester instructional materials and supplies	2018-19 (Year One) only.  (Initial materials in place as the school year starts, prior to the grant period).	Orders placed; materials received prior to start-up of new school year in August/September
Recruit and hire new instructional staff (1 certified teacher/ 1 instruct'l assistant) for the "4 <sup>th</sup> Classroom" expansion for the upcoming	Winter-Spring (recruit)  Spring-Summer (hire)	Advertising placed; applications received; hiring completed.
Register and monitor new staff participation in initial IB instructional training	Summer prior to new grade start-up	Registration completed; training completed.
Order next grade/ rising "4 <sup>th</sup> classroom cohort " furniture, textbooks and supplies and manage their receipt	May – August	Delivery of textbooks and supplies, furniture; set up classrooms
Recruit and enroll new students to bring school to planned capacity following	Spring-Summer	Recruitment activities completed/documented; applications received; student

Admissions procedure outlined in this application		selected (including use of lottery, if needed); admissions offered; enrollment completed in time for new school year.
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2. **Expand York Academy Structure to Incorporate Grades 9-12:** (Target: Provide K-12 programs by 2021-22; increase enrollment by 225 during project period) Expand grade levels and enrollment capacity at the Upper School level, by adding one grade (75 students) each year, beginning with 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2018-19 (pre-project), expanding the structure and enrollment capacity until the school provides a complete K-12 educational offering.

On an annual basis until the school offers a complete K-12 program, **the CEO, Upper School Head, and Business Manager will:**

Responsibilities	Timeline	Milestones
Order second semester 9th classroom furniture, textbooks and supplies and manage their receipt	October-December 2018	Purchase orders placed; delivery of textbooks, supplies, furniture, equipment; set up classrooms in collaboration with instructors.
Recruit and hire new instructional staff (3 certified	Winter-Spring (recruit) Spring-Summer (hire)	Advertising placed; applications received; hiring

teachers/ 3 instruct'l assistants) for grade-level addition in coming year		completed.
Register and monitor new staff participation in initial IB instructional training	Summer	Registration completed; training completed.
Recruit and enroll new students to bring school to planned capacity following Admissions procedure outlined in this application	Spring-Summer	Recruitment activities completed/documented; applications received; student selected (including use of lottery, if needed); admissions offered; enrollment completed in time for new school year.

3. **Attain and maintain International Baccalaureate Accreditation at All Program Levels:**

(Target: Attain IB authorization or re-accreditation of Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), and Diploma Programme (DP)). **The CEO, School Heads, and Business Manager will:**

Responsibilities	Timeline	Milestones
Attain MYP authorization from IB	2018-19	Application pending as grant period begins; responses to

		IB info requests, recommendations; authorization received; communicated.
Retain PYP authorization through IB re- authorization process	2019-20 (self-analysis; application; IB visitation)  2020-21 (final authorization)	Staff self-analysis completed, application submitted; visitation hosted; responses to IB info requests, recommendations; authorization received; results communicated.
Attain DP authorization	2018-19: Upon receipt of MYP, begin IB process – plan, submit application; visitation. By 2021-22: DP authorization in place for first graduation cohort.	DP Plan completed; application submitted; visitation hosted; responses to IB info requests, recommendations; authorization received; communicated.

4. **Improve Student Achievement To Meet State Performance Standards:** (Target: On annual PA state assessments, increase school combined percentage of students assessed as Advanced or Proficient to ELA-85+%, Math-60%, Science-85+%; Consistently achieve or exceed state target on school's PA School Performance Profile, 70.0+ ).



This objective, central to the purpose and vision of the whole school, necessarily reflects the working of the entire school system and processes. Assessment of achievement will be conducted by instructional staff in accord with state assessment regulations with achievement reporting provided by the state Department of Education. In addition, students will complete benchmark Fountas and Pinnell and MAP formative assessments (See “Assessment” in the “Quality of Project Design” section above). Staff will use formative assessment results to adjust instruction, to modify instructional groups, and to target interventions to support student success. York Academy provides tutoring programs during the school year and a summer camp that reinforces student learning. On an annual basis, following the schedule outlined below, **the CEO and School Heads will** manage the processes outlined.

<b>Responsibilities</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
Administer and score formative assessments; share data with faculty (whole faculty, grade-levels, individual); share summary data with Board; monitor instructional adjustments	January (Admin/score); February (data reports to faculty and Board); February and continuing (instructional adjustments, targeted student interventions)	Data summary documents created and shared with faculty and Board; instructional goals refined with appropriate faculty; administrative walk-through's and teacher conferencing about emerging student results based on classroom assessments.
Coordinate tutoring programs targeting individual student	March	Students targeted, tutoring conducted, participation and

needs in PSSA priority areas		progress documented
Administer state PSSA assessments (receive results; report to Board/staff; adjust program appropriately)	<p>April (administer)</p> <p>July (analyze results)</p> <p>August (reports to Board and staff; instructional program adjustment planning)</p>	Tests administered and returned; data received and analyzed; reports created and delivered; instructional adjustments planned and documented.
Manage summer school program	<p>Spring (preparation)</p> <p>July (program delivery)</p> <p>August (report to Board)</p>	Program planned, faculty committed, students enrolled, supplies acquired, program delivered, participation and results reported to Board
Administer “end-of-year” assessments as the school year begins (prior year benchmarks)	<p>August (Admin/score);</p> <p>September (data reports to faculty);</p> <p>September and continuing (instructional adjustments, targeted student interventions)</p> <p>[October (data reports to Board) – “end of project year” performance reports]</p>	<p>Data summary documents created and shared with faculty and Board;</p> <p>instructional goals refined with appropriate faculty;</p> <p>administrative walk-through’s and teacher conferencing about emerging student results based on classroom assessments.</p>

**Charter Quality Controls:** York Academy was approved for Charter Renewal in May, 2016, by each of the school boards of the three chartering school districts, for a renewal period from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2016 (when the school will be due and eligible for another five-year renewal period). The Charter Renewal document states legal agreement between the chartering districts and the charter school regarding the nature and performance of the charter school during the term of the Charter Renewal. It incorporates the Charter Renewal application submitted by York Academy, including characterizations of the design of the school programs and goals for continuing improvement of student and school performance. The Charter Renewal specifies that Academic Performance, a key element of accountability and future charter renewal, is to be based upon state assessment systems and measures. It further specifies operational requirements regarding application procedures designed to insure fair and equitable eligibility for application and enrollment (limiting access to performance information, placement testing, and related student information until after admission). As discussed in our response to Competitive Preference Priority #3: Single School Operator above, York Academy is recognized legally by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and its public school districts as a separate school granted administrative and fiscal authority and programmatic flexibility as specified in Pennsylvania Charter School law. That law and the approved Charter Renewal set forth the administrative roles and contractual agreements between these school organizations. As York Academy is a locally-managed nonprofit organization, there is no Charter Management Organization with any role or responsibility to or for the school.

**Financial Management:** York Academy Regional Charter School operates with a well-developed set of financial controls and procedures for management of financial resources that are implemented within the parameters of financial policies adopted by the Board of Trustees and a

Board-adopted annual budget. The Board receives updates regarding the school's finances, grant funds, revenues, expenditures and related topics at each Regular Meeting of the Board. York Academy manages financial accounting using PA's Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) software including modules for Fund Accounting, Personnel, and Payroll. CSIU's software is aligned with PDE state reporting requirements and Pennsylvania State Chart of Accounts for Pennsylvania Public Schools and generates Annual Financial Reports using Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for budgeting, accounting and reporting.

**(v) Quality of the Eligible Applicant**

Since its opening in 2011, York Academy Regional Charter School has: established a K-2 school; expanded it annually by one grade to its current K-8 structure; hired and trained professional staff and maintained an educational program aligned with high-quality international standards; been authorized by International Baccalaureate as an IB World School offering a Primary Years Programme (PYP); established and maintained strong parent and community relations. We have retained enrollment of our students at rates higher than 95% for several years in a row, with the principal reason given for leaving as family mobility (York City experiences a far higher level of family mobility across its schools and in-and-out of the district, with high impact on continuity for students). We have consistently operated with a waiting list for admission, growing each year (numbering 241 in the current school year). York Academy has experienced student attendance rates of higher than 95% since its inception..

A principal purpose in establishing York Academy was to provide better educational options to the students of York City, combatting the impact of concentrated poverty in the city. Using 2017 state reports on PSSA achievement (see Section I above, as well), we can state that York Academy is finding success is doing so (we acknowledge our need for continuing improvement).

York Academy’s students from its chartering urban district (York City) have consistently surpassed performance of their district-of-residence peers on the PSSA state assessments, while our students from two suburban chartering districts have essentially paralleled performance of their district-of-residence peers. In recent PSSA statewide assessment of English Language Arts and Math achievement, York Academy students outperformed their cohorts from their chartering districts in nearly every comparison of English Language Arts and Math:

<b>Student Cohort</b>	<b>York Academy Advanced/Proficient</b>	<b>Chartering District Advanced/Proficient</b>
<b>ELA – Central York</b>	88%	67%
<b>Math – Central York</b>	50%	52%
<b>ELA – York Suburban</b>	81%	79%
<b>Math – York Suburban</b>	81%	72%
<b>ELA – York City</b>	53%	20%
<b>Math – York City</b>	35%	9%

On PA’s aggregate school performance scoring measure, York Academy has consistently scored near the state-established target, 70.0, scoring from 67 – 76 in recent years. In 2017, York Academy’s 71.0 surpassed the scores earned by any of the schools in two of our chartering districts, falling short of only of York Suburban schools. At the close of its initial five-year charter period, York Academy’s charter was renewed by all three chartering school boards, including the stated plan to continue its steady expansion towards a K-12 educational program.

PA has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education to substitute the subgroup “historically under-performing” students (in lieu of reporting score breakouts by specific, but overlapping sub-group categories). Pennsylvania defines this subgroup: The historically

underperforming student group is a non-duplicated count of students with disabilities with an individualized education plan (IEP), students who are English Language Learners (ELL), and Economically Disadvantaged (ED) students. Within the grade span assessed in 2017 at York Academy by statewide examination, grades 3-7, the category of “all” assessed York Academy students essentially matched statewide performance in English Language Arts, surpassed statewide “all students” performance in Science, and fell short of statewide performance in Math. However, York Academy students in the “historically underperforming” student group surpassed the statewide “historically underperforming” students results in all three assessed subject areas. As we revise our Math curriculum seeking to improve its alignment with state academic standards and grade-level assessments, we take heart in the relative success shown by the performance of students in the “historically underperforming” group. (We have replaced our previous Math curriculum beginning this school year for better standards/assessment alignment).

York Academy has operated with no statutory or regulatory noncompliance (we have shared above, by contrast, a commendation from the state Bureau of Special Education on the ways in which our overall program, IB-focused in a “positive behavioral intervention and support” climate and culture, has benefitted all students, including those with disabilities). Our financial management has been strong, providing high-quality services on revenues per student significantly less than the chartering districts and state average: York Academy - \$11,831; York City - \$23,229; Central York - \$14,168; York Suburban - \$17,184; PA Average - \$13,538. Our financial audits are consistently clean (see the most recent Financial Statement in Appendix F).

While we are not complacent with our performance, we look forward to strong and steady growth, providing an educational option of the highest-quality to our regional community.

**(vi) Continuation Plan**

York Academy Regional Charter School is well-prepared and positioned to continue to operate in a manner consistent with the program and system design outlined in this application. Our planful and steady growth, continuing development of professional staff and a collaborative, learning-focused organizational culture, our commitment to continued improvement of our practices and procedures in pursuit of consistently high academic performance by each of our students, and waiting list for entry all are indications that our future is strong.

We have included in Appendix F a current-year Operational Budget and a 10-Year Budget Summary, the latter showing projected revenues and expenditures as we grow to K-12 and expand the number of students we serve. The budget projection shows how Federal grant funding will help to address the impact on school finances of opening a new school. There will be several years (during the potential five-year grant period) in which York Academy will experience expenditures and debt-service costs beyond annual revenue – a fiscal squeeze in the short term that sets the stage for strong, fiscally responsible continuing school operation and growth for years to come. We are confronted with the imperative to expand and the choice of whether to do so (a) within current revenues by cutting programming until our student complement is full at the Upper School, or (b) to continue to improve and perfect our envisioned educational program as our school grows. As we've outlined throughout this proposal, our vision, charter, and expansion goals all promise continuation beyond the federal grant period. We have earned our first charter renewal in 2016 and anticipate continuing to do so in 5-year renewal cycles into the distant future. With federal assistance, we will bridge that multi-year gap in funds needed to be fully self-sustainable. Our need and our request is for federal assistance to make the transition into a high-quality multi-site school for our students and region.