

# **Polaris Charter School**

**~ Where True Potential Shines Bright ~**



## **Charter School Application**

Resubmitted to the New Hampshire Department of Education

By

## **Polaris Charter Foundation**

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### **(a) Mission**

The mission of Polaris Charter School is to create a joyful and exciting learning community for intellectually curious elementary-aged children. Through an engaging, inquiry-based curriculum, our students will develop the ability to communicate effectively, work collaboratively, think critically, and excel academically. Our program fosters creativity and the development of social and emotional skills, instilling a positive attitude about future studies and ensuring students are well-prepared for the challenges of an ever-changing world.

Polaris Charter School will:

- Implement a rigorous, project-oriented, interdisciplinary curriculum that ensures state standards are met and exceeded.
- Utilize flexible groupings in multi-age classrooms.
- Encourage each student's progress with personal learning plans, combining social and academic standards with individualized goals.
- Motivate students to learn at their own pace and reach their full potential with a move-on-when-ready approach that allows for accelerated learning and is based on subject mastery.

### **(b) Governance and Organizational Structure and Plan**

#### **Ability to Submit Application**

In accordance with provisions to RSA 194-B:3, V, the Polaris Charter School application to establish a charter school has been submitted by a group of 10 or more parents.

Polaris Charter School Committee has also applied to State of New Hampshire for non-profit status, and will operate as Polaris Charter Foundation, with a Board of (5) five members (Please see Appendix B).

#### **Board of Trustees**

In accordance with RSA 194-B: 5, Polaris will be governed by a seven member Board of Trustees that is responsible for oversight over the operations of the charter school. The Board's specific mission is to review all policies, hiring, and practices and insure that all reflect the mission and vision of the charter school. The Board hires the school Director and reviews all other hiring after selection is made. The Board has statutory responsibility for reporting progress and achievement of the school's stated goals.

Trustee selection will be based on personal and professional background and commitment to the school's mission, support and sustainability. Trustees will represent the diversity of stakeholders and contributors:

- Two (2) non-parents representing the N.H. business community
- Two (2) non-parents representing the N.H. education community
- Two (2) founders and/or parents (Parent Steering Committee Representatives)
- One (1) School Director (non-voting).

The Board of Trustees can establish ex-officio board members and/or advisors who will be non-voting. All Board meetings are open to the public unless personnel issues or grievances are being discussed.

### **Officers**

The initial Board of Trustees will develop the schedule of terms for board members and will establish terms and policies for electing Board officers. Initial officers shall include: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Marketing/Publicity and Fundraising/Grant Writing. Officers of the Board shall be elected by majority vote of those present at the annual organizational meeting to be held in August of each year and to serve until the next annual organizational meeting.

### **Governance**

The Board of Trustees of Polaris supports a governance philosophy whereby the board has an advisory role, focusing on community networking, fundraising and grant writing. We strive to have each Board member bring value to the school through active participation and to sustain cooperation and harmony between staff and the Board. Lastly, we recognize that the success of our school lies in part in our ability to govern with commitment and skill.

The Board of Trustees will have oversight and authority to render decisions on the following:

- Approve policies proposed by school Director, teachers, or parent steering committee
- Approve and monitor the budget and the school's fiscal practices, including the receipt of grants and donations
- Oversee the implementation of school's charter and insure its success
- Approval of annual budget
- Hire and oversee performance of school Director
- Create and implement a vision, annual goals, and strategic plan; oversee and evaluate annual progress toward meeting the vision, and revise the strategic plan accordingly
- Appoint Board advisory members and committees as needed
- Establish professional salary and compensation program

- Approve and monitor management of school liabilities, insurance, health, safety and risk related matters
- Approve all major non-emergency operational contracts/expenses over \$10,000 and all capital expenses over \$50,000, including facility and benefits program
- Receive and review quarterly financial reports and the yearly financial audit
- Establish satellite campuses if determined other campuses are needed to address student and community needs.

The Board may initiate and carry out any program or activity that is not in conflict with or inconsistent with any law and which is not in conflict with the purpose and vision for which this charter school was established. The Board may execute any powers delegated to it by law, and shall discharge any duty imposed by law upon it and may delegate to an employee of the school any of those duties. The Board however, retains ultimate responsibility over the performance of those powers or duties so delegated.

Term of trustees will be staggered, 5-year terms. First-year trustees will be appointed for two, three, or four year terms to establish initial staggered terms and governance stability. The Board may appoint a trustee to fill a vacancy if vacated but that Board member will only be allowed to serve until the original date expires. Board members may serve consecutive terms if so voted by a Board majority.

The Board of Trustees, once operating, will select and appoint future trustees, define future board terms and vote policies for board governance and filling vacancies. For purposes of conducting business, the Board will follow the New Hampshire Right to Know Law, RSA 91-A. For purposes of lawful meetings, a quorum is defined as a majority of trustees physically present or participating through video or voice conferencing systems. Records and meeting minutes will be kept in accordance with statutory guidelines.

The Board of Trustees will begin governance within four months after the charter is awarded. The Board's first task will be to create a selection process for the school Director. The school Director will be a non-voting member of the Board. Yearly, the Board of Trustees will hold an annual vision and goals session open to the entire Polaris community. This will be an opportunity for the Board and Director to receive input about the direction of the school. This will also be an opportunity for the Board to communicate with parents and community members about annual goals, budget, and direction.

## **Committees**

The Board of Trustees may authorize one or more of its members to serve on a board committee or to act as an official Board representative to other associations, school districts, or offices for any matter pertaining to the business or policy of the school. No opinion, decision, or commitment on behalf of the Board however, can be made by a Board representative or subcommittee without Board authorization.

### **Parent Steering Committee**

A Parenting Steering Committee will be created within the first few weeks of school. The committee will consist of a volunteer parent committee with two representatives on the Board of Trustees. Board representatives serve a renewable one year term and represent the Committee in all Board decisions. The Committee serves as the communication vehicle between parents, the School Director, and Board of Trustees.

The Committee will also be responsible for:

- Celebrations in the classrooms
- Working with teachers to identify classroom needs not included in the budget
- Fundraising and donation requests

### **Start-up Committee**

During the school's first year of planning, a design and development team shall work on all facets of start-up and readiness. This team will be comprised of the founders and Board of Advisors, including innovative educators. Their duties will include:

- Secure appropriate site for school
- Submit application for 501c3 status
- Develop job descriptions and hiring calendar
- Obtain health, fire, and building code approval for site
- Secure liability insurance
- Develop applications and marketing materials
- Publicize staff, administration, and faculty positions
- Select Board of Trustee members
- Purchase supplies, materials, and furniture for classroom and building

### **Board of Advisors**

The founders group will be augmented by a non-voting Board of Advisors, which represents academia, the arts, research, students, faculty, legislators, and experienced personnel from other charter schools. This committee will add experienced individuals who can advise the founders in putting the charter in place. The Board of Advisors will meet on an "as-needed basis" as the Board of Trustees establishes jurisdiction.

### **(c) Methods by Which Trustees and their Terms are Determined**

The initial trustees will be selected from the founders and Board of Advisors who have already participated in the development of this charter. The start-up committee will determine the first Board meeting and start-up members will attend to insure a smooth transition.

### **(d) General Description of Potential Location**

The start-up committee has established a relationship with New Hampshire Representative Mike Ball, of CBRE commercial real estate company, who has volunteered his time to act as a tenant representative on behalf of Polaris Charter School to secure the best lease terms possible. We anticipate a campus large enough to house up to 52 students during the first year and allow for growth to 120 students within first few years.

Once the charter is approved, the initial trustees will pursue, negotiate, and arrange facility options. The location sought is along the Concord to Nashua corridor, where driving from any location will be possible by major roadways.

### **(e) Maximum Number, Age Levels, and Other Information About Pupils Served**

During its opening year, Polaris will serve up to 52 students, who are from five to eleven years old at the time of entry. Solely for the purpose of required reporting, mandatory testing or assisting transfer students, grade level assignment will be based on the age, and not the achievement level, of each student.

Pupils will be placed in multi-age classrooms capped at (15) fifteen students per class, with the ultimate goal of twelve to thirteen students per class. New incoming students will be added each year until the school is fully enrolled. The school intends to serve up to 120 students in its primary location. As interest increases, and as determined by the Board, a satellite school or schools may be created to avail options for students in other parts of the state.

Satellite sites will accommodate approximately 30 students per site in cost-conscious locations such as unoccupied town space, office buildings, and/or space shared with another tenant.

As a state-sponsored charter school, Polaris will be an open enrollment school of choice for students throughout New Hampshire from every community and socioeconomic stratum. The school will comply with current statutory provisions that govern acceptances, whereby not more than 10% of the resident pupils in any grade shall be eligible to transfer to a charter school in any school year without the approval of the local school board. Five spaces will be reserved in the first year of operation for children of founders to acknowledge the contribution of the startup, per Ed 318.05. Siblings of enrolled students, who also demonstrate the characteristics most likely to benefit from Polaris' innovative approach, will be given preference in admission. On a space-available basis, Polaris will accept students funded in alternative ways for available slots, including tuition students from out of state.

### **Pupils to be Served**

Students who choose Polaris will:

- Seek an accelerated curriculum that is individualized to the student's strengths and weaknesses.
- Desire a differentiated program design that puts emphasis on a student's personal learning style and needs.
- Have the ability to study topics in depth.
- Wish to be in a "community" school setting emphasizing personal responsibility, respect, self-awareness, social awareness and responsible decision making skills.
- Desire a setting where differences are celebrated and accepted.

### **(f) Curriculum that Meets or Exceeds State Standards in Subject Areas Offered**

As part of the vision and mission of NH Department of Education's Innovations in Education initiative, Polaris Charter School will work in partnership with students, families, and the school community to ensure each student acquires the knowledge, skills and disposition necessary to become personally fulfilled and socially responsible.

Founders envision a school that will embrace each student's individuality and nurture their intellectual curiosity while empowering them to maximize their educational opportunities. The curriculum will support the schools' mission by:

- Creating a standards-based, non-competitive, multi-grade educational environment which serves both the social/emotional and academic needs of Polaris' students.

- Providing students with a mastery learning approach to study the core curriculum in-depth and at an accelerated pace, allowing for novelty in student outcomes and emphasizing higher level thinking skills.
- Offering a rigorous advanced curriculum designed to engage and challenge intellectually curious elementary-age children.
- Meeting or exceeding the state's core competencies and standards.

## **Special Curriculum Features**

- **Interdisciplinary Curriculum**

Polaris will utilize an innovative, technology enhanced, interdisciplinary curriculum in order to create an optimal learning environment where each student can explore their interests while learning at his/her appropriate instructional level and pace. Through the use of interdisciplinary learning, Polaris students will engage in problem-solving activities designed to promote imaginative, critical, and independent thinking skills. An emphasis on the development of verbal and non-verbal communication skills will foster a safe, nurturing environment in which students will gain self-awareness, confidence, and camaraderie. Students will benefit from educational programming that allows them to question, explore, investigate, and discover information across subject areas, thus allowing them to make organic connections between what they have learned and how it relates to the larger world.

- **Individual Learning Plans**

To maximize learning and to help guide students to reach their full potential, each student at Polaris Charter School will have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). In the fall, after a period of observation and formative assessment, teachers will meet with students and their parents or guardians to develop their ILP. We understand that each child is unique; having different learning styles, strengths and weaknesses, and interest areas. We want to use our students' strengths and interests to support their areas of need. The initial and subsequent conferences will allow us to create and monitor individual plans for growth, based on the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English/ language arts and the non-cognitive curriculum selected or developed by the school.

Our ILPs will also be used as a tool to challenge our students and to encourage them to monitor their own progress toward meeting the stated objectives . We want our students to have a true understanding of how they learn and what works best for them, so that they can advocate for themselves and maximize their educational opportunities. This is a critical skill that can be carried with them throughout their academic career and will help them become personally fulfilled and socially responsible pre-teens.

ILPs will be reviewed at least quarterly through parent/teacher/student conferences scheduled during the year. If at any time a member of the staff or a parent/guardian identifies an area of struggle or advanced need, they may request a meeting to set up further intervention (see RTI).

- **Response to Intervention (RTI)**

Polaris will use an RTI inspired framework adapted to the needs of our students. The traditional tiered system designed to support students' areas of academic challenge will be enhanced to address those who need a faster paced, more complex, and in-depth curriculum and/or to support the development of social competence. Implementing this model of a Response to Intervention will allow us to address students who are not progressing at above-grade levels commensurate with their abilities, as well as students whose social maturation requires additional support. Progress will be measured through the use of observational analysis, rubrics, formative and summative assessments, and self-evaluation to document mastery. Once mastery has been documented, students will be given opportunities to continue learning with enriched and advanced materials related to their area of strength. Students will be active participants in monitoring their progress.

- **Class Structure**

Flexible groupings will be used to help promote community and collaboration amongst our students. Polaris classrooms will provide a nurturing and supportive environment where students will learn to encourage each other and learn from one another. Instructors will have the freedom to allow students to work individually or to place them in small groups depending on their abilities, interests, and academic goals at any given time. Ideally, class size will be capped at 12-13 students in order to provide individualized attention and to ensure staff is accessible to students needing guidance with their social/emotional interactions while working in groups.

- **Instruction**

Students' unique needs will be met by using a rigorous, responsive curriculum in which students will be given the opportunity to study topics with great depth and breadth. Teachers will use individual (or small group) 'Learning Contracts' for interdisciplinary units, projects, or assignments as way to ensure student work is sufficiently integrated and academic needs are being met across subject areas. Students will be provided with numerous opportunities for project-based learning and real-world experiences. Instructors will make every effort to adjust assignments to meet the varied learning styles of individual students. They will also regularly make use of

technology in the classroom, as a way to help students research, evaluate, and share information.

### **English Language Arts**

Students will participate in engaging, interdisciplinary activities to promote strong achievement and enjoyment in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Progress toward mastery will be monitored by incorporating the Common Core State Standards in English/ Language Arts into each child's Individualized Learning Plan.

Reading is a complex process that encompasses both learning how to read and deriving meaning from text. Our emergent readers will develop phonemic awareness and apply their learned skills individually and in small and large group settings. Using phonics in concert with whole language reading instruction will provide a balanced literacy program for our emergent readers. We will also put special attention on developing comprehension strategies. We want our readers to interact with the text by making and validating predictions, making text to self, text to text, and text to world connections, and by questioning; to seek further meaning or for self-monitoring. A variety of print material will be available for instruction, including mass media, fiction, non-fiction, drama and poetry.

At Polaris students will learn about expository, narrative, and persuasive types of writing. As they are writing about topics that are of high interest to them, an emphasis will be put on grammar and other conventions of writing (spelling, punctuation, paragraph structure, etc...). We want students to feel comfortable expressing their ideas and feelings using their written language and will encourage creative writing including poetry, script writing, song writing, etc. Writing will not stop with pencil and paper; students will use the internet and other technologies to express their ideas. Blogging and emailing national or international pen pals are just some of the ways students at Polaris will express their written language. They will also have many opportunities to present their work both in and outside of the classroom.

### **Mathematics**

Students will participate in engaging, interdisciplinary activities to promote strong achievement and enjoyment in using mathematical tools to solve problems and to communicate symbolically. Progress toward mastery will be monitored by incorporating the Common Core State Standards in mathematics into each child's Individualized Learning Plan.

Mathematics will focus on mastering basic skills as well as using abstract, in-depth thinking and problem-solving. Students will learn numeracy, algebraic skills, geometry

and probability and statistics using inquiry and creative thinking skills of flexibility and fluency. They will also master mental math, and be able to communicate their reasoning orally, symbolically and in writing. Instruction will focus on the application of mathematic principles to real world, age appropriate situations.

### **Science**

Our science curriculum will include Earth/Space Science, Life Science, and Physical Science. Using inquiry and research-based learning, students will discover connections between science, the other disciplines and their daily lives. Instruction will include science process skills (observing, inferring, measuring, communication, etc.), which will allow them to think critically and be responsible, compassionate contributors to the world around them. Students will have a multitude of opportunities to experience the wonder of science by participating in hands-on, multi-sensory activities including, but not limited to experiments, field studies, and field trips. Students will receive a well-rounded, in-depth understanding of the topics they study and will also be expected to present their findings orally and in writing.

### **Social Studies**

Students at Polaris Charter School will study history, geography, and government (including civics) in an integrated, holistic approach. By studying scientific data, literature, students will learn how historical figures and events influenced and shaped the world as we know it today. They will understand how the past can predict the future and begin to grasp the importance of how the decisions made today will impact the future. Students will also study other countries/cultures to accept and understand differences as well as being able to identify similarities from one culture to the next. Having a sense of our place in the world is crucial to appreciating all we can learn from it. Our studies will be practical yet enriching. We will use a variety of approaches to make these concepts as real to our students as possible including historical reenactments (doing plays of specific events, putting on festivals/fairs, etc...), field trips to historical sites (America's Stonehenge, Freedom Trail, Plimoth Plantation, etc...) , and mock trials, for example, as well as research-based projects.

### **Technology**

Students will acquire functional technology skills in:

- Computer word processing,
- Electronic information (databases, Internet) retrieval and use,
- Ethical use of technology, and
- Electronic media for presentation of projects.

Students will develop basic technology skills, respect for and knowledge of hardware, and understanding technology as a tool to assist learning by using a thematic, interdisciplinary approach.

Students will be introduced to technology in developmentally appropriate ways, using computers and other technology for research, assignments, and presentations, recognizing that young children learn best through direct experience with the world around them. Multimedia software, Internet use, and technological equipment will be integrated into projects throughout the curriculum.

### **World Language**

Polaris students will have the opportunity to attend world language classes during their elementary years. Knowing other languages and understanding other cultures are important skill sets for students as they prepare to live and work in a global society. Our goal is to offer a choice of language courses that may include French, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and Latin. Polaris administrators will survey parents and students regarding their area of interest as part of the process in determining what language courses to offer. Students will receive exposure to oral, written, and visual communication skills while also learning about the historical and current cultures of the people who speak that language.

### **The Arts**

Polaris students will be encouraged to express their individuality and creativity through art and music. Students will experience an engaging arts program designed to expose them to a variety of art forms including fine arts, craftwork, applied art, general music education, and performing arts. To reinforce these lessons, students will then apply their knowledge and refine their skills as they incorporate various art forms into the presentation of numerous theme-related academic research projects throughout the school year.

Polaris administrators will survey parents and students regarding their interest level in the arts and work to identify local resources for families interested in pursuing specific programs such as instrument lessons, painting lessons, etc. and when possible arrange for classes to be held on-site.

### **Health, Physical Education**

Students will learn and develop the necessary skills for promoting life-long personal fitness and health. Physical education will be integrated into classroom activities, offered throughout the week during recesses, and taught once a week in a structured

class. The physical education program will encourage the development of flexibility, coordination, strength, gross motor skills, and cardiovascular fitness.

### **Social and Emotional Learning**

Students will participate in a social and emotional learning program where they will learn and practice specific skills to develop social competency in areas such as self awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Standards will be established in this area to facilitate inclusion on each student's Individualized Learning Plan and potentially in the enhanced design of the school's Response to Intervention tool.

### **(g) Academic and Other Learning Goals and Objectives**

The New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) and the Common Core State Standards will be used to guide instruction in all subject areas. Instructional strategies will include individualized or small group lessons to address basic skills needs in reading, writing, mathematics, and spelling. Generally, all subject-area content will be taught through an integrated, interdisciplinary approach, using research-based strategies and student interest to guide instruction. In addition to subject area knowledge, critical skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, communication, and organization will be taught by providing challenging, experiential curriculum with opportunities for students to question, practice, exhibit, reflect on and assess their own and each others' knowledge and skills.

#### **Polaris' Academic Goals:**

- A comparison of annual objectives written into Individualized Learning Plans will demonstrate growth in English/ language arts, mathematics and in social competence.
- Students will demonstrate progress on critical skills through portfolios and classroom exhibitions.
- 95% parent or guardian school involvement.

### **(h) Achievement Tests to be Used to Measure Pupil Academic and Other Goal Achievements**

Achievement will be reflected through a variety of assessment strategies, including but not limited to portfolios, conferences, observations, norm-referenced tests, and presentations. The school will cater to different learning styles and methods. The School Director in partnership with teachers, parents and students will develop the means to assess progress and student performance.

Polaris' assessment plan will focus on three goals:

- To help students reach their full potential
- To inform teachers about student progress and to evaluate the success or failure of instructional strategies and
- To inform and include parents as partners in the educational process.

Student achievement will be measured by a variety of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments, anecdotal records, portfolio assessments, and norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests. Tests may include the New England Assessment Program (NECAP), California Achievement Tests (CAT-5), and the Northwest Evaluation Assessments (NWEA) as supplemental standardized measures. At the beginning of the school year, students will be given benchmark assessments for reading and mathematics, using the Common Core State Standards. Each child will have a portfolio to be reviewed at least twice a year with parents/guardians. Other assessments may include, but are not limited to observations, anecdotal records, portfolio assessments, tests/quizzes, rubrics, checklists, and student self-assessments.

This plan will ensure that teachers and parents have the data they need to know how students are doing and how to help students progress. Students will learn to reflect on their effort and achievement to establish new academic and social goals. Teachers, parents, and students will work together as a team to celebrate success and establish academic, personal, and social targets.

#### **(i) Graduation Requirements**

N/A as intended for High Schools applications.

#### **(j) Staffing Overview**

##### **Period of Planning and Development**

The time period from authorization until 4-6 months before the school opens to students is considered the Period of Planning and Organizational Development. Planning will commence once authorization is granted. Planners have considered this period consuming approximately one year, based on assumption of authorization by Spring 2011. During this time of planning and organizational development project staff will include start-up coordinators, as needed consulting specialists, personnel from other organizations, and volunteers.

Tasks related to school development include:

- Planning and coordination
- Materials development and marketing
- Curriculum development and course design
- Board initiations and government training
- Set-up of administrative systems
- Strategic planning
- Financial operations, revenue initiatives
- Facility initiatives
- Dissemination of material to schools, parents, and colleges; outreach to selected corporations, gifted resources; research and visitation.

### **Period of School Readiness to open**

Once building site and classrooms are secured, the Coordinating Council will put in place a school Board of Trustees. The Board will begin the staff searches and selection process.

### **Staffing**

Polaris Charter School is committed to recruiting staff with a wide range of skills and qualities, teaching and administrative experience, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Other desired qualities and qualifications include: a commitment to the mission and vision of the school, an ability to work effectively on a team with colleagues, students, families, and community members; experience with a variety of instructional approaches, including project-based learning; interest or expertise working with a diverse student population; and a commitment to their own professional growth.

The following is an estimated staffing plan for Polaris Charter School in its first year of operations:

- 1 director
- 1 administrative position
- 3 - 4 teachers
- 3 - 4 assistant teachers
- 36 hours/week extracurricular instructors paid hourly
- 1 special ed liaison

### **School Director**

This individual will be responsible for supporting and leading an educational environment that will:

- Allow faculty and students to maximize achievements consistent with Polaris' philosophy

- Establish a school culture built on respect, responsibility, support, and common goals of excellence
- Act as a public relations liaison, including working with local school districts
- Assist faculty with all aspects of school as needed
- Assume overall responsibility for supervision of staff and students
- Hire additional administrative staff as needed with increased student population
- Follow all Polaris, State and Federal administrative requirements and standards
- Supervise and collaboratively evaluate the work of staff, and submit recommendations to appropriate staff members for promoting, retaining and dismissing members of the Polaris staff
- Oversee schedules created in collaboration with all staff members
- Seek and provide adequate testing and evaluation program for students
- Research grant programs, writing funding applications and overseeing student run entrepreneurial sources of revenue
- Initiate and participate in consultation with teachers, parents, students and the community regarding the welfare of any student or other issues relative to Polaris, and
- Promote safety and good health practices by adherence to public codes/regulations and Polaris standards.

### **Director Qualifications**

- Meets all NH regulations for eligibility and teacher certification, preferred
- Master's Degree from an accredited university, preferred
- Minimum of 5 years teaching and/or school administration experience, preferred
- Experience with administrative duties
- Background in elementary education, especially with gifted/talented education, preferred
- Demonstrated ability to individualize and make use of techniques to address the needs of high capacity learners
- Such other qualifications as the Board may find appropriate.

### **Administrative Assistant**

Assists administration in all aspects of running Polaris, including but not limited to reception, mailings, data entry, record keeping, and public relations/communications. This position to become full-time as enrollment increases.

### **Teachers**

In staffing Polaris, the Board of Trustees will comply with RSA 194-B: 14. Section IV requires the teaching staff of a charter school to consist of a minimum of fifty percent of

faculty with New Hampshire certification, or having at least three years teaching experience.

Polaris anticipates a teaching staff of one full time teacher and one full time assistant for each classroom, with some assistant services provided by volunteers or teachers in training. In addition teachers will:

- Be highly qualified or certified in New Hampshire (or demonstrate progress toward achieving certification)
- Be experienced differentiating instruction, especially for high ability students
- Commit to the success of Polaris’ students, and to Polaris’ mission, and collaborate with faculty as a member of a dynamic instructional team
- Teach to the very best of their ability
- Keep administration updated regularly of their needs and wants in order to maximize student achievement
- Model lifelong learning
- Develop a staff development program and plan that follows the Standards of the National Staff Development Council
- Build a professional learning community via learning models
- Work as a team with entire faculty to maximize integration of knowledge across disciplines.

**Projected Teacher Needs**

School Year	Students	Teachers/student ratio	Teachers
2012-2013	48-52	12 -13	4
2013-2014 Campus expandable to 120	90-120	12-13	7-10
2014-2015*	150	12-13	10-12

\* Polaris will develop satellite sites after the first years of operation.

### **Special Education Liaison**

Polaris recognizes that some students have special educational needs and may require specialized educational programming that goes beyond what is ordinarily provided by regular classroom programs. Therefore, a special education liaison will be hired.

The Special Education Liaison will coordinate all state and federal requirements as necessary for Polaris to fulfill the responsibilities which fall to a New Hampshire charter school, in accordance with RSA 194-B:11. This position will become full-time as enrollment increases. To this end, this individual will:

- Ensure that documented special education students reach their maximum potential
- Realize that all students are special and may need individualized help in certain areas
- Commit to the success of Polaris' students, and to Polaris' mission, and collaborate with faculty as a member of a dynamic instructional team
- Establish relationships with district Special Education Departments and work with the students' school districts to coordinate services for students with special needs, 504s or IEPs.

This individual will also work with local agencies and consultants (some listed in Section U) to identify these children throughout New Hampshire.

### **Volunteer Staffing**

Polaris will use parents, districts, and college campuses to initiate volunteer programs. Polaris will also be in contact with agencies that service low-income families and other local family services interested in collaborating.

Polaris has also been approached by IT Director, and Professor of Computer Science at Manchester Community College, Professor Adnan Tahir to set-up Polaris' Network by implementing Sakai Learning Management System. This technology is used to enhance teaching, learning and research in a collaborative community. Mr. Tahir also has also offered to teach technology classes and help us to have a 21st century facility. This Learning Management System will also be used as a portal for communication between parents and educators.

Polaris has also been approached by several educators such as administrators, educational experts, and paraprofessionals who have offered to volunteer to consult with us from set-up to operation.

## **(k) Personnel Compensation Plan**

### **Salary**

The Director and Lead Teachers of Polaris Charter School will be paid a salary. The salaries of these full time personnel shall be paid bi-weekly (contingent on Polaris approval).

Assistant Teachers, paid experts, and all non-teacher personnel, whether full-time or part-time, will be paid on an hourly rate as employees or as independent contractors based on negotiated rates. See budget for salary expectations.

### **Vacation**

Polaris Charter School will publish an annual calendar of holidays and vacations during which the School will officially be closed. Full-time teachers will also receive a maximum of two (2) days of paid personal leave per year. Personal leave days must be used during the school year in which they are accrued.

### **Sick Leave**

Sick leave is available to employees to provide for full salary and benefits for absences due to personal illness or injury that prevent the employee from working.

Full-time staff shall accrue sick leave at the rate of 5 days per school year. If specified in the employee's contract, part-time staff, or staff working part of the school year shall accrue sick leave on a prorated basis to reflect the proportion of time or working months that the employee's schedule represents in relation to a full time schedule. Employees may accrue up to a total maximum accrual of 20 days of sick leave. All employees shall inform the Director of an anticipated absence as soon as possible, and such leave (other than for unexpected circumstances) must be pre-approved by the Director. The Director may require an employee to verify the claimed reason for any absence.

### **Retirement**

Polaris Charter School intends to participate in the New Hampshire State Retirement Program for public teachers according to state requirements for our Full-time salaried teachers.

### **Other Benefits**

The Board of Trustees will determine a benefit and leave policy during the period of planning and development. With available funding, the school hopes to offer options that include health, disability, and retirement in order to attract highly qualified teachers

for the school. The leave policy will reflect the federal and state rules and policies and be determined by the Board of Trustees.

### **(l) Pupil Transportation**

Charter school students will have access to transportation to the class program only if they reside in the district where the charter school is located. The charter school will comply with charter law provisions that govern student transportation under Section 194-B:2, which states:

*“Attendance at a charter school for the purposes of transportation shall not constitute assignment under the provisions of RSA 189:6 and RSA 189:8. Pupils who reside in the school district in which the open enrollment or charter school is located shall be provided transportation to that school by the district on the same terms and conditions as provided for in RSA 189:6 and RSA 189:8 and that transportation is provided to pupils attending other public schools within that district. However, any added costs for such transportation services shall be borne by the charter school.”*

Students attending the charter school who reside in the host school district shall ride direct transportation with the charter school providing for added route costs, if so billed.

*For the purposes of open enrollment, neither the sending nor the receiving school district shall be obligated to provide transportation services for pupils attending an open enrollment school outside the pupil’s resident district. No transportation will be provided by a sending school district or receiving charter school for students whose residence is other than where the school program is located.*

We foresee students applying from many different school districts. One goal of charter school personnel will be to assist parents and students who wish to coordinate personal transportation. For students in secondary district special education programs, the charter school will assist with transportation arrangements (e.g., identifying shared routes, coordinating convenient “bus stops”).

### **(m) Statement of Assurances Related to Non-Discrimination According to Relevant State and Federal Laws**

Polaris does not discriminate in the administration of its admissions and educational programs, activities or employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation or marital status. This statement is

a reflection of the schools philosophy and position in embracing and celebrating all diversity.

Polaris intends to work closely with local and state agencies to seek out and identify intellectually gifted children from low-income families.

**(n) Method of Coordinating with a Pupil's Local Education Agency (LEA) for Matters Pertaining to Any Special Education Programs or Services Including Method of Compliance with All Federal and State Laws Pertaining to Educationally Disabled Pupils**

NH charter school statute RSA 194-B:11, §III, states that all options available to the parent and the local education agency are retained. Regarding special education, options now available to parents and the local district include: 1) the district concurring on the parent's or student's desire for choice and attendance at this school, and assuring whatever services the student needs continue to be received, 2) the parent accepting or rejecting the district-proposed education plan in full or in part, 3) the district concurring with the choice placement as a general placement and providing the special services needed after hours, 4) an education plan of short duration or one that allows for a trial period in the charter school to assess suitability for a student and the services needed, if any, in the charter school environment, 5) the parent refusing special services and matriculating the student without services, should the charter school find this acceptable in a particular instance, and 6) should the placement be disputed, either the parent or the school district initiating the resolution of disagreements through provisions of the Department of Education.

Polaris will operate in compliance with all state and federal laws to provide appropriate educational programming for our students with special needs. Our school will work closely with a student's local education agency to ensure a smooth transition and will review all documentation pertaining to the student's educational needs. In the event that a student comes with a 504 Accommodation Plan or an Individualized Education Plan, appropriate staff will meet with the LEA's special education team when the student enters our school and on an annual basis to review and adjust educational goals. Communication will be encouraged, and Polaris teachers will be available to speak with representatives from their student's LEA.

Polaris will employ an LEA liaison to ensure that students documented with special needs will achieve their maximum potential and to oversee proper handling of special education matters.

The school responsibilities are:

1. To assure that districts are alerted about requests for admission.
2. To provide information about the school to the sending district, and, when possible, attend meetings for the purpose of district review of choice requests.
3. To obtain copies of parent rights provided to parents by districts and to assist parents who want choice to understand their own district's procedures.
4. To obtain copies of any IEP that is in place, and assure that each teacher and service provider listed as having responsibility for implementing the IEP has a complete copy of this document and explanation as to what is required of the charter school.
5. To keep name, address, phone, and email for the person(s) in each district who are responsible for special education vis-à-vis students attending the charter school, and make contact, when needed.
6. To alert the sending district of pre-referral issues that rise to a level of concern of needing district attention.
7. To meet with special education administrators or their designees to understand how districts would like certain procedures to take place (e.g., should the charter school schedule and call a required meeting or should the LEA).
8. To notify the LEA if the IEP written in one setting does not seem pertinent for the student's needs within the charter school and to ask for a review of the IEP when a portion of the IEP seems inadequate, unneeded, inappropriate, or too long in duration.
9. To assist the local education agency in development of the IEP and procedures designed to ensure that individualized education programs are monitored in a regular and systematic manner.
10. To work with the district and articulate services or accommodations the student's needs, from the charter school's perspective, and to continue the dialogue about concerns until they are reviewed.

Polaris has recruited and identified professionals such as Brenda Lee, M.Ed. from New Hampshire Counseling Center, who provides curriculum based assessments, and serves as an Educational Liaison conveying information regarding psychological testing and/or therapy to schools systems attempting to develop IEP or Section 504 plans to address students' learning, behavioral, or emotional challenges.

Polaris has also identified Jennifer Stylianos, a certified pediatric occupational therapist, as well as an assisted technology specialist to consult with our Board on matters regarding OT, disabilities and program development.

## **(o) Eligibility and Admission Procedures**

### **Eligibility**

Polaris is an open enrollment, public elementary school of choice. The school may accept out-of-state students on a space-available basis (tuition will apply). Enrolling students must reach, at minimum, their fifth birthday by August 31<sup>st</sup>.

Students enrolled at Polaris are automatically re-enrolled for the following school year, provided that they are in good standing at the school. A letter of intent will be required from families prior to the end of each school year. This will classify the number of possible spaces for the following school year. As a family oriented school, we encourage siblings to attend school together. Siblings of enrolled students will be given preference in admission.

In the event that more eligible students apply than the number of spaces available in any grade or program, the board will conduct a lottery according to policy established by the state of New Hampshire. Eligible students who are not chosen in the lottery will be placed on a wait list in the order their names are drawn, according to grade or program. Should a selected student not attend or an opening otherwise occur, placement will be offered based on waiting list order. If a student offered admission from the waitlist declines admission, the board will continue to contact students/parents in the order listed.

### **Application Procedures**

The application process allows the school to understand student needs and abilities to ensure their experience at Polaris is a positive one, should the student enroll. Importantly, the application process is also designed to enable families to make an informed choice about a student's potential for success in the Polaris environment. Polaris offers a unique opportunity for students to become involved in their own education. There is an expectation for students to make a commitment to excellence and strive to be genuinely involved with opportunities that the school provides. Student involvement begins at the time of application.

Polaris is open to all elementary-aged students in New Hampshire; however, the students more likely to benefit from Polaris' differentiated approach will demonstrate some of the following characteristics of high academic potential, as defined by Renzulli, Smith, White, Callahan, Hartman, & Westburg 2002; Clark 2002; Silverman 1997-2004:

- Academic performance well above grade level in one or more areas
- Exceptional abstract reasoning skills
- Continuous curiosity and drive to learn

- Unusual creativity, an independent thinker
- Unusual commitment, intensity, and persistence.

1. The school will provide its program information, application procedures, and application forms to New Hampshire public school personnel. Polaris will have a website with complete application procedures and forms available online.

2. The school will have one or more admission decision deadlines. Dates and guidelines for admissions decision-making and lottery will be available to applicants.

3. Students will submit a completed school application package that will include a personal statement of interest in the school and student questionnaire. A Portfolio is recommended. Portfolio contents allow students to offer materials that enhance the Admissions Committee's understanding of the student. Examples of portfolio material may include artistic work, creative writing, science or math projects, and audio or video tapes. Letters of recommendation are required.

4. Applicants will provide all available records of achievement such as testing results, portfolios, official records/report cards, extra-curricular interests, etc.

5. Once the application is complete, the applying student and parent or guardian will be invited for a visit to the charter school. Before the school opens, students will have opportunities to see the location and go to information sessions.

6. The student and parent will be required to meet with the Admissions Committee or designated staff to review the program and share expectation and interests. The student will be given the opportunity to demonstrate some of the traits defined above, in a variety of ways. Alternatively, the student is also welcome to provide video evidence of these traits. The results of the meeting will be provided to the Admissions Committee and school staff.

7. Should the Admissions Committee decide further evaluation would be beneficial; the committee may contact the sending school district to request such evaluations be provided.

8. The student and parent will review the responsibilities, rules, and commitments necessary to attend and sign a statement of acceptance of the policies and programs of the school. This confirms the student's intent to be an applicant for the school. If a student is enrolled in a school district special education program, the respective special

education department will be notified of the student's request for admission, but such students are continued in the lottery pool.

9. The Admissions Committee and parent/ guardian must agree that the applicant is likely to benefit from this specific charter school program.

10. The applicant student and his/her parent will agree to the mission of the school, its policies, programs, and expectations.

**(p) Philosophy of Student Governance and Discipline, and Age-Appropriate Due Process Procedures to be used for Disciplinary Matters Including Suspension and Expulsion**

Polaris' philosophy of student governance includes having clear expectations of all members of the school community. Students will be expected to become "citizens" of their community and demonstrate behaviors and skills which promote a positive school environment.

As elementary school students, emphasis will be placed in the classroom on developing lifelong skills such as:

- Responsibility for one's actions
- Developing caring friendships which are inclusive of others
- Conflict management
- Self control
- Acceptance of differences in others
- Identifying and communicating one's needs
- Self esteem

The school is committed to a respectful and safe environment for all. Specific governance and discipline procedures will be written in a handbook that students and parents will receive. The policies will outline the school's procedures for student governance and discipline and will include clear and fair guidelines; a support system to help students understand and change their behavior, if needed; and consequences if students cannot or will not participate in school according to school policies and guidelines.

Polaris will comply with statutes that prohibit bullying and harassment, fighting, drugs, alcohol, smoking, and any other dangerous behavior. A student may be suspended or expelled in accordance with statute and policy.

Polaris will provide fair and age appropriate due process in administering student discipline and will comply with current suspension and expulsion provisions in RSA 193:13 (Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils): A pupil may withdraw from a charter school based on criteria determined by the Board of Trustees consistent with the advice of the principal and teachers in conformance with RSA 193:13. No public school shall be obligated to enroll an expelled pupil.

### **Commitment to Conflict Mediation and Dispute Resolution**

Internal disputes include all disputes among and between students, staff, parents, volunteers, or advisors. Polaris advocates maintaining open lines of communication within the “school community” i.e. the parents, students, volunteers, staff, administration, and the Board of Trustees with the intention of resolving all disputes in a timely fashion and in accordance with school policies which shall be outlined in the Polaris Handbook. All members of the school community are required to agree to work within these policies.

The dispute resolution process shall begin with the School Director. The Director shall meet with all parties involved in the dispute and will keep on file a written copy of any agreement reached. In the event that the dispute cannot be resolved by the Director in a timely manner, the dispute shall be referred to the Board for resolution. If agreement is reached, this will be noted and recorded in the minutes of the Board and a copy sent by U.S. mail to each party. In the event that agreement is not reached, the decision of the Board by simple majority vote shall be final. All parties shall be notified in writing of the resolution by U.S. mail.

### **(q) Method of Administering Fiscal Accounts and Reporting, Including a Provision Requiring Fiscal Audits and Reports to be Performed by an Independent Certified Public Accountant**

Submitters of Polaris have formed a non-profit foundation which will apply for a federal start-up grant. Polaris Charter Foundation will follow public school accounting guidelines and will put in place internal accounting controls necessary to safeguard its assets. Polaris will maintain accurate financial records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for public schools. An annual financial report will be provided with audit by an independent, certified public accountant.

Polaris’ Board of Trustees will appoint a Treasurer (contingent on approval) who will provide the oversight necessary to monitor the school’s financial status. The Board of Trustees shall also adopt policies for the financial management of the school, including policies on Conflict of Interest for Board members and faculty.

A general account has been set up with Bank of America for the administration of funds. In addition, a discretionary account will be set up. The Board of Trustees will establish a maximum cap for discretionary expenditures.

Additional accounts will be set up for endowment funds and restricted grant awards. The Treasurer and two other Board members designated by the Board will have check-writing authority. Two signatures will be required for withdrawal of funds from any of the above accounts.

Except for emergency purchases cleared with the school Director, all expenditures and contracts will be handled through an encumbrance system of purchase orders for clear tracking of expenditures and status of account balances.

Each individual with check writing authority will be covered by a fidelity bond in accordance with guidelines of New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration. Accounting activities will consist payroll paid to school personnel and the maintenance of an accounts payable system to track amounts due vendors of the school.

Polaris shall comply with all requirements specified in the law pertaining to reporting requirements (RSA 194- B: 10, I-V). This list includes annual report, annual financial audit and report, program audit, and participation during the annual school budget process.

Pursuant to Ed 318.07, Polaris will produce an annual report which will include the following elements:

- A general progress report to establish the initial school program, a process that will require considerable flexibility and energy.
- An assessment and report of how Polaris is meeting its educational and financial goals, as identified in its mission statement.
- Changes, if any, in the organizational structure and make-up of the Board of Trustees.
- Assessment and report of business, parent, and volunteer involvement in the school.
- Description of community services available at the site.
- A report of enrollment statistics including but not limited to, attendance, per-class enrollment, graduation rates and any occurrences of withdrawal. Commentary about successes in program, collaboration, or goal achievement.
- School calendar.
- Financial statement and balance sheet identifying Polaris' asset, liability, and fund balances or equities.

- Projections of income and expenses for the upcoming school year.

**(r) Annual Budget, Including all Sources of Funding**

Polaris will use the state's average elementary and middle school tuition costs as a basis for shaping its own budget, attempting to comply with the 80% of average per pupil funding guideline of RSA 194-B.

Polaris will apply for a federal charter school grant through Polaris Charter School Foundation a non-profit corporation formed to support the charter school in order to supplement state per pupil funding. Polaris has acquired a sample of the grant application and has obtained the information needed to submit this formal document should we be approved. An application for 501c 3 non-profit status is in the process of being submitted.

Founding members of the charter school recognize that the financial sustainability of a charter school requires a long-term fiscal plan, especially after the expiration of the federal grant. We are currently investigating multiple revenue sources such as before and after school child care services, summer camps, enrichment programs, grants, and an annual fund drive seeking private and business donations. A portion of all money raised will be used to establish an endowment fund to support long-term fiscal sustainability.

Please see Appendix A for projected budgeted amounts which are provided as estimates only to indicate how the school anticipates evolving from the start in September, 2012, through full enrollment.

**(s) School Calendar Arrangement and the Number and Duration of Days Pupils are to be Served Pursuant to RSA 194-B. 8, III**

The Polaris Charter School will be in session at least the number of days required by state law; currently, 180 days. School operating hours are Monday-Friday approximately 8:45-2:45, not including before and after school care.

Annually, the Board of Trustees will approve a school calendar that conforms to rules and laws of the state as to the number and duration of days required by law, including any existing provisions for exceptions that may be pursued.

All school policy on time and use in calendar will be in conformance with laws that apply.

**(t) Provision for Providing Continuing Evidence of Adequate Insurance Coverage**

Polaris, pursuant to RSA 194-B:1, III, will be a public school subject to the same protections as any public school under RSA 507 (b) which provides for Limited General Liability for the charter school and its agents.

Polaris will pursue, procure, and provide evidence of a comprehensive liability insurance program that provides protection needed for a public school charter, including workman's compensation, board errors and omissions, and faculty coverage. The insurance program will be in place as the first Board of Trustees begins its duties.

**(u) Identity of Consultants to be Used for Various Services, if Known**

During this period of planning and development, Polaris will require numerous tasks addressed by specialists in fields of charter schools, assessment, school administration, insurance, finance, public relations, curriculum, instruction, special education, business, technology, science and engineering, and strategic planning.

At this time the consultants who have agreed to participate in the first year of planning and development include:

- **Dr. Foad Afshar, Mental Health and Educational Services – CLEER Institute**

Dr. Afshar provides psychological & educational evaluation of children and adolescents. Dr. Afshar has served in the mental health community since 1980. Other training and specialties include: parental training, mind and brain learning, urban special education, neurodevelopmental and behavioral disturbances of children and adolescents, and special education process and procedures. Dr. Afshar holds licenses or certification in the following:

NH Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor. Lic. #473

Nationally Certified Clinical Hypnotherapist. Lic # 0001

NH Certified School Psychologist

NH Certified Director of Pupil Personnel

NH Certified School Principal

NH Certified Guidance Counselor

- **Mike Ball, CBRE, Commercial Real Estate Professional, Tenant Representative NH State Representative**

Mike comes to us as a former morning radio show host as well as a parent who sent his three children to Manchester and surrounding school districts. Mike believes that the children of New Hampshire deserve the finest education that we can provide and will serve us as a liaison with constituents and the business community. Mike has offered his services as a commercial real estate professional at no cost to Polaris.

- **David Chauvette, Director, Academy for Science and Design a Chartered Public School**

Dave has been in education for almost 30 years, the last seven as a principal. As the Director of a NH charter school for advanced academics that is just reaching its fifth year of operation, David has offered to be a resource of best practices for a fledgling charter school with a similar mission.

- **Maurine Egan, A-Med, Resources For The Gifted & Creative Child**

Educational consultant in Bedford, NH specializing in gifted children. Ms. Egan has worked with several districts and is interested in helping Polaris promote best practices in gifted education.

- **Senator Jim Forsythe, Vice-Chair, NH Senate Education Committee**

A business entrepreneur and former adjunct professor at Arizona State University, Senator Forsythe assisted in the formation of a private scholarship foundation in Colorado, and also co-founded a school choice advocacy group in New Hampshire. His experience with problem-solving in education and organization of business will be indispensable to our charter's success.

- **Raymond Foss, Attorney Specializing in Family Law, Education and Individuals with Disabilities**

Mr. Foss is an advocate for education and choice and has offered to be a consultant and resource. Mr. Foss' expertise is as a practitioner focused on children in family law matters - serving children's legal interests, and those of their parents, as their champion in the schools and in the courtroom.

- **Kristina Germano, Comptroller at MDM Management Group, LLC (MA) and Cope Enterprises, LLC(PA), Financial Partner at Profits in Progress Investment Club**

Kristina has offered to provide services in financial advisement. Her experience in comptrollership, business development, accounting, loss prevention, and financial maintenance of vertically and horizontally related and affiliated companies will be greatly utilized in the start-up phases of the charter. Kristina specializes in accounting, financial analysis, forecasting, management, and G & A oversight.

- **John Hikel, New Hampshire State Representative, Business Owner, Polaris Board Member**

John joined the team in its early stages. His commitment to help this student population and to rally supporters, constituents, donors, legislators, and the business community has been outstanding.

- **Brenda Lee, M.Ed. Educational Liaison and SPED consultant**

Ms. Lee has eight years teaching experience in elementary and special education in public schools in NH and MA. She has taught a wide range of curriculums and is trained to give curriculum-based, as well as standard-based, assessments. Ms. Lee has extensive experience in creating Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), conducting meetings about these plans, completing the accompanying paperwork, and monitoring student goals and objectives during the process. Throughout her career, she has consulted with psychologists, neuropsychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and behaviorists to provide her students with the care and instruction they need.

- **Eileen Liponis Executive Director of NH Public Charter School Association**

Ms. Liponis was development director at Seacoast Charter School and now serves as the executive director of the New Hampshire Charter School Association.

- **Robert Minicucci, Marketing Communications Consultant**

Robert's background includes nearly 20 years of developing public relations, social media, community relations, and corporate and internal communications programs for consumer and technology companies. He has expertise in strategic marketing communications with the ability to meet challenges, establish relationships, build consensus, and get results. Robert has volunteered to lead our marketing initiative.

- **Diane Ramirez, Certified SENG (Supporting the Emotional needs of the Gifted) Educator, Gifted Education Advisor, Co-founder Polaris Charter School, Teacher Academy of Science and Design**

Diane completed an undergraduate degree in English at University of Florida and next summer completes a Masters in Educational Psychology, emphasis in Gifted Education, University of Connecticut. During her three and a half years as a public high school English teacher in Florida and Connecticut, Ms. Ramirez also taught debate. Diane is a New Hampshire certified teacher of middle and high school English.

- **Peter H. Reynolds, Co-Founder, CEO Fablevision Learning; Curriculum and High tech learning consultant; Best-selling Childrens' Book Author; Award-winning Illustrator; Educational speaker**

A speaker at the recent Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) conference, Mr. Reynolds offers expertise in several areas, including as the designer of our logo. Peter's personal mission is: "My journey has been dedicated to helping kids, especially the "off the path" kids. I was one of them myself. Not every student is lucky enough to have a teacher, or adult, see his or her potential."

- **Denise Rodino, Faculty Grants and Government Relations, Smith College**

Ms. Rodino offers her expertise in grant writing and administrative advising to our team. With Ms. Rodino's assistance we will be able to identify, apply, and qualify for grant funds. Her representation in higher education will also provide Polaris with other avenues of interested supporters and educational experts.

- **Marion Roessling, M.Ed**

Ms. Roessling requested to be a part of our consultant group. As an experienced teacher and a parent of a gifted child, Ms. Roessling has offered to help us provide a successful and appropriately differentiated curriculum.

- **Matthew Southerton, Director, Co-Founder New Hampshire Center for Innovative Schools**

Matt is an experienced professional with an extensive background in budget and finance, network administration, web development, and database management. Matt has designed specifications and technology plans for multiple start up schools. Matt is available to advise on charter and budget development, charter application requirements, grant writing, governance and management, purchasing and licensing of technology, and other technical aspects of charter school development.

- **Jennifer Stylianos, Pediatric MS OTR/L, ATP, Occupational Therapist, ATECH Services**

Jennifer has been an occupational therapist for seven years. She is certified as an Assistive Technology Practitioner (ATP) by the Rehabilitation Engineering Society of North America (RESNA). Jen and her colleagues (OT/PT/SLP) provide evaluation & consultation services in the area of Assistive Technology. Program components include seating & wheeled mobility, augmentative & alternative communication, computer access, home modification, mobility, aids for daily living, worksite modification, and modification & fabrication services. The interdisciplinary team assesses complex medical, physical, orthopedic, cognitive and communication needs and recommends assistive technology solutions for home, school, work, and play.

- **Adnan Tahir – Professor MCC, Technical Support Specialist, Director Sakai Learning Management System**

Professor Tahir has graciously donated his professional services to set up Polaris' network and create our online reporting and communications database. This database will later be expanded to serve students online with homework and portfolio management and also assist administration with tracking, parental communication, and inter-office management. Prof. Tahir has also graciously donated his time to teach technology classes and assist in recommendations of platforms and services to be used.

- **JoAnna Telschow, Teacher, SPED Director**
- **Dr. Jay Patil, M.D. and Licensed Psychiatrist**
- **Linda Jezierski, Weare School of Music**

#### **(v) Philosophy of Parent Involvement and Related Plans and Procedures**

Parental involvement is a core philosophical commitment of the school. The school will have a well-defined parent involvement initiative through the Parent Steering Committee. The parent steering committee will have two representatives on the Board of Trustees and have regular attendance at their meetings by the School Director. Parents can bring their concerns to the annual all School Meeting and have input into hiring through participation of hiring committees. Polaris believes that parents are an integral part of the school community and bring valuable input, energy and skills to the school's success.

Not all students have parents to share in their academic interests. The school will identify business and community members who are available as mentors, providing guidance specific to students' interests.

A Parenting Steering Committee will be created within the first few weeks of school. The Committee serves as the communication vehicle between parents, the School Director and Board of Trustees.

The Committee will also be responsible for:

- Celebrations in the classrooms.
- Working with teachers to identify classroom needs not included in the budget.
- Bringing forth parent concerns to the School Director and Board of Trustees Serving on hiring committees.
- Giving annual feedback on teacher effectiveness to School Director.

- Fundraising and donation requests.

**(w) A Plan to Develop and Disseminate Information to Assist Parents and Pupils with Decision-Making About their Choice of School**

To ensure all residents have an equal opportunity to apply to the charter school, an extensive public marketing effort will be initiated through the Polaris Charter Foundation. As students from lower income or minority families may suffer disproportionately due to a lack of access to technology or to advanced curriculum, particular attention will be paid to reaching those students through their schools, communities, and services to ensure their families are aware of Polaris as a choice available to them.

Direct relationships with the State of NH, educational facilities, doctors and specialists are underway in an effort to identify children most likely to benefit from Polaris' program. Our approach to school districts will be open and positive with the intention of creating partnerships from day one.

We have identified a marketing communications professional, Robert Minicucci, to help us launch our marketing initiatives. During the initial months of planning, information will be disseminated through bulletins, advisories, social media and posting on informational websites. Materials for a major informational outreach program will be disseminated to public school administrators, school personnel, parents, businesses, and foundations.

Upon approval of the charter, the Board of the Polaris Charter Foundation will develop informational brochures describing the school, its mission, its approach to education, and the expectations and opportunities the program hopes to provide. Informational brochures will be distributed to businesses, parents, residents, and school faculty via newspaper, magazines, education advocates, mail, email and social media broadcasts.

**(x) A Global Hold Harmless Clause**

In accordance with RSA 194-B: 3, II(x), Polaris, its successors, and assigns, covenants and agrees at all times to indemnify and hold harmless any other school district which sends its students to the charter school, and their school boards, officers, directors, agents, employees, all funding districts and sources, and their successors and assigns, (the "indemnified parties") from any and all claims, demands, actions and causes of action, whether in law or in equity, and all damages, costs, losses, and expenses, including but not limited to reasonable attorneys' fees and legal costs, for any action or inaction of the charter school, its board, officers, employees, agents, representatives, contractors, guests and invitees, or pupils.

### **(y) Severability Provisions and Statement of Assurance**

Any provision of the charter school contract found by competent authority to be contrary to applicable law, rule, or regulation shall not be enforceable.

### **(z) Provision for Dissolution of the Charter School Including Disposition of its Assets**

The Board of Trustees, in the event of dissolution or revocation, would develop a prompt but strategic plan that addresses debt obligation, contracts, and assets. All property that Polaris has leased, borrowed, or contracted for use shall be returned or handled according to contractual prearrangement. Disposal of other property, furniture, supplies, equipment, vehicles, and the like will be handled as follows:

- The board will first consider any debt obligation and will research the disposal of property, etc., that best enables the Trustees to meet its debts.
- Once debt obligations are met, any remaining property and assets of the school will be distributed depending on how it was obtained. Items obtained through federal or state charter school funding will be offered to other charter schools or to otherwise identified parties in funding agreements. Assets provided with funds from local school districts will be offered to public schools in a manner deemed fair and appropriate (e.g., either returned to the district that provided the asset or liquidated and distributed on a participation basis). Unwanted items will be consigned in the most beneficial manner with the proceeds reverting to the New Hampshire's charter school support fund.
- All property personally or individually owned by the employees of the charter school shall be exempt from distribution of property as prescribed herein and shall remain the property of the individual teachers and staff. Such property includes, but is not limited to, albums, curricular manuals, personal mementos and other material or apparatus that have been personally financed, acquired, or developed by teachers and staff.
- All outstanding debts/encumbrances for which the charter school is legally liable will be properly settled with the creditor of record. Under no circumstances shall a sending school district be liable for any obligations of the dissolved charter school. Polaris shall coordinate any planned or voluntary bankruptcy filing with the area school boards where Polaris students reside to facilitate reintegration of its students.

A minimum notice of 120 days for voluntary dissolution of the charter school will be given to school districts with students at Polaris.

**(aa) In the Case of the Conversion of a Public School to a Charter Conversion School, Provision for Alternative Arrangements for Pupils who Choose Not to Attend and Teachers who Choose Not to Teach at the Charter School**

Not applicable.

**(bb) A Plan for the Education of the School's Pupils After the Charter School May Cease Operation**

A plan for each student's continued education, should the school cease to exist, will be determined individually with each student and his/her parent or legal guardian. Likely options would be: 1) reintegration into the student's assigned public school; 2) application to a different chartered public school, if available; 3) other available options based on parent and student priorities.

Upon cessation of operation, the records of all the students would be transferred in a timely manner to the receiving school, and the staff and trustees would work with the receiving school to assure a smooth and timely transition.

**(cc) In Addition to an Application, Each Charter School Applicant, in Consultation with the Local School Board, Shall Prepare a Proposed Contract**

Not applicable.

**(dd) An Outline of the Proposed Accountability Plan which Clarifies Expectations for Evaluating the School's Program and which Contains an Acknowledgement that a Full Accountability Plan Shall be Developed and Ready to Implement Prior to the Date of Opening**

Polaris Charter School will follow the NH Accountability Process Plan, in compliance with the requirements of RSA 194-B, Polaris will submit annual accountability reports that will cover each of the areas required by the New Hampshire Charter School Accountability Process. These will include reports of progress that covers governance, financial operations, student enrollment, and progress toward meeting goals, parental

involvement and outreach. Polaris will use data and narrative statements that provide evidence to answer each of the following questions especially as outlined in section (g) Academic and Other Learning Goals and Objectives.

1. Is the school making progress toward achieving its mission?
2. Is the school responsibly using public funds?
3. Is the school promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills?
4. Is the school sustainable?

An annual report will be prepared and submitted to the State Board of Education for their review in August following each academic year (outlined in Appendix C). The accountability plan shall be developed and ready to implement prior to the date of opening. Reports will be submitted according to the NH Accountability Process Timeline.

### **Timeline for Accountability Checkpoints: Years 1 Through 4**

- **December 1 of Opening year 2:**

Accountability plan (per RSA 194-B) review and feedback on

Measurement of goals

Staff qualifications (form A12A Part B) compliance check

Enrollment (Form A12A Part A)

Health, fire and safety inspection reports compliance check

Evidence of insurance coverage compliance check

- **Fall Reports:**

October 1

October 15

- **Monthly:**

Board minutes review to assure effective governance practices

Progress toward school goals compare with targets in accountability plan

- **Quarterly:**

Nov. 15

Jan. 30

Apr. 15

June 30: Financial report check to see if complies with standards.

- **Annually:**

August 1: Year-end summary of school performance review and verification as needed to assess performance.

- **End of Year Reports**

August 1: Attendance, graduation, etc. (Form A3 and others, as appropriate)

- **Annually**

September 30: Independent financial audit request for action if any material defects.

### **(Appendix A) Budget**

Please see pages 41 - 44 for the budget spreadsheet.

**Polaris Charter School**

**6/1/2011**

Appendix  
A A

**Expenditures**

1100		<b>Instructional Services</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>FY 2012</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>
	110	Teacher Salaries	1	160000	200000	320000
	111	Salaries, Support Staff, Teacher Assistants	2	40000	60000	80000
	122	Substitutes	3	700	800	1000
	200	FICA Teachers		16000	20000	32000
	290	FICA Support Staffl		4000	6000	8000
	320	Consultants and Contracted Support	4	15000	15000	25000
	580	Instructional Travel		2400	3200	4500
	591	Arts, Music, Language Programs - Contracted		14500	15000	18000
	610	Supplies for art, music, language		25000	30000	40000
	640	Textbooks and Core Instruction Program		30000	30000	30000
	650	Computer Software Licensing		4000	3000	3000
	733	Furniture and Equipment		10000	4500	4500
	738	Computer and Communications Equipment	5	10000	15000	15000
		<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>331600</b>	<b>402500</b>	<b>581000</b>
		<b>SPECIAL EDUCATION</b>				
1200	110	Teacher Liaisons Special Education	6	10000	25000	40000
	320	Contracted Special Services		1200	3000	5000
		<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>11200</b>	<b>28000</b>	<b>45000</b>
2100	110	<b>STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES</b>				
2122	370	Testing/Appraisal & Support Services		15000	12000	15000
2122	390	Contracted Services, Guidance/Counseling		1600	2000	5000
2122	610	Supplies/Support Services		1000	1000	1000
2700	320	Busing/insurance/maintenance		10000	20000	30000
2122	738	Computer and Communications Equipment		1400	1000	1000
		<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>29000</b>	<b>36000</b>	<b>52000</b>
2130		<b>HEALTH SERVICES</b>				
2134	110	Nurse Salary Contracted		1000	1500	1800

2134	220	Nurse FICA		100	100	100
2134	610	Supplies, Health		1000	1300	1900
		<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>2100</b>	<b>2900</b>	<b>3800</b>
2222		<b>LIBRARY &amp; MEDIA SERVICES</b>				
2222	641	Books, Library		1000	1000	1000
		<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>1000</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>1000</b>
2225		Contract Services, IT		1200	1200	1200
2225	110	Computer Coordinator Salary		0	0	0
2225	610	Computer Supplies		2600	1000	1000
2225	731	Computer Equipment		5000	5000	5000
		<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>8800</b>	<b>7200</b>	<b>7200</b>
		<b>OFFICE OF PRINCIPLE SERVICES</b>				
2410	110	School Director Salary	7	70000	73000	75000
2410	111	Support Staff	8	15000	25000	38000
2410	210	Director Benefits		0	1500	1500
2410	210	Support Staff Benefits		0	0	0
2410	220	School Director FICA		7000	7300	7500
2410	221	Support Staff FICA		1500	2500	3800
2318	330	Legal Services		1500	1500	1500
2317	331	Auditors		4000	4000	4000
2410	532	Postage		1500	2500	3000
2410	540	Advertising & Program Material Dissemination		1500	1500	1500
2410	550	Printing		600	500	500
2410	580	Travel		2000	3000	3000
2410	390	Contracted Services, Board/School Management	9	15,000	15000	15000
2410	730	Equipment, Office Coordinator		1000	500	500
2410	733	Furniture, Office Coordinator		2000	500	250
2319	810	Other Purchased Services: Background Checks		350	300	300
		<b>SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>122950</b>	<b>138600</b>	<b>155350</b>
2600		<b>OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE of FACILITIES</b>				
2610	117	Custodian Contracted		1000	1000	1000
2620	411	Water and Sewer - included in Lease		0	0	0
2620	420	Water, Well Testing - included in lease		0	0	0
2620	421	Trash Removal, Plowing, Grounds, Etc.		1500	1500	2000
2620	431	Building Readiness - included, unless substantial		20000	0	10000



<b>NOTES EXPENDITURES</b>	
1	Teacher positions \$40,000, based on state statistic estimates the range of salaries as \$40,000 to \$45,000
2	Teacher assistant estimates based on \$20,000 FTE, after capacity there will be both FTE and PTE, contract aids if shortage in support
3	The board of Trustees will set substitute rates and leave allowances
4	This anticipates curriculum module development
5	Computer purchases reflect classroom set-up needs
6	Anticipate part-time position during planning until full enrollment for first year
7	Due to scope of this initiative, 1.4 FTE is needed for development/planning year
8	Anticipates 0.5 FTE admin assistant during planning and 1.0 FTE office after school has capacity of 45
9	Anticipates the Board needing specific consultation services each year, e.g. training, research reports, specialists for projects and concerns
10	Anticipate a facility that needs some findings for renovation and code compliance finds in this category will be requested unless needed. Future years anticipate mortgage or space expansion
<b>NOTES REVENUE</b>	
1	Revenue from parent group fundraisers, other fundraising within community dinners, corporate fundraisers etc.
2	Revenue balances will be transferred to a trust account according to appropriate procedures.
3	Revenue from Summer programs, enrichment classes, before after school care, school initiatives. Revenue based on 1/3 of students using services
4	Reflects expenditure allotted for growth in 3rd year, new small and online, initiative

## Potential Grant Initiatives

- **New Hampshire DISSEMINATION PROGRAM SUMMARY**

The dissemination grant program fosters the sharing of charter school best practices, encourages the development of new high-quality charter schools, offers technical assistance to developers, provides mentorships for new groups, and distributes policy guides and governance examples to all interested parties.

- **Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program**

These grants for gifted education are awarded under two priorities. Priority One supports initiatives to develop and scale up models serving students who are underrepresented in gifted and talented programs. Priority Two supports state and local efforts to improve services for gifted and talented students.

- **John Templeton Foundation**

The Foundation is committed to identifying and nurturing young people who demonstrate exceptional talent in mathematics and science. In the U.S., it supports accelerated learning for students capable of working well beyond their grade level, and has funded a number of important national studies of the issue. Internationally, the Foundation has sponsored academic training and competitions for students who show extraordinary potential but whose talents might not otherwise be developed, especially because of their economic circumstances or insufficient educational support.

- **Community Impact and Express Grants**

The mission of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation is to improve the quality of life in New Hampshire and some adjoining communities in Vermont and Maine. Community Impact and Express grants offer a competitive grant process twice each year to organizations working across a wide variety of areas including arts and culture, education, the environment, health and human services, and other public affairs.

- **Arts in Education**

LEAs acting on behalf of a school or schools where 50 percent of the children are from low-income families may apply in partnership with at least one of the following: an institution of higher education (IHE); a state education agency (SEA) or regional education service agency; or a public or private agency, institution, or organization including a museum, arts education association, library, theater, or community- or faith-based organization.

- **Race to the Top**

Awards in Race to the Top will go to States that are leading the way with ambitious yet achievable plans for implementing coherent, compelling, and comprehensive education reform. Race to the Top winners will help trail-blaze effective reforms and provide examples for States and local school districts throughout the country to follow as they too are hard at work on reforms that can transform our schools for decades to come.

- **Dominion K-12 Educational Partnership**

Educational grants from Dominion and the Dominion Foundation provide elementary and secondary educators with the tools they need to revitalize math and science programs through the study of energy and the environment. In the area of k-12 education, Dominion accepts grant applications, up to \$10,000, to encourage the development of new programs to strengthen math and science education through the study of energy or the environment.

- **HP Technology for Teaching Grant Initiative**

This Initiative is designed to support the innovative use of mobile technology in K-16 education, and to help identify K-12 public schools and two- and four-year colleges and universities that HP might support with future grants.

- **Bean Foundation Grant**

The Bean Foundation awards grants in the fields of arts and humanities, education, environment, health, human services, and public/society benefit. Grants are only available for nonprofit organizations that serve Manchester and Amherst.

- **3Comm K-12 Education Giving**

3M invests in teachers and opportunities that introduce new methods of learning into classrooms. Its Foundation recognizes education as one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality and lays a foundation for sustained economic growth. The Foundation recognizes how important it is for young people, especially those who face greater challenges in life, to attend and graduate from college.

- **BMT Foundation**

Grants for education are made in the areas of: program support aimed at preparing underserved students for college; colleges and universities for scholarships; and endowed funds to colleges and universities for scholarships to needy students.

- **Ashland Corporate Contributions**

Ashland has a proactive, outcome-driven giving strategy. It seeks, selects, supports and/or partners with organizations whose goals reflect our commitment to enhancing the quality of life in our communities. Areas of funding interest include education, communities and civic affairs, disaster relief, environment, health and human services.

- **AT & T Foundation**

The AT&T Foundation makes grants to tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations as defined under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. Areas of funding interest include K-12 and higher education, and educational nonprofit.

- **The Sprint Foundation**

This Foundation is committed to supporting K-12 education, particularly those initiatives that focus on character education. The Sprint Character Education Grant Program promotes leadership, youth volunteerism, character education, and school pride.

- **Toshiba Grant Foundation**

Improving student achievement in science and math is the foundation's only grant-making interest.

- **ASM International Foundation**
- **Benton Foundation**
- **The Chalkboard**
- **Community of Science (COS)**
- **Corning Foundation**
- **Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation**
- **Ezra Jack Keats Minigrants**
- **George Lucas Educational Foundation Resource List**
- **GrantsNet**
- **IBM Foundation**
- **National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE)**
- **National Science Foundation**
- **Partners in Education**
- **The Pentair Foundation**
- **Polaris Grants Central**

## **(Appendix B) Bios of Polaris Charter Foundation Committee Members**

The application for Polaris Charter School was originally submitted in January 2011 by a group of 10 parents – a copy of the original signature page follows. The Polaris Charter Committee is a group of 10 individuals – not all of whom are parents; although many of the names are the same – who have worked and continue to work diligently to make Polaris a reality. This group has filed with the state of New Hampshire for non-profit status. The Polaris Charter Foundation members are:

- **Jill Cane, Ed. D. (Advisor, Vision and Governance)**

Jill has shared her wealth of experience in public education with our foundation, most especially in the areas of curriculum development, program evaluation, faculty evaluation, mentoring, professional development, instructional strategies, and grant writing. Twenty of her 40 years in education was spent as the principal of elementary schools in Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. She currently serves as an educational consultant at the Academy for Science and Design, a New Hampshire public charter school, in the areas of curriculum and organizational structure. She is also a consultant at SERESC in Bedford, NH, where Jill provides workshops and continuing courses for both small and large groups in the areas of assessment, mentoring, curriculum, and instruction. Her focus is on improving student achievement in public school settings. Jill has a particular interest in helping teachers and administrators develop professional learning communities.

- **Tia Fogarty (Co-Chair)**

Tia has applied a great deal of experience in business start-ups, management, and organization to her new role as a founder of Polaris and a school choice advocate. Tia has been a program management professional and consultant for over 20 years; leading high profile initiatives as well as small and start-up business projects in the areas of: business development, strategic partnerships, direct and channel sales, best practices, operations and logistics, lead generation, sales force training, and business valuation. Additionally, Tia provides a broad and vastly useful knowledge of emerging computer systems and technologies including hardware, software, networking, and service.

- **Susan Hartford (Curriculum Committee)**

Susan's range of diverse educational and teaching experiences has provided her with a unique perspective that has been to Polaris' strong advantage. Susan is a former Head Teacher for the Harbors Schools and Family Services of Merrimac, MA. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Massachusetts, and has completed the coursework for her Master's Degree in Elementary/Special Ed. from Cambridge College. Most recently, she served as Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Marketing Committee Chair for the Scholars' Academy, School for the Gifted in Hooksett, NH. She is the mother of three young children, a home educator, and an advocate for gifted and talented education in New Hampshire.

- **John Hikel (Vice Chair)**

John is a New Hampshire State House Representative in Goffstown/Weare and a local business owner. John is also the Vice Chairman for the Transportation House Committee in Hillsborough. Polaris has been the grateful recipient of John's ability to rally supporters, constituents, donors, legislators, and the business community. John's strong commitment to school choice and improving the quality of education in NH is just one of the areas in which John hopes to make a difference in his community.

- **Jennifer Minicucci (Co-Chair)**

As a former Trustee of the Academy for Science and Design, Jennifer provides Polaris with real-world understanding of what it takes to start, run, and fund a charter school in New Hampshire. After several years in marketing communications for international firms, Jennifer applied her corporate experience to event-planning and fundraising for non-profit organizations in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, also serving on a number of Boards. Recently returning to school at the NH Institute of Art for a career change, Jennifer is now an interior designer. The process of meeting the diverse educational needs of her own three children has provided Jennifer with first-hand knowledge of district public schools, charter schools, private schools, and homeschooling.

- **Robert Minicucci (Marketing and Publicity Committee)**

Polaris is fortunate to have Robert's two decades of corporate communications and public relations experience at its disposal; especially once the foundation readies the school to open. Robert has developed programs for early-stage start-ups and public companies. He has contributed to The Boston Globe, and he has also produced a range of award-winning marketing materials including annual reports, advertorials, newsletters, case studies, product brochures, direct mail, and advertising. Robert successfully developed communications programs that secured national and regional and raised the profile of clients in such key outlets as The Wall Street Journal, ABC News, CNN, Bloomberg TV, Investor's Business Daily, The Chicago Tribune, The Baltimore Sun, and The Washington Post. He also ghostwrote many articles that have appeared in trade journals.

- **Elizabeth Putnam (Admissions, Staffing Committee)**

Elizabeth's experience in management and administration has been instrumental to the successful completion of Polaris' charter and will prove even more essential as the foundation moves from application to start-up mode. Elizabeth most recently held the position of Director of the former Scholars' Academy, School for the Gifted in Hooksett, NH. She has served as a deaconess and on the Sunday School Committee for the New Hampton Community Church, and as Secretary for the Bristol Nursery School. Before joining the education community, Liz worked for 10 years in the business field as owner and chief financial officer of a manufacturing corporation in central New Hampshire. Elizabeth is currently homeschooling her youngest child. Her older children are two of the original 35 students of the Academy for Science and Design Charter School.

- **Heath Putnam (Treasurer)**

Heath has generously applied his leadership skills and experience to Polaris' great benefit. Heath holds a BS in Mechanical Engineering and Six Sigma Green Belt certification. He is currently working toward his Black Belt certification as well as a Master's degree. Previously, Heath was vice president of a small manufacturing corporation for many years, but currently works as a Manufacturing Process Engineer Leader. In recognizing that young people need inspiration and mentorship to encourage them to continue their interest in Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM), Heath volunteers as a mentor for FIRST Robotics Team 2342. Along with a long professional career in manufacturing, Heath also volunteers as an Assistant Troop Leader for Boy Scouts of America Troop 75.

- **Diane Ramirez (Academic Objectives, Achievement Committee)**

Diane's knowledge and background in gifted education has been and will continue to be invaluable to the creation of Polaris. Diane is a certified SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted) educator; a gifted education advisor; and a certified teacher of middle and high school English in New Hampshire, where she teaches at the Academy for Science and Design Charter School. Diane received her undergraduate degree in English at University of Florida, and next summer completes a Master's degree in Educational Psychology, emphasis in Gifted Education, at the University of Connecticut.

- **JoAnna Telschow, M. Ed. (Secretary)**

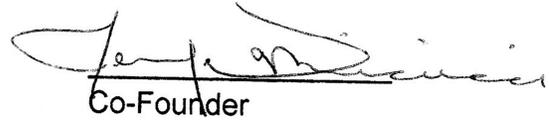
Polaris' charter has been greatly enhanced by JoAnna's practical classroom experience as a head teacher at a school for gifted children. JoAnna has more than ten years of experience in elementary and special education. She has worked both as a classroom teacher, and in administration as a special education chairperson. Throughout her career, she has made it her mission to meet the needs of each and every student she works with by using their strengths to support their challenges. By differentiating instruction and allowing students to be active participants in their learning, JoAnna helps motivate and challenge her students to reach their full potential. JoAnna has just recently moved out of state, but remains an avid supporter of Polaris and is dedicated to its success.

## Appendix B: Names and Addresses of Parents and Founders

Matthia Fogarty  
1 Surrey Lane  
Merrimack, NH 03054

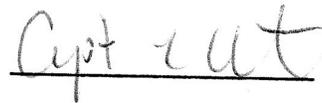
  
Co-Founder

Jennifer Minicucci  
63 Perry Road  
Bedford NH 03110

  
Co-Founder

### Committee Members

Crystal Chretien  
2021 River Road  
Manchester, NH 03014



Keith Fogarty  
1 Surrey Lane  
Merrimack, NH 03054



Bradley Hartford  
4 Norris Court  
Epping, NH 03042



Susan Hartford  
4 Norris Court  
Epping, NH 03042



Robert Minicucci  
63 Perry Road  
Bedford, NH 03110



Heath Putnam  
6 Essex Drive  
Bow, NH 03304



Laura Diane Ramirez  
121 Country Club Drive, #36  
Manchester, NH 03102



Kristian Telschow  
42 Whitford Road  
Nashua, NH 03062



## **(Appendix C) Outline of Polaris Charter School Accountability Plan**

### **A. Polaris Mission Statement**

### **B. School Program**

1. Grade and age levels served
2. Brief summary of curriculum design and instructional approach, including provisions that are made for students with disabilities and students who have limited or non-English proficiency
3. Brief description of key mission-related programs
4. Teacher/student ratio
5. School year and hours of operation
6. Brief description of the student application and enrollment process, including the deadline for submitting applications for enrollment in the coming year

### **C. School Staff**

1. Name of head of school (Principal, Headmaster, Dean...)
2. Name of business manager
3. Number of teachers
4. Summary of qualifications (e.g., yrs of experience, training, degrees/degree in field, licenses, certification/certification in field) and assignments of school staff
5. Staff attrition rate

### **D. Student Characteristics**

1. Number of students enrolled, by grade level
2. Student attrition rate during the year reported
3. Demographics (by race, ethnicity, gender)
4. Percentage of limited and non-English proficient students
5. Percentage of students with special education IEPs
6. Percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced price school lunch program
7. Average daily membership
8. Average daily attendance

### **E. Governance**

1. Board of Trustees members (names and affiliations), officers, and committee assignments
2. Advisory committees (member names and affiliations)
3. Meeting schedules for upcoming year

### **F. Finance**

1. A financial statement of revenues and expenditures for the year just ended
2. A balance sheet listing the charter school's assets, liabilities, and fund balances or equities
3. A copy of the school's approved budget for the current school year
4. The average cost per student (total non-capital expenditures divided by the FTE enrollment)
5. A list of all donors and grantors that have contributed monetary or in-kind donations having a value equal to or exceeding \$500 during the year reported

## **School Performance**

This section will report on what has been learned about the school's performance against the goals contained in its accountability plan. The section also will describe actions that are being taken to use accountability information to improve school programs, practices, and performance. Finally, the section will describe how the information is being reported to parents and the public.

### **A. Evidence of Performance and Progress** (from the school's accountability plan)

Information on school performance should be organized according to the three central questions that will guide the Board's decisions about charter renewal or revocation.

#### **1. Is the educational program getting results?**

- a. Educational Goals
  - A statement of the educational goals, performance indicators, and annual and long-term performance targets contained in the school's accountability plan.
  - A description of the student assessment tools and processes.
- b. Student Academic Performance
  - A summary of student performance on multiple assessments, including district-wide assessments.
  - For students with disabilities, evidence of attainment of the objectives contained in their Individual Educational Plan.
  - A summary of grade advancement and graduation rates, if applicable.
  - A summary of college admission test scores and college admission rates, if applicable.
- c. Student Non-Academic Performance
  - A summary of performance on non-academic student performance goals included in the school's accountability plan.

#### **2. Is the school a viable organization?**

- a. Organizational Goals
  - A statement of the organizational management goals, performance indicators, and annual and long-term performance targets contained in the school's accountability plan.
  - A description of the measurement tools and processes.
- b. Organizational Performance
  - A summary of the school's performance against each of its organizational management goals.
- c. Parent and Community Satisfaction and Support

#### **3. Is the school in compliance with the rules under which it operates?**

- a. Compliance with the Charter
  - Information describing how the school has observed the provisions of law and met the conditions of the charter

## **B. Unique Accomplishments**

This section of the report offers schools the opportunity to describe a few of their big successes, even those that may have been unexpected or unintended. Schools are encouraged to report their unique accomplishments in vignette form.

## **C. Lessons Learned and Actions Taken Based on Accountability Information**

1. Some important lessons learned from the school's accountability processes
2. Problems identified and program changes undertaken as a result of information generated through the accountability plan
3. Program modifications under consideration based on information generated through the accountability plan
4. Anticipated problems

## **D. Reporting Accountability Information to Students, Teachers, Parents, and the Public**

1. A description of dissemination activities, including reports, publications, meetings, or other initiatives completed, underway, or planned
2. Materials used by the school to communicate accountability results to its constituents may be included in an appendix to this report.

## **E. Improving the School's Accountability Plan**

1. Problems encountered in implementing and managing the school's Charter School Accountability Plan.
2. Recommended changes in the Accountability Plan based on your experience.

## **Audit Report**

1. An audit report prepared by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with Government auditing standards for financial audits issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

### **(Appendix D) Outreach Providers**

Agencies Polaris Charter School will use to identify low-income, culturally disadvantaged and other gifted children who would benefit from our school:

#### **Paraprofessionals, physicians and psychologists:**

- **Swing for the Stars**  
2 Pillsbury Street, Suite 404  
Concord, NH 03301  
Phone: (603)-228-STAR(7827)  
Fax: (603)-228-7828
- **DTS Inc. Therapy Rehab**  
370 Daniel Webster Hwy  
Merrimack, NH 03054
- **The Counseling Center of Nashua**  
One Main Street  
Nashua, NH 03064  
Phone: 603-883-0005  
Fax: 603-883-0007
- **The CLEER Institute**  
1 Tremont Street  
Concord, NH 03301  
603-223-5966

#### **State Agencies:**

- **New Hampshire Department of Education**  
Kenneth Relihan, Consultant Office of Gifted Education  
101 Pleasant Street  
Concord, NH 03301 (603) 271-6151
- **NH Association for Gifted Education**  
Teresa Morris, President  
PO Box 10432 Bedford, NH 03110  
nhaged@gmail.com <http://www.nhage.org/>
- **Greater Manchester Alliance for the Gifted (GMAG)**  
[allianceforthegifted@gmail.com](mailto:allianceforthegifted@gmail.com)
- **Granite United Way**  
2 Concord Street, Floor 2  
Manchester, NH 03101

603.625.6939 | 603.627.6057 (f)

46 South Main Street  
Concord, NH 03301  
603.224.2595 | 603.228.0395 (f)

21 Technology Drive, Suite 4  
West Lebanon, NH 03784  
603.298.8499 | 603.298.8590 (f)

P.O. Box 311  
Littleton, NH 03561  
603.444.1555 | 603.228.0395 (f)

- **ACCESS**

PO Box 3072  
Peterborough, NH 03458-3072  
Ph: (603) 924-7006  
Fax: (603) 924-9776  
John Vance, Executive Director  
Email: j\_vance@conknet.com

- **Child and Family Services of NH**

9 Hampton Road  
Exeter, NH 03833  
Ph: (603) 518-4002  
Fax: (603) 772-3787  
Joann Cobb, Program Director  
Email: cobbj@cfsnh.org

- **Children's Unlimited**

PO Box 986  
182 West Main Street  
Conway, NH 03818  
Ph: (603) 447-6356  
Fax: (603) 447-1114  
Jackie Sparks, Director  
Email: children@emailmv.net

- **Community Bridges**

2 Whitney Rd  
Concord, NH 03301  
Roy Gerstenberger, Executive Director  
Ph: (603) 225-4153 or 1-800-499-4153  
Fax: (603) 225-6159  
Website: [www.communitybridgesnh.org](http://www.communitybridgesnh.org)

- **Community Partners**  
 Forum Court  
 113 Crosby Road, Suite #1  
 Dover, NH 03820-4375  
 Brian Collins, Executive Director  
 Ph: (603) 516-9300  
 Fax: (603) 743-3244  
 Website: [www.communitypartnersnh.org](http://www.communitypartnersnh.org)
- **Community Strategies for NH (CSNH)**  
 1490 Elm Street, Unit 1  
 Manchester, NH 03101-1334  
 Ph: (603) 621-7072  
 Fax: (603) 621-7076  
 Deb Hopkins  
 Email: [dhopkins@crjustice.org](mailto:dhopkins@crjustice.org)
- **Easter Seals New Hampshire, Inc.**  
 555 Auburn Street  
 Manchester, NH 03103  
 Ph: (603) 623-8863  
 Fax: (603) 625-1148  
 Larry Gammon, CEO  
 Email: [lgammon@eastersealsnh.org](mailto:lgammon@eastersealsnh.org)  
 Susan Silsby, Vice President, 603-775-0195
- **Gateways Community Services**  
 144 Canal Street  
 Nashua, NH 03064  
 Phone: (603) 882-6333  
 Fax: (603) 889-5460  
 Sandra Pelletier, President/CEO  
 Beth Raymond, Vice President of Family & Individual Svcs  
 Website: [www.gatewayscs.org](http://www.gatewayscs.org)  
 Email: [info@gatewayscs.org](mailto:info@gatewayscs.org)
- **Monadnock Developmental Services-ISO**  
 121 Railroad Street  
 Keene, NH 03431  
 Ph: (603) 352-1304  
 Fax: (603) 352-1637  
 Chris Coates, MDS-ISO Director  
 Email: [chrisc@mds-nh.org](mailto:chrisc@mds-nh.org)

- **New Hampshire Connections: A Project of PIC Parent Information Center**  
 151A Manchester Street  
 Concord, NH 03302  
 603-224-7005
- **New Hampshire Family Voices**  
 129 Pleasant St.  
 Concord, NH 03301  
 Toll Free In State: (800) 852-3345 X 4525  
 or (603) 271-4525  
 Email: nhfv@yahoo.com
- **Opportunity Networks**  
 116 A Perimeter Road  
 Nashua, NH 03063  
 Ph: (603) 889-0796  
 Fax: (603) 546-0128  
 Rocky Morelli, Executive Director  
 Email: rmorelli@opportunitynetworks.org
- **RISE Early Intervention and Prevention Services**  
 147 Washington Street  
 Keene, NH 03431  
 Ph: (603) 357-1395  
 Fax: (603) 357-1397  
 Toni Ellsworth Executive Director  
 Email: tellsworth@riseforbabyandfam
- **The Parent Information Center**  
 PO Box 2405  
 Concord, NH 03302  
 (603) 224-7005
- **Easter Seals**  
 555 Auburn Street  
 Manchester, NH 03103

## **(Appendix E) Supporters**

### **Professional Support**

The following supporters have committed to providing Polaris with professional advice and support. Additional Information can be found on page 34, Section U: Identity of Consultants.

- Dr. Foad Afshar, Mental Health and Educational Services – CLEER Institute
- Mike Ball, CBRE, Commercial Real Estate Professional, Tenant Representative NH State Representative
- David Chauvette, Director, Academy for Science and Design a Chartered Public School
- Maurine Egan, A-Med, Resources For The Gifted & Creative Child
- Raymond Foss, Attorney Specializing in Family Law, Education and Individuals with Disabilities
- Kristina Germano, Comptroller at MDM Management Group, LLC (MA) and Cope Enterprises, LLC(PA), Financial Partner at Profits in Progress Investment Club
- Brenda Lee, M.Ed. Educational Liaison and SPED consultant
- Ken Relihan, Gifted and Talented Office, NH Department of Education
- Eileen Liponis Executive Director of NH Public Charter School Association
- Peter H. Reynolds, Co-Founder, CEO Fablevision Learning; Curriculum and High tech learning consultant; Best-selling Childrens' Book Author; Award-winning Illustrator; Educational speaker
- Denise Rodino, Faculty Grants and Government Relations, Smith College
- Marion Roessling, M.Ed
- Matthew Southerton, Director, Co-Founder New Hampshire Center for Innovative Schools

- Jennifer Stylianios, Pediatric MS OTR/L, ATP, Occupational Therapist, ATECH Services
- Adnan Tahir – Professor MCC, Technical Support Specialist, Director Sakai Learning Management System
- Dr. Jay Patil, M.D. and Licensed Psychiatrist
- Linda Jezierski, Weare School of Music

## Community Supporters

Brook Lunquist  
1 Alexander Lane  
Bow, NH 03304

Beth Scaer  
bscaer@gmail.com  
603-888-5487  
111 East Hobart Street  
Nashua, NH 03060

Celestia Lensky  
seegreet@earthlink.net  
603-883-6853  
22 Sims Street  
Nashua, NH 03063

Charlene Logsdon  
charlene.logsdon@mac.com  
603-216-5958  
23 Nottingham Road  
Windham, NH 03087

David Goldberg  
kathysuep@comcast.net  
11 Rolling Woods Drive  
Bedford, NH 03110

Diane Chubb  
dmc1003@yahoo.com  
603-635-2564

Elaine Isaak  
authorelaine@gmail.com  
34 Hardy Road  
Bedford, NH 03110

gtsociety  
gtsociety@comcast.net

Gwen Stratton  
603-553-6624  
267 Webster Street  
Hudson, NH 03051

Jacqueline Lianos  
jax0777@hotmail.com  
40 Skyline Dr  
Manchester, NH 03109

Kathleen Goldberg  
kathysuep@comcast.net  
11 Rolling Woods Drive  
Bedford, NH 03110

Deborah Knox  
brodysmom323@yahoo.com  
603-384-1244  
42A Joppa Hill Road  
Goffstown, NH 03045

Laurie Anderson  
laurel.anderson@asdnh.org

Lenore Mullett Edwards  
sageedwards@yahoo.com  
12 Willow Vale  
Atkinson, NH 03811

Nan Guterl  
49 High Point Road  
Newbury, NH 03255

Roger Ramirez  
603-606-1016  
121 Country Club Drive #36  
Manchester, NH 03102

Scott Logson  
charlene.logsdon@mac.com  
603-216-5958  
23 Nottingham Road  
Windham, NH 03087

Shannon Michaels  
603-210-1214  
300 Church Road  
Pembroke, NH 03275

Steve Lundquist  
steve@larianlequella.com  
1 Alexander Lane  
Bow, NH 03304

Terri Pessinis  
9 Osgood Street  
Windham, NH 03087

Karen Fioretti  
klfioretti@hotmail.com

Vinnie Stratton  
vgstratton@comcast.net  
603-553-6624  
267 Webster Street  
Hudson, NH 03051

Deborah Knox  
brodysmom323@yahoo.com  
603-384-1244  
42A Joppa Hill Road  
Goffstown, NH 03045

Ellen Mohnkern  
ellen.mohnkern@asdnh.org  
603-262-9162  
Academy for Science and Design  
316 Daniel Webster Highway  
Merrimack, NH 03054

Erin Ramshaw  
23 Clinton St  
Concord, NH 03301

Kristen Cole  
cole.kam@gmail.com  
140 Old Town Road  
Weare, NH 03281

Kim Murdoch  
603-369-7889  
10 Pearl Street  
Concord, NH 03301

Kristine DeCoursey  
decourseys@comcast.net  
59 Donovan Court  
Merrimack, NH 03054

Mari Twitchell  
34 Back River Road  
Bedford, NH 03110

Sylvia Anderson

Sarah Paratore

Vince Paratore

Thomas Guterl  
49 High Point Road  
Newbury, NH 03255

Tricia Desroches  
dylpickl@comcast.net

Veronika Hombs  
vhombs@yahoo.com  
424-0375

Laura Sterret  
10 East Hobart Street  
Nashua, NH 03060  
603-888-5338

Barbara Jarvis-Lefebvre  
cakegal1@hotmail.com

Judith Loeffler  
76 North Road  
Sandown NH 03873  
603-235-3083

Michelle Martel  
pmjmartel@comcast.net  
603-488-5111

Earl and Alice Tuson  
acjtuson@gmail.com

Amy Fillion

Kym Harrington

Jennifer Sylianos

TerryAnn Bowen

Ann Marie Banfield

Dana Fader Ossorio

Pam Stone

Peter Narotosky

Ryan Galloway

Mike Ball

Shane M. Stylianos

Jeff Degler

Kathleen Rutty-Fey

Rachel Graham

Brenda Douglas

Rebecca Goldwaite

Josh Shaine

Don Daigle

Tina Alexopoulos Miris

Rebecca Fredrickson

Sundra Durkis

Terrie Harris

Christina D'Allesandro

Jessica Donohue-Wachsman

Maria Roessling

Aimee Hall

Jennifer Monette Mangiafico

Mark Demers

Staci Roy Loeffler

Elizabeth Foye Miller

Hilary Bak

Bethany Peck Kalabokis

Mary Schreitmueller Hibbard

Jennifer McCormick

Bridget Layland

Bob Dostaler

Matt Fader

Nancy Lynah Harrington

Christine Taylor

John Scheffer

David Fogarty

Keith Fogarty

Betsy Oreilly

Melissa Baird

Lauren Romanuska

Lisa Guineau

Margaret Mauroff Barney

Katrina Macleod

Michelle Levell

Deborah Knox

Dellie Champagne

Erin Ramshaw

Jennifer Malkuns Baca

## **Educator and Legislator Support**

Polaris has received letters of support from various educators and state legislators in New Hampshire. These letters are attached. The supporters include:

- Kate Baker, Founder and President, Greater Manchester Alliance for the Gifted
- Gail Barry, NH Representative, Hills District 16, Manchester, NH
- Jill Cane, Ed. D, Education Consultant
- Carol Foley, Curriculum Coordinator K-12, Nashua School District
- Jim Forsythe, NH State Senator, Vice-Chairman, Senate Education Committee
- Frank R. Holden, NH House of Representatives, Vice-Chairman, House Science, Technology and Energy Committee
- Patricia Humphrey, Founder, NH Center for Innovative Schools
- Carol La Chance, Gifted Specialist, Chester Academy; Creator, LEAP program, Nashua NH
- Mary Mattingly, Director of Admissions, Academy for Science and Design
- Teresa Morris, President, New Hampshire Association for Gifted Education
- Mary Ellen Wessels, M.Ed., Intensive Needs Paraprofessional, Nashua, NH

## **Greater Manchester Alliance for the Gifted**

P.O. Box 6442  
Manchester, NH 03018  
603-785-0174  
[kateisrosie@gmail.com](mailto:kateisrosie@gmail.com)

May 21, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

The Greater Manchester Alliance for the Gifted (GMAG) supports the Polaris Charter School's application to become a public charter school in New Hampshire. As the founder of GMAG and the Scholars' Academy, I understand the need for a school that truly recognizes that gifted students have unique interests, needs, and talents. We, at GMAG, recognize that *every* child should be allowed to learn at appropriate instructional levels with a pace and depth of content matching their individual academic abilities and social development. Many, many parents have come to GMAG because their school has been unable to fulfill these needs. No matter what good intentions the teachers and administrators at the schools have, this is a need in New Hampshire that is not being met.

When their educational needs aren't being met, gifted children often lose interest in school and find other activities to occupy their time. These are the children who become the trouble-makers or class clowns and whose grades suffer. If their motivation to learn is lost in elementary school, it is often impossible to help a student to regain it later years. Many high school drop-outs are gifted. Polaris Charter School plans to prevent these students from traveling down this road of underachievement and anti-school attitude.

I have worked with many of the professionals who plan to or already work with Polaris. They truly understand gifted children, their needs, and what is vital for a school to succeed in educating such a promising, but at risk population. Polaris Charter School's education and business plans thoroughly address the important qualities that a school needs to succeed. The founders of Polaris Charter School have shown the commitment to develop a successful, positive learning environment for elementary children in the state of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

*Kate Baker*

Kate Baker  
Greater Manchester Alliance for the Gifted

**From:** Barry, J. Gail [<mailto:Gail.Barry@leg.state.nh.us>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 19, 2011 4:02 PM  
**To:** Tia Fogarty  
**Subject:** RE: Polaris Charter School

I have read with interest and excitement all information forwarded in your e-mail on the Polaris Charter School. This is a fine example of the charter schools we have envisioned. My wish is that such a school had been available for my eldest daughter when she had been in elementary school. The only answer to her abilities were, "she should be in private school", or we can have her skip a grade." She did, however reach her goals and graduated from Georgetown Law and is practicing in the D.C. area. This proposed school with its mission goal would have made her education so much more enjoyable and rewarding.

I look forward to following your upcoming achievements.

Respectfully,

Gail Barry

Rep.Hills.District 16  
Manchester, N.H.

Jill H. Cane, Ed.D  
22 Sandpiper Lane  
Merrimack, NH 03054

May 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with excitement and high praise that I write this letter of recommendation for the Polaris Charter School. As a former public school teacher and principal, and current curriculum consultant, I strongly support their application to the New Hampshire Department of Education. The Polaris Charter School addresses a very real need in the public schools of New Hampshire, and should be funded as a model of instructional innovation and a necessary educational foundation for our intellectually curious young students.

What the Polaris Charter School proposes would be a stimulating and successful educational environment for all students. Students would be challenged by an inter-disciplinary curriculum, provided in a structured and nurturing environment. A low teacher- student ratio would facilitate project-based learning in collaborative teams, and promote self-assessment of individual progress according to established social norms and academic rubrics. The Polaris Charter School would provide a model of various instructional strategies which current research has shown to be the very best practices to improve student achievement and sense of well-being.

The mission speaks to serving the whole child by “fostering creativity, academic achievement, a love of learning and the development of social and emotional skills.” While appropriate for all students, the proposal for the Polaris Charter School is particularly well-suited and most necessary for the very brightest elementary children. There is no doubt from research, nor from the local media that the educational needs of our youngest students with the greatest intellectual potential are not being addressed. Public school districts in NH are being forced to increase class size and to cut gifted and enrichment programs during these tough economic times. The children needing these services deserve an adequate public education in New Hampshire. Their only option may be the Polaris Charter School.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Jill H. Cane, Ed.D



Carol Ann Foley  
Math, Science and R.E.A.C.H. (Recognizing  
Extraordinary Abilities in Children)  
Curriculum Supervisor K-12  
Nashua School District  
141 Ledge Street  
Nashua, NH 03060-3071  
Telephone: 603-966-1015  
Fax: 603-594-4350  
foleyc@nashua.edu

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New Hampshire Department of Education  
101 Pleasant Street  
Concord, NH 03301-3494  
May 3, 2011

To Whom It May Concern;

It is my pleasure to write a letter in support of the proposal of Polaris Charter Foundation which is being submitted to the New Hampshire Department of Education to develop the Polaris Charter School.

The plan for Polaris Charter School is that it will be housed in the Nashua to Concord corridor or the state, accessible to a large percentage of the population of NH, with a plan to have additional satellites as time goes on. Between that fact and the recruitment of students from all socio-economic and culturally diverse populations makes this a compendium of beneficial beginnings. Polaris Charter School has made a comprehensive plan to develop and disseminate information about the school. Much thought has been put into how the school will show progress in all areas as needed for the NH Accountability Process Plan. The instructional model proposed fits best with advanced learners, and research has been put into planning on incorporating Response to Intervention into their school plan. The class structure will take into consideration small group, flexible work and will use Individual Learning Plans to track progress of students.

I believe that the benefits to having a charter school for primarily gifted students are many fold. Gifted students are often more advanced than their age peers in many significant ways. Their rate of development is faster than expected, causing them to reach a higher level of maturity. This puts them out of sync with their age peers and with the curriculum of the regular classroom in a regular public school. Not only have these students acquired more information in a shorter time, but they think with the greater depth and insight of older students. The two most significant assets for gifted and

motivated students are an appropriate educational fit and friends of similar maturity. Having Polaris Charter School as an option for these students will give a viable alternative to boredom in a regular classroom. The Polaris Charter School intends to "embrace each student's individuality and nurture their advanced academic needs while empowering them with self knowledge and social skills strategies", which will fill the need these students have when in a regular classroom.

Gifted students need opportunities to work ahead of the curve in a setting that matches his or her level and pace of learning. The right amount of challenge requires gifted students to stretch themselves and grow intellectually; too little challenge produces boredom and turnoff, an inevitable erosion of ability and commitment. It is this type of behavior I see in the gifted students with whom I have worked. As per other studies, when gifted students move into appropriate settings with mental age mates and are no longer effortlessly at the top of the class, they may find it disconcerting. However, they generally discover that, as never before, they are where they belong. Students typically are happier with friends who match them in mental age. Not only do their interests and conversations mesh, but so do their ideas of how friends behave toward one another (research from *A Nation Deceived*). What we are looking at with the opening of such a magnet Charter School is that the needs of many students would be met that are not being met in the regular classroom.

In conclusion, I agree with the efforts of the Polaris Charter Foundation as they seek to provide an alternative choice for families of gifted children and their siblings who are not thriving as well as they should in a traditional classroom setting. "*We commit to building a community of gifted students prepared to progress to the challenges of higher education, contribute to society in a productive way, and become lifelong learners.*" Such a quote is evidence of the intent of the Foundation to implement high quality education for this group of youth. I fully support their application to become the Polaris Charter School.

Sincerely,

*Carol Ann Foley*

Carol Ann Foley

Nashua School District

Math, Science and R.E.A.C.H. (Recognizing Extraordinary Abilities in Children)

Curriculum Supervisor K-12



# The Senate of the State of New Hampshire

107 North Main Street, Concord, N.H. 03301-4951

May 18, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

I write today in support of the charter school application submitted by the Polaris Charter Foundation. As stated in the mission of the application, Polaris Charter School will create an innovative elementary school engaging intellectually curious students by utilizing an accelerated interdisciplinary curriculum in a structured and nurturing environment.

The Polaris Charter School will strive to support the whole child by fostering creativity, academic achievement, a love of learning, and the development of social and emotional skills.

Polaris Charter School will continue the commitment other charter schools make to build a community of gifted students prepared to progress to the challenges of higher education, contribute to society in a productive way, and become lifelong learners.

Charter schools enable public education to offer choice schools that provide experimental alternatives responsibly and accountably, with lower mandates from the state. They also arise based on the needs and desires of the local groups that create them.

The Polaris Charter School deserves to be approved based on the excellence of its charter and the commitment of its founders to offer a challenging and interesting educational choice to families in New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. R. Forsythe".

Jim Forsythe  
NH State Senator, District 4

**From:** Frank R. Holden [<mailto:frholden@tds.net>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 19, 2011 2:43 PM  
**To:** Tia Fogarty  
**Subject:** Re: Polaris Charter School

Dear Tia,

I'd be happy to write a letter in support of Polaris Charter School. Hopefully this letter below is acceptable. Please let me know what I need to do next.

The importance of charter schools.

Giving the children of New Hampshire an excellent education should be one of our top priorities and it is of great importance to me personally.

Charter schools offer an opportunity for students that is not often available at their local public school. While the local public schools try to do their best with the resources at hand, they sometimes can be constrained by bureaucracy and inertia. Charter schools make an examination of the education process with "fresh eyes" possible. Assessments of different teaching methods can be tried and evaluated more quickly and objectively with a focus on the results.

With American students continuing to fall behind their counterparts in the industrialized world in math and science we must do something different. Maintaining the status-quo clearly isn't working. For the United States to remain competitive, it is imperative that we demand better results from our educational system. Charter schools are a big step in the right direction.

Charter schools offer something new and innovative and parents and even other schools around the state have noticed. The success of New Hampshire's first charter schools and the effort put forth by the teachers, volunteers and parents are a testament to the need to try a new approach to education. The popularity of these new charter schools and the excitement they have created reflects the need for more charter schools.

Polaris Charter School will provide children with an opportunity for an excellent education they might not otherwise have. We can and must do something different for the sake of our children, our future.

Frank R. Holden  
New Hampshire House of Representatives  
Vice-Chairman- House Science, Technology and Energy Committee

Patricia Humphrey  
78 Garvin Hill Road  
Chichester, NH 03258  
[pghu@comcast.net](mailto:pghu@comcast.net)

April 20, 2010

To Whom It May Concern,

The Charter of the Polaris Charter School is an inspiring document. It outlines a plan for an elementary school that would serve as a model for schools everywhere.

The school plans to use a project-based approach to learning with many integrative features. Ages will be mixed; cross-disciplinary teaching and learning will be emphasized; teachers and students will work together as partners in the learning process.

Accountability for these experimental approaches will be built into the system through the use of rubrics to ensure basic mastery of subject matter and through a personal learning contract for each child.

Charter schools enable public education to offer choice schools that provide experimental alternatives responsibly and accountably, free from the curriculum mandates of State and SAU. They also arise based on the needs and desires of the local groups that create them.

The Polaris Charter School deserves to be approved based on the excellence of its charter and the commitment of its founders to offer an challenging and interesting educational choice to families in New Hampshire. As with all charter schools, it is free and open to the public on a first-come first-serve basis.

Yours truly,

Patty Humphrey  
Founder, NH Center for Innovative Schools

Carol Wallas LaChance  
187 Middle Branch Road  
New Boston, NH 03070  
greenspirit17@gmail.com

May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I write in support of the Polaris Charter School application. I have been involved in education as a specialist working with gifted and talented students for the past thirteen years. I presently run a program for gifted students at a public elementary school in New Hampshire.

My experiences have shown me that gifted students learn differently and require educational challenges, emotional and social support. I offer a program that teaches Habits Of Mind through project-based learning that enhances and deepens the regular learning that is taking place through the NH standards and GLEs. Gifted students thrive when they are presented with project-based learning and have some choices about the topics they study. They are able to learn quickly and to explore connections when their curriculum involves integrated content. The Polaris Charter School application contains excellent examples of this type of curriculum. Gifted students have special needs that are quite as real as the special needs of students across the spectrum. Gifted students need to be challenged and given the freedom to learn at their own pace, rather than at the pace of the average student. Research shows that the brains of bright students learn material much more quickly, but that repetition can compromise its retention.

The Polaris Charter School application has wisely chosen to use teacher/student ratios that will allow teachers to give more attention to each student, allowing for more individualized teaching to occur. The recommendation of an ILP (Individual Learning Plan) is an excellent tool to support the potential of each gifted student. The focus on emotional support and twice-exceptional gifted students is another strong focus of their application.

I work closely with parents, several of whom have chosen to teach their students at home because of a lack of specialized curriculum for gifted students. This charter school would offer a choice to families. I am delighted to support this application. I believe education in New Hampshire as a whole will be enhanced by the development of Polaris Academy. Gifted students will benefit from receiving an education that truly meets their needs, and surrounding schools will have a resource for their bright students who struggle in the regular classroom.

Sincerely,

Carol Wallas LaChance  
Gifted Specialist

Mary Mattingly  
38 Falconer Ave.  
Milford, N.H. 03055

May 23, 2011

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing a letter in support of the Polaris Charter School. As Admissions Director for the Academy For Science And Design Charter School in Merrimack, N.H., I have the unique opportunity to speak to every parental group applying for admissions with their child. I can see on a daily basis the need for an advanced curriculum in our schools.

Parents contact me daily on the need for their child to be able to take "advanced courses". Their children come home daily complaining of being bored in school. I've even had a student, currently in 5th grade (applying for 6th grade at ASD) say that he "just wants a teacher who knows how to teach kids". Students who are bored in school have a higher rate of discipline issues, and are also at greater risk of dropping out of school.

The problem with our current system is the grouping of many students in a single classroom with a wide variety of learning styles and abilities. What often happens with a situation like that is the students requiring more directions are the only ones getting that attention, and the ones who have completed their work must then sit and wait for more work.

What we at ASD have been able to accomplish, and I believe is the goal of Polaris, is to not only have a smaller teacher to student ratio, but to also give advanced courses and placement to students who, in a traditional public school, would be sitting and waiting to learn.

Students eager to learn more advanced teachings in math, science and technology should be given the right to do so. Children who are given the opportunity to join in a classroom where they are in their own peer group blossom. These children-often for the first time in their lives are free to speak of their interest in academics without feeling they will be ridiculed for those interests. A child who is ridiculed for his or her academic achievements may eventually lose that interest, in effect "dumb themselves down" to more fit in with the other students.

Schools of choice, like ASD or Polaris, can offer our more gifted students with the

ability to grow academically in a safe and motivational environment. Every child deserves the chance to learn in this way, and I am hopeful that the Polaris Charter School will be added to our New Hampshire Chartered School Association in the near future.

Sincerely,

Mary Mattingly  
Director of Admissions  
Academy for Science and Design  
603-262-9162



April 27, 2011

Roberta Tenney  
School Standards Administrator  
New Hampshire Department of Education  
101 Pleasant St.  
Concord, NH 03301-3860

Dear Ms. Tenney,

The New Hampshire Association for Gifted Education would like to take this opportunity to send a letter in favor of Public Charter School applications that support the needs of gifted and talented students residing in the state of New Hampshire. As a non-profit organization our mission has always been to promote appropriate education of gifted and talented children, especially in the state of New Hampshire. We serve as a resource to parents of gifted and talented children and schools throughout the state who may be looking for guidance on identification, programming and assessment.

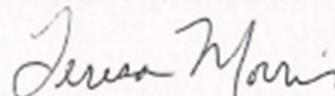
A recent survey completed by our organization showed that only about 13 public school districts in New Hampshire offered some type of Gifted and Talented programming, and more recent data shows that programs and personnel across the state have diminished further. As school districts face ever decreasing budgets, combined with increased pressure to focus on the needs of students performing below grade level expectations in order to make Adequate Yearly Progress, the result has been fewer and fewer public schools able to devote resources for meeting the needs of our gifted and talented students. This is especially dire for students living in rural communities where gifted students are often under identified. Additionally, gifted students with learning disabilities, behavior, and/or motivational concerns are even more at risk.

We are heartened by the strides made in teaching practices such as Differentiated Instruction or Response to Intervention (RTI), which in theory allow that *all* students must receive instruction at their educational level. The reality however is that very few teachers are certified to meet the unique learning needs and styles of a gifted student.

We therefore endorse an educational program that is purposely set up to meet the needs of the gifted and talented students in our state. We believe that families of highly gifted children must have more options, especially if they reside in a school district that offers no coordinated G&T program—a program that addresses the unique academic and social/emotional needs of a child achieving well beyond the established curriculum. We would support programs that use best practices that have been proven to be successful for gifted and talented students.

It is our sincere hope that the New Hampshire Department of Education, which recognizes diversity in our public schools and respects the needs of students with different abilities, will make a further commitment in meeting those needs by allowing the establishment of public charter schools designed to support gifted and talented students.

Teresa Morris, President

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Teresa Morris".

New Hampshire Association  
For Gifted Education

Mary Ellen Wessels, M.Ed.  
7 Greenwood Dr.  
Nashua, NH 03062  
[mew@mewsic.com](mailto:mew@mewsic.com)

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to encourage you approve the charter for the Polaris School. With school budgets being impacted by the still struggling economy, gifted programs such as REACH in Nashua are being cut. Now, more than ever, there is an urgent need for a community of learning to meet the needs of these students. Dr. Camilla Benbow noted in the study *A Nation Deceived*: “All kids deserve to learn something new every day – including the gifted. We can’t forget excellence in our effort to achieve equity.”

The Polaris charter also serves as a model for meeting the needs of all learners through approaches such as an integrated curriculum, multi-age projects, and small class sizes.

Perhaps more importantly, Polaris will meet the needs of the rapidly growing “2E” population. The number of autism spectrum students in public school classrooms is definitely rising. Many of these students have special behavioral and social needs and often suffer from sensory processing disorder. Polaris will offer these students a chance to thrive with challenging curricula, an individualized emphasis, and a social environment that will support growth. The Polaris Vision Statement says:

“The smaller classroom size and low student-teacher ratio will enable students to be stimulated by engaging academic conversation, but not overwhelmed by the distraction of sensory stimuli, and will ensure each child succeeds socially as well as academically...”

Webb and others have observed that gifted children can easily become underachievers. I am both a professional educator and the parent of two gifted boys, one of whom is 2E. With the recession putting private education increasingly out of reach, and public schools cancelling programs like REACH, my children and many like them will receive an education that is free and public, but not appropriate for their needs.

I urge you to approve the Polaris charter.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Wessels, M.Ed.