

Seven Hills Charter Public School

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEVEN HILLS CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL RECEIVES FIVE-YEAR CHARTER RENEWAL WITH PROBATIONARY CONDITIONS

Comprehensive plan in place to meet or exceed all conditions within prescribed timeframes

WORCESTER, MA, FEBRUARY 28, 2011—Seven Hills Charter Public School (SHCPS) today received a five-year charter renewal from the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). The charter renewal includes probationary conditions which the school has already begun to proactively address.

The conditions of SHCPS's charter renewal require the school to demonstrate that it is an academic success by meeting academic growth targets in English language arts and mathematics, as established by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) or by achieving Adequate Yearly Progress for all grades combined and for all statistically significant subgroups in English language arts and mathematics by 2012. In addition, SHCPS must meet the goals and objectives established in the school's Accountability Plan.

"These conditions attached to our renewal are not unexpected and we believe they are fair and appropriate," said Carlton Watson, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, SHCPS. "We recognized that improvements were needed at our school and began taking strong and affirmative action more than a year ago to address issues related to academic performance, school leadership and board oversight."

By December 2012, the school must demonstrate satisfactory progress through annual results from MCAS tests, site visits by the Charter School Office, information submitted by the school in its annual reports, and other means as necessary.

"Seven Hills is proud of the education and environment for learning that children experience at our school. The parents of our 666 students have voluntarily chosen our school as the best learning environment for their children and we are committed to fulfilling that confidence and trust each and every day," said Krista Piazza, Superintendent, SHCPS. "At the same time, we recognize that we can and must do better in some areas and have been proactively taking the steps necessary to do so. Increasing student achievement is our number one priority."

In the past year, SHCPS completed a study of best practices of high performing charter schools from around the country, conducted in-depth assessment and planning activities and began implementing a comprehensive set of initiatives that will allow the school to meet or exceed all of the conditions of its charter renewal within the prescribed timeframes.

Some of the key improvements being made at the school include:

- A revitalized Board of Trustees that is heavily invested in the mission of the school and focused on creating a culture of accountability and achievement.
- Focused curriculum and personnel changes and new staff positions that have greatly improved the quality of instruction, school culture and performance.

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Wisdom Justice Courage Compassion Hope Respect Responsibility Integrity

- Implementation of a standards-based report card to improve student progress monitoring and ensure the same content is taught by all teachers at a grade level.
- Creation of four distinct learning academies (Early learning, primary, elementary, junior) each with its own head of school
- Institution of a longer school day and a year-round school calendar beginning next fall.
- Requirement that staff members reapply for their positions to demonstrate commitment to our new school model

“We know that Seven Hills’ staff and students do amazing work every single day,” said SHCPS parent Jennifer Safford-Farquharson, M.Ed. “I am confident that the changes the board and administration have implemented will produce great results.”

Improvements are already evident in several areas. Grades 6 through 8 are seeing average or above average student growth percentiles, which means the rates of progress of students meets or exceeds the rate of progress of students across the state. The 3rd and 8th grades are consistently matching or outperforming the average rates of progress for the Worcester Public Schools. In grades 4 and 5—where SHCPS recently instituted changes in response to lagging student performance—the school has seen significant achievement gains on internal assessment measures from fall to winter.

“By continuing along this upward trajectory, we are confident that SHCPS will close the achievement gap on MCAS scores,” said Piazza. “The changes have also inspired a new level of intensity, commitment and support for accountability among teachers, students and parents which further enhances our forward momentum.”

Seven Hills Charter School is a family-oriented environment that strongly believes that the school-home partnership is an integral component for the academic success of each child.

“We have been involved in the Seven Hills Community for more than a dozen years and have had four children attend the school. All four have been provided with a wonderful education focused on maximizing their strengths while augmenting areas of academic challenge,” said SHCPS parent Jim Blodgett. “All of this learning takes place in a diverse community where a love of learning and the arts flourish together.”

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About Seven Hills Charter Public School

Seven Hills Charter Public School (SHCPS) was founded in 1996 by a group of private citizens interested in providing an alternative mode for public education in the city of Worcester.

The mission of SHCPS is to prepare a diverse cross-section of Worcester children for success as students, workers, and citizens by providing them with a high-quality education at prevailing public school costs. Seven Hills Charter School currently enrolls 666 students in grades Kindergarten through eight. <http://www.sevenhillscharter.org/>