



*Brass City  
Charter School  
Annual Report*

*2013-14*

## BCCS Pledge

I pledge to make the world a better place, starting with me.

I will respect myself and others.

I will be safe and follow the rules.

I will actively participate in my learning.

We are Brass City Charter School –a community of critical thinkers and lifelong learners.



Brass City Charter School

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## *Mission Statement*

Brass City Charter School (BCCS) provides a rigorous academic and holistic social-emotional learning program that will eliminate the achievement gap for underserved students. BCCS enables students to soar academically, develop as people of character, and lead meaningful and productive lives both for themselves and for their community.





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*A letter from the Director of the School and  
Governing Board Chairperson*

Stefan Pryor  
Connecticut Department of Education  
August 2013

Dear Commissioner Pryor,

Brass City Charter School is pleased to submit its Annual Report for the 2013-2014 school year.

Brass City Charter School is celebrating the successful completion of its inaugural year. The school was very well received in the community and maintained a growing wait list throughout the school year, one indicator of Waterbury’s support of an alternate school of choice within the City. BCCS was granted its charter on June 5, 2013 and opened in September 2013 under tight time restraints, but thanks to the enthusiastic participation of volunteer family members and friends, the school building, which had been an old parochial school, was cleaned and painted and readied for its first students by the first day of school. The school opened with 114 students in grades pre-k through 1. One of our biggest challenges initially was the lack of start-up funds. We were not approved as a 501(c)(3) until April 2014 and that deemed us ineligible for most grants for the greater part of the school year. The school did operate within its budget but that meant a tightening of our belts in terms of both materials and personnel. The dedication, commitment, and creativity of our teachers were the keys to a successful year. Our special collaboration with the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra through BRAVO Waterbury!, an intense music program based on the renowned El Sistema of Venezuela, was an essential component of our overall program. BRAVO Waterbury! provides students with a holistic program that supports social connection and cognitive development, particularly executive functions and memory, as well as providing many opportunities to participate in the broader community. While students participate in BRAVO, teachers are provided time to collaborate with one another for planning purposes.

At BCCS we are very proud of our family involvement. We had very close to 100% parent attendance at each of our teacher/parent/student conferences. Our newly formed PTO sponsored two book fairs, put out reading challenges to students, hosted an end of the year field day, and sponsored a successful fund raiser - all in its first year of operation. An End-of-the-Year Parent Survey was distributed in June with a 50% completion rate. Overwhelmingly, parents reported high satisfaction with their experience at BCCS. A few parents questioned the length of the school day and a few others felt that we should give more advanced notice to upcoming events which we will address this year.

In September 2014 we will open our second grade classrooms.

As we plan for the future, we are very excited that we will be welcoming our first Academic Dean for the 2014-2015 school year. Her charge is to develop highly effective instructional curriculum, analyze school-wide data in order to design responsive student interventions, and devise and monitor high-impact support plans for struggling students. She will also directly coach teachers, observe lessons regularly and deliver targeted feedback to teachers, and collaborate with grade teams to plan units, lessons and assessments.

We are committed to reducing our student/teacher ratio for the primary grades for the instruction of language arts in order to increase our students' achievement in reading. We will add an additional teacher at each grade level and reduce class size to 13.

BCCS is entering into a promising collaboration with the CT Science Center for the upcoming school year in order to develop an intensive inquiry-based science program that also includes substantial professional development for our teachers. This initiative, along with BRAVO Waterbury, can be attributed to strong community relationships that have led to partnerships that will benefit our students.

Brass City Charter School looks forward to the coming year with optimism that we will continue to make progress in fulfilling our mission to provide a rigorous academic and holistic social-emotional learning program that will eliminate the achievement gap for our students. Our evolving culture and character program will continue to foster the development of our students as individuals who possess the character necessary for life success.

Sincerely,

Barbara L. Ruggiero, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

Annie Scott  
President, Board of Directors



## ***About Our School***

### **School Program**

The Brass City Charter application is found online at our website. Since we do not wish to exclude families who do not have computers, parents who walk into the office to apply in person are assisted by office staff to enter their information on the school computer. Online applications are available in both English and Spanish, and a bilingual staff member is available to assist walk-in applicants.

Following the Waterbury Public School lottery schedule, we cleared our 2013-14 waiting list in early February. All parents with children on the list were contacted via email so that they could submit new applications for 2014-15 if they wished to do so.

Applications were accepted through March 7 and an open lottery was held at the school on March 18. Because the numbers were still manageable, the process was completed manually. Each child's name was put on an index card, the name was read, and the card was shown to those in attendance before being put in a box.

On lottery day, all applicants for pre-k were accepted; there were spaces available for all applicants, so a lottery was not necessary for pre-k. Names of applicants for grades K-2 were pulled for waiting list positions. Cards were mixed up and pulled; results were recorded and parental notification emails were sent to all families to let them know if 1) child was accepted into the pre-k class or 2) their child was placed on the waiting list. For those on the waiting list, their number was also communicated to them in the email.

BCCS accepts applications on a rolling basis. Prospective students whose applications are received after the lottery are placed on the waiting list in the order received.

It is our policy to backfill open seats until April. Openings that occur in April, May, or June are filled from the waiting list at the end of the school year. Spaces that open during the summer are filled immediately.

Preference is given to siblings.

### **Recruitment**

We advertise that applications are open in several ways:

- Information is posted on our web page.
- A large banner is hung on the fence in front of the school.
- Flyers are faxed to local churches and pediatricians' offices.
- Flyers are delivered to the local StayWell Health Clinic and the public library.
- An email is sent to current families.
- Article in local paper that referenced that applications were open.

### **Student Transportation**

The City of Waterbury provides four buses to transport our students to school.



**Student Information  
2013-14 School Year**

	PK	K	1
Applications received for lottery	38	48	34
Applications receiving seats through lottery	38	38	34
Number of students on wait list after lottery	0	10	0

**2014-15 School Year**

	PK	K	1	2
Applications received for lottery	33	35	20	16
Applicants receiving seats through lottery	33	0	0	0
Number of students on wait list after lottery	0	35	20	16

Note: There were no openings in grades K-2 on the lottery date. Since the March lottery, we have filled seats that have opened. Several families moved out of Waterbury; those seats have been filled from the wait list. We have a rolling enrollment period and have received 54 applications since the close of the lottery; the wait list as of August 8 is as follows: PK - 12 / K - 46 / Grade 1 - 20 and Grade 2 - 18.



# ***Curriculum Design and Instructional Method and Modification***

## **Brief Summary**

We have modified our original plans in the following ways:

We have decided against using Wordly Wise this year, as the Reading Street program provided sufficiently challenging vocabulary for students.

We purchased Core Knowledge Listening and Learning Kits, but they were backordered and were not received until late spring. They were not implemented in 2013-2014, but we look forward to using them fully in 2014-2015.

The Step Up Writing program was not used in kindergarten. The kits are for grades K-3 and activities are geared more toward the upper end of the grade range. First grade teachers used Step Up to Writing as planned.

For 2014-2015, we have purchased Writers' Workshop kits for grades K-2.

Because the CT Science Center partnership includes curriculum development, and because it was unclear whether CT would adopt the Next Generation Science Standards or continue with the CT Science Standards, we did not purchase science kits as planned. Instead, teachers taught units following the content in the CT Science Standards, and materials were purchased as needed. For 2014-15, a full inquiry-based science curriculum is under development in collaboration with the CT Science Center. All necessary materials will be purchased, as will non-fiction texts to support the curriculum.

Initial curriculum was developed by teachers using the Backward Design process and reflecting practices in the model units on the State of CT webpage. As planned, administrators and teachers are working to review and revise the curriculum based upon lessons learned during the first year of implementation. The process will be ongoing. We continue to research best practices and incorporate new ideas into the curriculum. At this time, we are looking closely at the EngageNY mathematics curriculum for additional ideas, especially regarding assessments.

The pre-kindergarten curriculum was written by an early-childhood expert and is designed as a comprehensive preschool curriculum focusing on English Language Arts and Math that aligns with the Connecticut Grade Level Expectations (GLE's) for kindergarten entry. It also embeds the CT Preschool Assessment Framework Standards and new CT Early Learning Development Standards.

# School Goals

## I. Educational Progress of Students

Goal A:

Measurable Objective A.1:

Our goal as stated on the charter application was initially to compare our DRA end of year statistics with those of our local district and to demonstrate higher success rates. We would then, in subsequent years, compare previous year results to chart school progress.

Measurement Tool: DRA2

Benchmark: See chart below.

Progress in Meeting the Goal: By our initial benchmark we achieved our goal.

### DRA Spring 2013-2014 Percentage of Students at Each Level By Grade

	Number Tested	Substantially Deficient		Basic		Proficient		
		Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	
Waterbury	K	1296	130	10.0%	533	41.1%	633	48.8%
	Grade 1	1230	319	25.9%	503	40.9%	408	33.2%

### DRA Spring 2013-2014 Percentage of Students at Each Level By Grade

	Number Tested	Substantially Deficient		Basic		Proficient		
		Count	Row %	Count	Row %	Count	Row %	
BCCS	K	37	1	2.7%	6	16.2%	30	81%
	Grade 1	36	7	19.4%	10	27.78%	19	52.78%

**Special Education:** Grade K: 1 student (2.7%); Grade 1: 6 students (16.7%)

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2013-14 School Year:

BCCS students will meet 80% “Proficient” at each grade level.

Improvements Planned for 2014-15:

We are very excited about our plans for the upcoming school year. After assessing our outcomes we have made two important changes for the coming year. We have hired a full time Academic Dean. Her charge, which in general is to cultivate a high-achievement academic environment, includes developing a highly effective instructional curriculum, analyzing data to design responsive student interventions, and devising and monitoring support plans for struggling students. We believe having a person whose sole purpose is academic promises to be a huge boost to student achievement. In addition we have reorganized our class structure. In order to allow for increased individualized teacher instruction we have decided to divide each grade into three rather than two classrooms with thirteen students per class (excluding pre-k). Students will change classes for LA and be grouped homogeneously.

We will institute the Wilson Reading Program this year for struggling readers.

We will develop a leveled literacy library this year to support our reading program.

Professional development for the 2014-2015 school year includes a workshop on Reading Street and DRA2, digging into the data.

***I. Accomplishment of Mission, Purpose and Specialized Focus***

Goal A:

Measurable Objective A.1:

Brass City Charter School students will attend school regularly.

Measurement Tool: teacher takes attendance

Benchmark: 98% of students will attend school at least 95% of the time

Progress in Meeting the Goal:

Not met

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2013-14 School Year:

We will improve attendance by 10%

Improvements Planned for 2014-15:

We will improve attendance by increased parent education concerning the negative effects of absenteeism on academic achievement.

During the past year we tracked all data manually. We have recently purchased Alma, a student information and learning management system, that will allow the office to be more timely in flagging chronically absent students.

Goal B:

Measurable Objective B.1.

Brass City Charter School parents will support their child's education.

Measurement Tool:

Attendance taken by teachers.

Benchmark:

100% of parents will attend parent-teacher-student conferences

Progress in Meeting the Goal:

Met

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2013-14 School Year:

Maintain benchmark

Improvements Planned for 2014-15:

## ***II.***

### **Efforts to Reduce Racial, Ethnic and Economic Isolation and to Increase the Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the Student Body**

Goal A:

In order to support a pathway out of poverty, Brass City Charter School will focus on the development of positive character traits that confer resiliency and optimism.

Measurable Objective A.1:

Teachers will implement the PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) program in their classrooms.

Measurement Tool:

Director observation.

Benchmark:

All teachers will use the program daily.

Progress in Meeting the Goal:

Met

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2013-14 School Year:

None

Improvements Planned for 2014-15:

During this our second year, we will assess students progress in achieving the goals of the PATHS program by using a character report card.

Goal B:

In addition to rigorous academics, Brass City Charter School will support student achievement through daily enrichment activities that support cognitive development through the development of such functions such as self-control and memory and social connection. Programs will also allow students experiences in the broader community.

Measurement Tool: Developmental Assets Survey

Benchmark: not predetermined

Students will participate in the BRAVO Waterbury! program.

Progress in Meeting the Goal:

Developmental Assets represent factors in children's lives that facilitate positive development and resiliency. The more assets a child has the more likely he or she will demonstrate healthy development.

*Developmental Asset Scores: Overall, children averaged a developmental asset score of 90.1% (the highest score possible is 100%). This score is higher than the national average of 60% across over 700,000 evaluations.*

*Program Satisfaction Scores:* Overall, children reported being highly satisfied with the program.

*Children and youth participating in the program reported an average satisfaction score of 91.3% (100% is the highest score possible), which is above the national average of 70% across over 700,000 evaluations.*

Modification in Goal/Objectives for the 2013-14 School Year:

None

Improvements Planned for 2014-15:

The program will expand by offering instrumental instruction to students. BCCS is the “strings school” for BRAVO Waterbury!. Students will participate in an increased number of musical experiences in the broader community.



## ***Efforts to Effectively Attract, Enroll and Retain Students from Among High Need Populations***

Brass City Charter School is committed to effectively attracting, enrolling, and retaining students from among students who receive free or reduced priced lunches pursuant to federal laws and regulations. Waterbury is designated as a Priority School District by the Connecticut State Department of Education. BCCS’s student enrollment is comprised of 100% of children residing in the Waterbury School District. The special focus of recruitment efforts is in the most impoverished neighborhoods in Waterbury through distributing flyers to institutions within those neighborhoods. We will attempt to be more aggressive in our marketing in these neighborhoods during the 2014-2015 school year. We recently hired a Director of Development and an important component of her job is to raise awareness of the school in the city and most particularly in the neighborhoods in which we recruit. Sixty- two percent of students qualified for free/reduced priced lunches for the 2013-2014 school year.

Our retention rate for the 2013-2014 school year was 86%. Of those families who chose to withdraw from BCCS, 6% moved outside of the City of Waterbury so by definition were ineligible to remain at the school.



# Financial Information for 2014-15 Fiscal Year

**[DIRECTIONS:** Provide FY 2014-15 budget; include all revenues from private, state, federal and local sources and evidence of Governing Board approval.]

	Proposed 2014-15
<b>REVENUE</b>	
4110 State Charter School Grant	\$1,628,000
4120 School Nutrition	\$111,746
Fresh Fruit/Vegetable Grant	\$5,700
4130 Title Grants	\$42,019
4200-4300 Grants - Foundations, Corporate	\$170,000
4500 Fundraising	\$176,855
	\$2,134,320
	\$2,134,320
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	
5110 Payroll - Admin	\$352,000
5120 Payroll - Teachers	\$610,703
5130 Payroll - Education Aides	\$200,352
5140 Payroll - Clerical	\$40,280
5150 Payroll - Nutrition	\$44,308
5160 Payroll - Custodial	\$28,880
5171-5183 Payroll Taxes & Employee Benefits	\$196,002
Subtotal Salary & Benefits	\$1,472,525
5190 Pupil Services	\$4,000
5195 Employee Training & Development	\$26,620
5197 Field Trips	\$7,400
5198 Student Transportation	\$8,880
5200 Rent	\$84,000
5210 Utilities	\$37,000
5211 Alarm	\$1,660
5215 Dumpster	\$3,600
5220 Repair/Maintenance Services	\$25,800
5230 Repair/Maintenance Supplies	\$16,000
5310 Food - Nutrition Program	\$77,850
5315 Nutrition Supplies - Non-Food	\$5,920
5410 Textbooks/Periodicals/Software (inc assessments)	\$55,800
5420 Classroom Supplies	\$27,000
5513 Parent Activities	\$1,480
5515 Printing & Copying	\$2,000
5520 Administrative Expense	\$10,000
5522 Insurance	\$8,650
5525 Dues & Fees	\$5,740
5530 Communication	\$2,495
5540 Audit	\$7,400
5541 Payroll Service Fees	\$2,200



5545	Outside Contract Services	\$11,800
5550	Professional Technical Svcs	\$8,000
5600	Travel & Meetings	\$4,000
	Depreciation	\$17,000
1200	Computers	\$83,500
1500	Furniture/Copier	\$16,000
	Reserve for operating expenses	<u>\$100,000</u>
		<u><u>\$2,134,320</u></u>



## ***Best Practices***

Brass City Charter is committed to providing ongoing professional development for its faculty. All but one of our founding teachers were part of TEAM this year. We hired outside mentors who the teachers found to be invaluable to their professional growth.

As all our program materials were new to everyone this year, we scheduled professional development with the publishers’ trainers as part of PD. Workshops were held on Reading Street and Math In Focus (3 days to date). In addition, we provided training on the DRA with a focus of digging into the data as well as a separate workshop on “using data to drive instruction.” As part of our new collaboration with the CT Science Center, teachers have spent a total of 7 days focused on inquiry-based learning. During the year we shared and critiqued “book talks/think alouds” with one another.

The program BRAVO Waterbury! provides the time needed for teachers to meet, share, reflect, and modify instructional practice. When students are in BRAVO, teachers meet.

It was evident as the year progressed that we needed someone who would become the instructional leader, freed of all other distractions and able to develop a true collaborative learning community where staff is able to meet, share, reflect, and modify instructional practice. We have hired an Academic Dean to do just that and she has been working with teachers since the beginning of July. She is charged with developing *ongoing professional development which is aligned with the school’s common focus and high expectations to improve the performance of all students.*



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## ***Status of Charter Renewal Findings and Follow-Up Activities***

Review all follow-up activities associated with the school’s last charter renewal. Provide a concise update on all matters detailed in the report which required follow-up.

It is important to be clear and concise as this information will be used by state reviewers as part of the charter school’s next charter renewal.

N/A



Also, June 20, 2013 resolution stipulating that checks in excess of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) have two signatures. 9 votes passed. August 7, 2013 official full board meeting to pass the above resolutions.

Post Charter Approval:

July 24, 2013: Board approved written agreement and participation in the National School Lunch Program.

December 4, 2013: Board approved conflict of interest statement proposed at October meeting.

December 4, 2013: Board resolved to apply for a \$100,000-\$125,000 line of credit with Webster Bank with the expectation that if used, to pay down such line of credit by the second 2014 payment from the state to BCCS. Carried unanimously.

March 6, 2014 & April 16, 2014: Board resolved to revise Articles of Incorporations to bring them in line with IRS code for Not for profits and to include in next revision of the By Laws. Subsequent meeting to pass resolution on Changes to Article II and Article XI of Bylaws to bring Mission Statement and Dissolution / Revocation of charter into line with IRS code and article of Incorporation.

June 18, 2014 Corporate Bylaws : (attached) Resolution to include revisions based on amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and suggestions from spring strategic planning retreat.

June 18, 2014 Resolution on School Lunch / Nutrition Program. Annual approval of agreement and Board understanding that The Healthy Food Certification document states that BCCS will not sell any food items to students during school hours that do not meet the CT Nutrition Standards.

June 18 2014 resolution to Accept the recommendation of the finance and audit committee to procure the services of King, King & Associates as official BCCS auditing firm.



## *Summary of Other Key Accomplishments*

- Summer Term: During the month of July, 85% percent of the BCCS students participated in our four week summer term. The program consisted of a morning session of academics and an afternoon session with BRAVO Waterbury!. Hours ran from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily.
- We have entered into a collaboration/partnership with Leever Foundation to implement the BRAVO Waterbury! program and a three year initiative with the CT Science Center to imbed inquiry based learning into the science program with the goal of it effecting other cross disciplinary subjects.
- We outfitted a kitchen for the school and we have on staff a chef who provides fresh, non-processed food each day. It is a non-pricing program where all children eat at no cost to them. We secured the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable grant for the 2014-2015 school year.
- Joined Waterbury's Bridge to Success - a partnership of 84 local organizations and over 200 community members working together to prepare Waterbury's youth for success from cradle to career. Bridge to Success provided the Developmental Assets Survey analysis for BRAVO Waterbury!.