

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2010-2011

Proposed School Name:	Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School
Grades Served At Full Capacity:	6-12
Number of Students At Full Capacity:	595
Proposed School Location:	Boston (South Boston Education Complex: Odyssey High School)
Proposed Opening Year:	FY2013 (Founding group and BPS would like to open FY12)

Public Statement:

Boston Green Academy is an innovative Horace Mann charter school for grades 6-12 that will replicate the successful practices of Boston’s Fenway High School to ensure that all students—especially those who have struggled socially and academically—will graduate prepared for success in college and the workforce. BGA will equip its graduates to be leaders in environmental stewardship and activism and to take advantage of opportunities in the burgeoning “green” economy. The school will open in 2012, absorb the student population of a current BPS high school to be identified by the Boston Public Schools, and grow to maximum enrollment of 595 students in 2015.

Mission Statement:

Boston Green Academy’s mission is to graduate all of our students prepared for success in college and the workforce. We are especially committed to recruiting, enrolling, and supporting off-track 6th and 9th grade students before they enter the “drop-out pipeline”. As a public school that is deeply vested in cultivating a highly skilled and actively engaged global citizenry, we will prepare all of our students to be leaders in local and global environmental stewardship and activism, to live their lives responsibly and sustainably, and to take advantage of employment opportunities in the burgeoning “green” economy.

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	9, 10, 11, 12	340*
Second Year	6, 9, 10, 11, 12	425*
Third Year	6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12	510*
Fourth Year	6-12	595*
Fifth Year	6-12	595*

* **Note:** Student enrollment figures and grade size may change based on pending negotiations with BPS over facility size, the total future enrollment of the BPS high school that BGA will replace, and other factors. Enrollment figures will be finalized by Fall, 2011, as detailed in our MOU-A, and will not exceed the numbers listed here.

Mission, Vision, and Description of the Community(ies) to Be Served

Primary Strengths

- The mission clearly defines the purpose and values of the school with a clear focus on the students it intends to serve.

Primary Weaknesses

- While reviewers thought the use of the term ‘green’ within the application was not clearly explained or integrated, during

<p>(Section I.A.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vision is meaningful and serves as an organizing principle for the application. The vision describes an educational program that provides a ‘rigorous, relevant education in a caring environment’ and incorporates the best practices of Fenway High School. (Section I.B.) • While at the time of the application, the applicant group did not know which specific school population they would be serving in the city of Boston, the application provides strong evidence of the value and demand for the Fenway High School programming. The application proposes that replication and expansion of Fenway’s practices at the proposed school will increase the options available to Boston families and duplicate Fenway’s success with diverse learners. (Section I.C.) 	<p>the interview the applicant group provided additional context to explain the school’s ‘green’ focus. (Section I.A.)</p>
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Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application provides research to support the proposed programming choices of replicating Fenway practices, trauma sensitive support, and visual learning to address the needs of the diverse learners within the anticipated student population. (Section II.A.) • The application describes a clear plan and thoughtful curricula selections that are consistent with the mission and the educational philosophy to serve all learners with a rigorous, relevant education. The application describes a ‘green education’ that involves problem solving, grappling with complexity, mastery of skills in science and math, strong emphasis on argument, public exhibitions of mastery, and college preparatory experiences.’ (Section II.B.) • The application addresses non-academic goals through specific character development programming, such as 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the multiple pieces of the educational philosophy align with the school mission and are integrated into the implementation of a comprehensive educational program, the sheer number of components and the complexity of integration concerned reviewers. (Section II.A.) • The core beliefs of the philosophy were unclear to reviewers though during the interview the applicant group was able to provide additional information about the ‘design consciousness’ of the school and the use of trauma informed and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) programming. (Section II.A.) • The application provided limited information about the process to facilitate ongoing development, improvement, and refinement of curriculum. The application indicated that faculty and school leaders will focus on these tasks during the
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Advisory, peer-mediated dispute resolution training, community service learning, and career exploration and internships. (Section II.B.)

- The application provides descriptions of a variety of instructional methods that are consistent with the proposed school’s educational philosophy and highlight a commitment to serve all learners. (Section II.B.)
- The application states that teachers will be supported in learning and implementing the proposed school’s model through professional development in the summer and during the year. The application also explicitly states that in the future new teachers will have an extra week of summer orientation and co-plan classes with a mentor teacher. (Section II.B.)

summer and school year. During the interview, the applicant group indicated that the proposed board of trustees has content area subcommittees that are working to identify and fill gaps. (Section II.B.)

- While the application discussed implementing Critical Friends Groups and the Collaborative Coaching and Learning Model, it was still unclear how faculty and school leaders would use student achievement data to evaluate and improve curriculum and instruction. (Section II.B. and II.D.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- The design and implementation of eighth grade review, sophomore spotlight, junior review and senior institute as methods for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and indicate their readiness for promotion are aligned with the school’s mission and based on high expectations. (Section II.C.)
- The high school graduation standards are based on high expectations for all students with the requirement of four years of content area study for all disciplines. (Section II.C.)
- The application describes multiple measures to assess student progress and diagnose student needs. The proposed school will use assessments available through the district and internally developed assessments consistent with the proposed school’s programming. (Section II.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The plan to measure student progress towards attaining non-academic goals appears to be in the early development stages and lacks focus on any tangible goals or specific assessment methods. (Section II.D.)
- Though the application emphasizes the use of student achievement data at every stakeholder level for different purposes and the collection of data into a Student Information Management System, it is unclear how these pieces will be integrated into a process to facilitate school-wide decision-making about programming and professional development. (Section II.D.)

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The application clearly describes programming components and the strategies to support students with a wide range of needs. These strategies include morning Advisory meetings, proposed single gender math classes in the middle school grades, a Learning Center for academic support and long instructional periods to provide time for varied and targeted instruction. (Section II.E.)
- The application provides a clear plan for developing a school culture. The applicant group has developed strategies to address the challenge of engaging Odyssey students into the new culture. They propose home visits and summer academy prior to opening and then numerous activities during the year such as town meetings, special events and public exhibitions. (Section II.E.)
- The application described a clear plan for building and maintaining family-school partnerships, such as an annual family needs survey, family retreats, a Family Center and family-staff potlucks in addition to student led conferences and exhibitions. (Section II.E.)
- The application and applicant group emphasized the caring environment of the proposed school evidenced in the high number of guidance counselors (four full time staff) and trauma-informed training for all staff. (Section II.E.)
- The application provided a clear student behavior philosophy and discipline plan that is consistent with the proposed school's mission and philosophy. The behavior policies demonstrate a clear appreciation of individual rights and responsibilities that is strongly connected to the proposed school's vision. (Section II.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While the application includes a lengthy list of potential community partners and the applicant group explained that at the time of the application they did not know which school they would be located in, it is not clear which external programs will be brought into the school and why. During the interview, the applicant group conveyed that they intend to realign potential new partnerships to best leverage their selected location in South Boston. (Section II.E.)

Special Student Populations and Student Services

Primary Strengths

- The application describes providing professional development for faculty in the ‘Response to Intervention’ model, Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) category training, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to provide content area teachers the expertise to serve diverse learners within the general education curriculum. (Section II.F.)
- The application provides a clear and explicit description of the processes and procedures used to identify, assess, and serve English language learners. The support services and staff qualifications described are accurate. (Section II.F.)
- During the interview, members of the founding team shared additional information about their extensive expertise in designing and implementing trauma sensitive and UDL programming and the plan to develop tools and provide professional development at the proposed school. (Section II.F.)
- The applicant group intends to access district programs, such as athletic programs and arts opportunities, to increase opportunities for students. (Section II.F.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While the special education staffing reflects a commitment to service students with special needs, the application provides a limited discussion of the processes and procedures to be implemented for the special education programming to operate. It is clear that a Special Education Coordinator will perform the identification and assessment of students with special needs. (Section II.F.)

Enrollment and Recruitment

Primary Strengths

- The recruitment plan is clear and targeted to students, representative of the populations they intend to serve, English Language Learners (ELLs), special needs, low income, and ‘off-track’ academically. (Section III.A.)
- All application materials will be provided in multiple languages representative of the student populations in Boston. (Section III.A.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The applicant group wishes to shift opening from FY13 to FY12 in order to meet the district’s needs to serve the students of a closing high school at the South Boston Education Complex. The proposed board has discussed not only the change in opening date but the changes from serving grades 6-9 in the prospectus to grades 6-12 in the final application. The board acknowledges the challenges of developing curriculum for grades 9-12 and inheriting former Odyssey students who may not feel a connection to the

proposed school's programming. (Section III. A.)

- The growth strategy of the proposed school is clearly in response to the district's needs. While the proposed school benefits from the economies of scale during its first year in staffing levels and programming capabilities, it will remain a challenge to ramp up such a complex proposal in such a short period of time. (Section III.A.)

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- The proposed board of trustees provides expertise that is diverse and demonstrates experience in education, school leadership, professional development, non-profit management, science and technology, community development, and environmental affairs. (Section III.B.)
- The proposed board of trustees will include parent, faculty, student and community partner voting members reflective of the proposed school's mission and program. While reviewers were concerned that this did not represent a clear workable structure, during the interview the applicant group described the system as part of the replication of practices at the Fenway High School. They also intend to replicate the Leadership Team, Family Council and Student Government structures. (Section III.C.)
- The governance model supports a clear reporting structure among the board, school leader, school administrators, and staff. (Section III.C.)
- The proposed board of trustees has formulated criteria to evaluate the Headmaster and intends to solicit feedback from all stakeholders, staff, parents, teachers, and partner organizations, in order to do so. (Section III.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The proposed board of trustees lacks specialized expertise in finance and law amongst its board members. (Section III. B.)
- The proposed board of trustees has an uneven understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a charter school board of trustees. But, these issues could be addressed during opening procedures training. (Section III.B.)
- It is unclear within the application how the different constituencies participating in the governance model will be trained to effectively contribute to the proposed school's management. (Section III.C.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- The application provided clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for the school's leader and other administrative staff and an explicitly stated rationale for their leadership roles that aligns with their mission. (Section III.D.)
- The application describes faculty working conditions that emphasize teacher effectiveness through limited teaching loads and time for planning and collaboration during the school day. (Section III.D.)
- The applicant group developed their staffing plan in concert with feedback from the district's budget department to best align their mission with the availability of resources. (Section III.D. and III.F.)
- The application contains the necessary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the proposed school and the district and clearly outlines the key agreements. It also contains the draft MOU between the proposed school and potential school employees with details regarding working conditions and provisional waivers. (Section III.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- No primary weaknesses.

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group intends for all students to be provided with MBTA passes to facilitate transportation to and from school as well as participation in learning activities throughout the city of Boston. (Section III.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- No primary weaknesses.