

## **Spirit Preparatory Charter School: A Blended Model of Project-Based Learning, Face-to-Face Learning, and Online Instruction**

### **ABSTRACT**

“Spirit Prep Charter School” is a “Blended Model” Charter School Program in New Jersey. The project director and contact person for this project is Mr. Patrick Byrne, Spirit Prep founding director (201-723-4965 [patrick@cityprepacademies.com](mailto:patrick@cityprepacademies.com)). The State Educational Agency is the New Jersey Department of Education, P.O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ, 08625-0500. Spirit Prep Charter School is founded on the principle that the blended learning model of project-based learning, face-to-face learning, and online instruction with an integration of instrumental music will serve as a catalyst for the academic, career and social success of all students. The program will nurture and inspire a passion for learning, collaboration and arts in students who might not otherwise have an opportunity to develop their artistic skills.

Spirit Prep will provide a new educational option for up to 600 grade 9-12 students in the Irvington, East Orange, and Newark areas, each of which has limited quality high school options and art programs but increasing challenges with drug use, violence and gang involvement among its youth. At Spirit Prep Charter School the focus is always on student achievement. As the research in our charter application illustrates, students who participate in the Arts perform higher than their peers who do not. Immersion in an arts program coupled with a rigorous academic program can only increase the potential for academic gains. In Newark and East Orange, only a small percentage of students can benefit from this type of immersion. In Irvington, 0% of students have this option.

The founders understand that students need multiple pathways to success and the guidance of well-trained and caring adults. With those principles in mind, the school has identified two primary objectives:

- To demonstrate how delivering a tailored instructional program, combining the best elements of online and traditional instruction and infused with instrumental music, gives students the content knowledge, critical thinking skills, and confidence to compete and create in the 21st century global marketplace.
- To provide an alternative to gang activity. Students at Spirit Prep will have the opportunity to join performance groups, such as a drum corps or jazz band. The teamwork, discipline, and camaraderie fostered in these groups satisfy the need for belonging and excitement that many young people crave. Developing technical skills in instrumental music and learning about careers in music also broadens their thinking about their future.

This project supports the purposes of the Charter School Program by:

- increasing national understanding of a unique charter school model which with potential to be replicated;
- enabling a high quality charter school of this type to offer a highly effective individualized public school education choice to grade 9-12 students; and
- providing the opportunity to evaluate the effects of this charter school model on students, student academic achievement, staff and parents.