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Connecticut Board of Education Approves High School for Disengaged Students in Windham

Hartford, Connecticut.....

The State of Connecticut Board of Education Wednesday, June 5 unanimously approved a charter application to open “Path Academy,” which will be led by Hartford-based non-profit applicant Our Piece of the Pie (OPP). Path Academy will re-engage over-age, under-credited students in the Windham region by supporting them through mastery of the critical skills necessary for success in college, career and community.

Path Academy students will earn credits at an accelerated pace with mastery-based progression versus “time-in-seat” to achieve credits. With a maximum size of 200 students, the school will integrate technology (blended learning), project-based learning, and extended learning time opportunities to ensure mastery of skills and concepts aligned with the Common Core State Standards and Connecticut State Frameworks. This work will be anchored by student supports, such as youth development and postsecondary preparation, which will help students to remove barriers, provide long-term guidance and focus on their academic success.

Over-age, under-credited students are those who have fallen behind in credit accumulation and have therefore fallen behind their original graduating cohort by failing to be promoted from grade-to-grade. This student population is a key contributor to the state’s dropout crisis. A recent study by Dr. Andrew Sum at Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies, found that each Connecticut dropout costs the state more than \$500,000 over his/her working lifetime.

With Windham’s graduation rate of 62.8% and English Language Learner (ELL) incidence at 26.7%, compared to Connecticut’s overall graduation rate of 81.8% and 5.5% ELL students, Path Academy will enhance educational options for these struggling students. Working with Windham Public Schools leaders, the Windham Federation of Teachers, and community members/organizations, founding members have taken a school design targeting students and ensure that it will tackle the specific needs of students in the Windham region.

Our Piece of the Pie®, Inc. (OPP®) will serve as the Charter Management Organization for Path Academy. OPP’s mission is to help urban youth become economically independent adults. With the belief that success in adulthood includes being able to meaningfully contribute to society, OPP provides a framework to guide youth, with the specific goals of high school graduation, achieving a college degree or vocational certification and obtaining rewarding post-education employment.

OPP has a demonstrated history of success with at-risk youth, including over-age, under-credited youth in high school settings. Over the past 5 years, OPP served close to 3,000 youth in Hartford, with 82% of youth graduating high school, 77% enrolling in postsecondary programs and 80% retaining employment for 12+ months. Specifically with over-age, under-credited students in high school, OPP's Opportunity High School in Hartford has graduated 148 students -- 148 previously drop-outs or near drop-outs.

"OPP is so excited about bringing this new resource to this community," says Bob Rath, President and CEO of OPP. "We appreciate the support from the Windham region over the last 18 months as we've been working to develop the model together to ensure that community needs are met."

Path Academy will open in the Fall of 2014 with up to 120 students at a location to-be-confirmed.



About Our Piece of the Pie:

Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping 14 to 24 year-old urban youth become economically independent adults. OPP's unique model is centered around the intense and consistent relationship developed between each youth and a caring, committed and proactive adult staff member. That relationship helps participants identify and overcome barriers, access support services and programs and achieve the goals of high school graduation, college degree and/or vocational certification and rewarding post-education employment. For more information, please visit www.OPP.org.

About Path Academy:

The mission of Path Academy is to re-engage over-age, under-credited students in education, supporting them through mastery of the critical skills necessary for success in college, career, and community. Path Academy's innovative model, academic program, and overall vision has been created in service to the Windham region's over-age, under-credited students. Path Academy will offer these students a supportive environment in which to turn from current or future high school dropouts to scholars achieving high academic and non-academic standards.

Unanimously approved in June 2012 by the State of Connecticut Board of Education, Path Academy is a charter school to open in the fall of 2014. An executive summary of the application is located at <http://www.opp.org/About/publications.html>.