

City On A Hill Public Charter School offers free schooling, preparation for higher education, and emphasizes citizenship

City On A Hill Charter Public Schools are three high schools in Boston and New Bedford whose presence have affected thousands of lives in a positive way, prepared the same lot for higher education and helped them hone the necessary social skills and community outreach to be productive citizens.

Charter schools have been quite the hot topic as of late. Starting in 1991 in Minnesota, the number charter schools in America has grown exponentially. Today, there are over 5,600 schools with over 2 million students enrolled. Charter schools have gained in popularity, because many are top performers in the nation when it comes to schools period. In addition, a higher percentage of students that graduate from a charter school are accepted into a university or college.

Why Charter Schools?

Charter schools, like City On A Hill were created because of what some passionate educators, saw as failures in the public school system. These educators felt that the government was too restrictive in terms of curriculum and that many students were adequately prepared for higher education. They wanted more freedom, input and control with what they taught and how they taught it. The model was to take responsibility for a student's achievements. They believed that the educators themselves should be held accountable and that the blame should not be placed on the students for poor performance, but on the staff.



City on a Hill's dedicated staff lead by example – here they are about to run the New Bedford Half-Marathon to raise monies for the tutorial program.

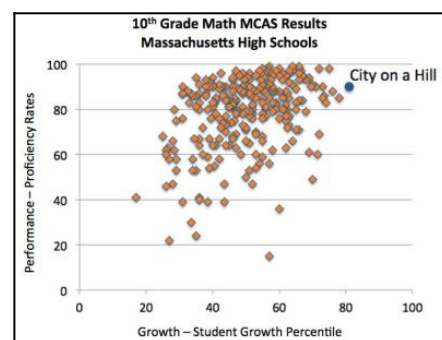
A cookie cutter curriculum that fits all students was felt to be impractical and left those students who needed extra attention, struggling. Those students who excelled were also left under-stimulated, bored and unchallenged. This freedom allows the staff to alter the curriculum to fit each individual student's needs on a *daily* basis. Advanced students would be challenged, excel and showcase those talents. Students who needed extra attention would get that extra attention and not be left behind.

Furthermore, going beyond academics, charter schools feel strongly about making their presence strongly felt in the community. Whether it's raising monies for a local charity, doing community work like environmental clean-ups, or some other type of activity, charter schools feel this connection to the community is an extremely important aspect to a complete schooling.

Charter Schools are public schools, therefore FREE

Contrary to belief there are no special requirements and there is no tuition – charter schools are open to **all** children. They are public schools that adhere to all state regulations.

City On A Hill at 384 Purchase Street is one of New England's premier charter schools. They take all of the aforementioned attributes and go beyond them. Principal Kim Wall, graduate of Harvard Graduate School of Education and two year principal of Nativity Prep before her tenure at City On A Hill, is determined to provide a unique school culture, unparalleled in the area. She takes her role very seriously. "I am honored, privileged, and blessed to work with the students, families, and staff at City on a Hill New Bedford. Everyday, I wake up excited to go to school. Passion, flexibility, teamwork, and consistency anchor our work. No two school days are the same and I love that."



CoaH's high standards of academics lead to results like these in the Math MCAS.

Principal Wall and staff haven't re-invented the wheel, but are developing more effective ways to promote positive transfer, or insuring that learning – academic and social – is taking place. This is born out when discussing with students what their experiences were. "This school is all about graduating and going to college. They prepare you for life. They'll help you in as many ways as possible. They're very understanding and that's what makes CoaH unique. I really like this school and you might too." declared student, Julie Chauvin.

Other students, like Joshua Semidey felt that the smaller school translated into a more intimate environment "CoaH is a

small school, and I like that because you can make a family here. It's not just your small group of friends, and you know the whole school, and they're all family...every one of the teachers care for the students, and they'll help you succeed."

While students will encounter the standard topics like mathematics, English, History, Spanish and Science, to graduate they will also have to complete two other special courses. One is a city project course whereby they research and identify a local issue, write a paper and complete 100 hours of service to that issue. The other is a Literacy & Numeracy course whereby they meet tutors in individually planned sessions. This course will prepare the students for not only AP exams and MCAS, but any class, course or job that will involve math or reading. Which is pretty much every job that exists. It's extra. It goes above and beyond. It will serve these students for the entirety of their professional and personal lives.

A staff focused on your students present *and* future education

But the positive experience certainly isn't limited to just the students. Tutorial supervisor, Sam Johnson went into some detail about an exchange with a student during her first month at City On A Hill. This particular student was doubtful about his college options, because he wanted to relocate to California where Stanford University was – his first choice and dream. Johnson reaffirmed to this student that she and the staff at City On A Hill would do everything in their power to ensure that he would be attending Stanford and that he'd better start reading travel books on California.

This particular discussion was a powerful one for Johnson. It was a moment early on that let her know that she had made the right career choice. This is why she gets up in the morning – not just to educate, but to inspire and motivate. "I want to make sure students not only know that they have the ability to go to college, but that they also know about as many college options as possible, so that they pick the college that is the

best for them.



One of the ways CoaH prepares their students for college? These students are doing a mock MCAS on a Saturday!

It's also equally important to me that this conversation starts during their 9th grade year so that they have this light at the end of the tunnel that they are constantly working toward – not just during their 11th or 12th grade year when the opportunity gap is widening and their possibilities can be much more limited.”

So what kind of results have CoaH had? 100% of CoaH students pass the MCAS and every single one of them “...earn college acceptance or placement in a post-secondary program appropriate to their learning needs.” This is impressive in itself, but when you take into account that the majority of the students who initially come to Coah from other public schools, arrive performing under their grade level.

When it comes to preparing the students for higher education, the teachers have a number of resources at hand. The juniors and seniors are enrolled in **seminar courses** lead by college counselors. They will fill out college applications, housing, meal planning and financial aid forms, and even take SATs. Having every question answered along the way.

When you have a staff that loves doing what they are doing, are passionate about their goals, and positively driven towards ensuring that the students have a positive, lasting experience that will serve them a lifetime, you have something special. City On A Hill is just such a place and if you spend just a few short minutes with anyone from the staff or one of the students, you will find out quickly for yourself. If you know someone's child that attends City On A Hill, just ask them about their experience. I've included some testimonials at the bottom of this article, but you can also peruse their photo stream to get a visual perspective of what happens at City On A Hill.

If you are not pleased with the current state of public schools and considering a charter school, there are a number of excellent reasons to do so. If you want your child or children to have a unique experience by educators who go above and beyond what is required, you would be hard pressed to find a better place than City On A Hill. Passionate, inspired educators doing what they love and want to do, taking each student on an individual basis and preparing them for higher education and life, sums up what City On A Hill *is* and *does* – with proven results.

Currently City On A Hill has a 9th grade and will add one grade per school year, culminating in a complete high school with grades 9-12 in the 2017-2018 school year. It is at the current Church Street location temporarily, but will move to its downtown location (384 Purchase Street) once renovations are done.

So how does one **enroll** a child or children into the school? The demand is high, so to be fair to all, there is a lottery process. The application is available in English, Spanish and Portuguese and can be found **here**.

Testimonials

"What I like about CoaH is almost everything. To start off every teacher is very caring and tries very hard to help you become successful. Since we are a small community, everyone knows who you are...[and the] tutors, who are also amazing at getting to know you and become not only your teacher but also a friend." –**Gary Brum Jr.**, student.

"I like how the teachers are very determined to help you succeed. They work hard to get you where you need to be no matter how challenging it is. They believe in you. CoaH is a very great school for you if you plan on going to college." –**Alyssa Cardoso**, student.

"I've had the opportunity to work in several schools, and I am fortunate to now be working at City on a Hill. It's a privilege to work with staff and students who have set their goal on college, and I am greatly enjoying helping them to realize this goal."–**Kerri Furtado**, teacher.

"With the small amount of students enrolling at City on a Hill, we get more one-on-one attention with the teachers. This allows us to better understand the curriculum. They are kind and patient with us... I'm glad that I made the decision to come here. My journey so far has included meeting new people, making new friends and learning new things. I hope that my journey to college continues in this way!" –**Emilie Lapointe**, student.

"CoaH is different from other schools because we are a family. I get more support and help from CoaH than from any other school that I've been to." –**Omarylis Lopez**, student.

"I like how it's a small school and in classes there are no more than 25 people, so it's easier to learn in class. I like how we have tutorial too because no other school has it and it gives you the extra help and support that some of us need."

–**Kyara Polanco**, student.

<em">What I love about CoaH is we get a lot of help whenever we need it. The teachers here are great and they care about us. We have a lot of activities. We have a lot of fun. This school makes me believe that I'll get into college." –**Zillah Carrion**, student.

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