

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Review Team Report on South End Village Academy Private School Application

Date: June 3, 2026

Prepared for: Superintendent of Boston Public Schools and Boston School Committee

School Name: South End Village Academy (SEVA)

Location: 1525 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02118

Mailing Address: 1 Cumston Street, Boston, MA 02118 (until June 15, 2026)

I. Overview of the Review Process

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) Review Team conducted a thorough evaluation of the South End Village Academy private school application. The review team engaged in a process based on the Boston School Committee Private School Approval Policy. The BPS Review Team's recommendations are a direct result of the criteria set forth by the Boston School Committee for the approval of new private schools.

The review process included:

- A review of application materials
 - A set of questions for the SEVA team based on the initial review of the application
 - An evaluation of follow-up responses submitted by SEVA on June 2, 2026
 - A site visit on June 3, 2026 to assess facilities and operational readiness, including a Q&A interview session with school leadership
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II. Summary of Findings

A. Mission, Philosophy, and Admissions

SEVA's mission is to provide a rigorous, student-centered education in a tight-knit, diverse community, preparing students with strong academic foundations, a sense of self, and a lifelong love of learning. The school's educational philosophy balances structured academics with purposeful play, explicit instruction, hands-on inquiry, outdoor learning, and close adult relationships, grounded in a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity.

SEVA's first-year admissions relied substantially on existing relationships with families from The Croft School community. As of the date of this report, enrollment for SY 26/27 stands at 81 students, exceeding the 77-student projection in the budget. For future years, SEVA has

described plans to extend outreach more intentionally into the broader South End and surrounding neighborhoods through open houses, community-based information sessions, partnerships with neighborhood organizations, and relationship-building with early childhood program leaders across Boston.

The school targets 40–50% of students receiving some form of financial support. The budget projects a scholarship rate of 30%, a figure that measures aggregate aid as a percentage of gross tuition rather than the share of students receiving aid. SEVA has a functioning Financial Aid Committee overseeing awards.

B. Curricular Model and Academic Accountability

SEVA's instructional program is grounded in evidence-based curricula. Literacy instruction draws on Foundations, Heggerty, Handwriting Without Tears, and EL Education. Mathematics is delivered through the Eureka Squared curriculum. Science uses PhD Science, and history and social science standards are embedded in interdisciplinary project-based learning units. Spanish is offered across all grades. The school plans to use LAP-D in the earliest years, DIBELS beginning in Kindergarten, and NWEA MAP beginning in Grade 3, alongside ongoing teacher observation and curriculum-embedded assessments.

The school's two-teacher classroom model (one lead and one associate teacher) is designed to support low student-to-adult ratios and enable flexible grouping, small-group instruction, and responsive differentiation within the school day. The target student-to-adult ratio is approximately 6:1, with an average class size of 16 and a maximum of 18.

Academic progress will be formally documented and communicated to families through progress meetings in November and March, supplemented by weekly teacher newsletters, a digital portfolio platform (Seesaw or equivalent), and ongoing communication. The review team found the assessment strategy to be coherent and appropriately calibrated for the school's grade span.

C. Student Support Services and Health

SEVA does not represent itself as a full special education provider. The school uses a three-tier MTSS framework to identify and support students with a range of learning needs. A learning specialist has been hired from within the existing teaching staff. Formal MOUs are in place with Play2Learn (occupational therapy), In My Words Speech and Language Services, and the Boston Child Study Center. These providers will deliver services on-site during the school day.

When a student's needs exceed what SEVA can provide — such as a substantially separate setting or high-frequency related services — the school has described a clear process for working with the family and BPS to identify an appropriate placement. The Assistant Head of School, Caroline Fisher, serves as the designated coordinator for all MTSS, service scheduling, and compliance documentation.

The review team notes that more intensive language support for multilingual learners beyond classroom scaffolds and the EL Education curriculum has not yet been formalized. This is an area SEVA should continue to develop.

A part-time licensed school nurse is planned at approximately 10 hours per week. During hours when the nurse is not on site, the school will rely on trained designated staff, written emergency protocols, and 911 activation when warranted. One full-time staff member is an American Heart Association Certified Instructor and EMT who will conduct annual CPR and first aid training for the full team.

D. Facilities and Operations

SEVA will operate out of 1525 Washington Street in Boston's South End, the former primary South End location of The Croft School. The lease was signed on May 13, 2026, with a start date of June 15, 2026. The facility includes classrooms of approximately 700 square feet each, child-accessible bathrooms, common gathering space, kitchen access, teacher work areas, and indoor and outdoor play amenities including a climbing wall and sandbox.

Because the lease term did not begin until June 15, 2026, safety and occupancy inspections and approvals are still in process at the time of this report. SEVA has represented that all required certifications (including fire, safety, and occupancy) will be obtained before students begin occupancy in September 2026, and that it will provide documentation to BPS promptly as approvals are finalized. The Director of Operations, Victoria Martel, is the designated point of contact for coordinating with city departments and inspectors.

During the site visit, the review team observed that the current facility is designed for preschool and pre-kindergarten use and that the addition of first, second, and third grade students in year one will result in meaningfully increased occupancy. SEVA leadership noted they are actively working to formalize shared-space agreements with two neighboring nonprofit organizations: St. Stephen's and the Salvation Army. These agreements have not yet been executed. The review team regards formalizing these partnerships as an important step toward ensuring that the physical environment adequately supports the full grade span as the school grows.

SEVA does not intend to request BPS transportation for its students.

E. Staffing and Financial Viability

SEVA's leadership team is anchored by Head of School Cristina Lopez and Assistant Head of School Caroline Fisher. Lopez brings ten years of experience as a Dean of Academics and Middle School Principal in public charter schools in California and Massachusetts, as well as prior experience as Head of School at The Croft School, and holds a master's degree in School Leadership. The Head of Finance and Operations position is currently in the interview process. The Director of Operations, Victoria Martel, is on staff.

The founding instructional team includes six returning teachers and one new teacher. Mean teaching experience across lead teachers is nine years. Fifty percent hold a teaching certificate

or license, and fifty percent hold a master's degree or other advanced degree. SEVA has expressed a commitment to increasing the proportion of licensed educators over time and to supporting associate teachers in pursuing licensure as a formal part of their development pathway.

Financially, SEVA projects a year-one operating deficit of approximately \$599,000, which is fully covered by a secured, unrestricted \$1 million founding pledge from a board member. Year-one enrollment of 81 students, above the budgeted 77, provides additional confidence in the near-term financial picture.

Year two carries more significant financial risk. Rent nearly doubles, from \$500,000 to approximately \$1,020,000, with the addition of a second, as-yet-unsigned location. SEVA has identified a potential expansion site and is in active lease negotiations, with cost assumptions based on current market conditions of \$25–35 per square foot on a triple-net basis. Enrollment is projected to grow to 141 students, a trajectory the school describes as consistent with historical enrollment patterns at The Croft School's South End campus. The projected year-two deficit narrows to approximately \$299,000, covered by a combination of annual fund contributions and remaining founding pledge reserves. Year three projects a modest surplus of approximately \$169,000.

The review team notes that year-two financial stability is contingent on both the enrollment growth and the second-location lease being executed on the terms assumed. Cost-containment measures described by SEVA — including multi-age classroom configurations if enrollment does not support dedicated classrooms — are reasonable, though specific financial triggers for activating those measures have not been formally defined.

III. Additional Feedback

- **Multilingual Learner Supports:** While SEVA has strong classroom-level scaffolds and the EL Education curriculum for multilingual learners, more intensive individualized language supports beyond these have not yet been formalized. The school should continue to develop this area as enrollment diversifies.
- **Records Management:** Student records will be maintained in FACTS, a secure electronic system, in accordance with Massachusetts 603 CMR 23.00 and M.G.L. c. 71, § 34H. The Head of School is responsible for the privacy and security of all student records.

IV. Final Recommendations

The BPS Review Team recommends approval of the South End Village Academy application, subject to the following conditions:

- **Submit Safety and Occupancy Certifications:** SEVA must provide BPS with all required safety, fire, and occupancy certifications for 1525 Washington Street prior to the opening of school in September 2026.
 - **Execute MOUs with Neighboring Organizations:** SEVA must formalize written shared-space agreements with St. Stephen's and the Salvation Army prior to welcoming first, second, and third grade students, to ensure that the physical environment adequately and safely supports the school's full first-year grade span.
 - **Submit Second-Location Lease Documentation:** Once the lease for the second location is executed, SEVA must provide a copy to BPS promptly, along with any updated financial projections reflecting final lease terms.
 - **Public Report on Financial Health:** The review team suggests SEVA present a full financial public update through the Boston School Committee within six months of the school's opening, covering year-one financial performance, year-two projections, and the status of the second-location lease and associated enrollment and cost assumptions.
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BPS Review Team Members

- Anne R. Clark, Development Officer for Strategy, Partnerships, and Innovation and Acting Assistant Superintendent of Autonomous Schools
- Kelsey Smithendorf, Deputy Chief of Staff