

Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools Executive Summary

*This was prepared by the founding group of the
Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools.*

Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools, 5th – 12th grade public schools, will prepare students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college. Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools are founded on the philosophy that all students are entitled to and can succeed in college preparatory programs when: 1) the curriculum is rigorous, engaging, and well-planned; 2) the school emphasizes student character, community responsibility, and exposure to life's possibilities; and 3) a community network supports student academic, social, and physical well-being.

Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools will be based on the successful model created by Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, a 6th – 8th grade public school located in Mission Hill. Since its founding in 1999, Roxbury Prep's enrollment has grown to 256 students. The student body is currently composed entirely of students of color. Most students live in single-parent households and 76 percent qualify for either free or reduced-price lunch. Internal and external assessments of entering 6th grade students at Roxbury Prep indicate that students, on average, arrive with poor basic academic skills—one-third of enrolling students typically score at least two years below grade level on the Stanford 9 Achievement Test.

On the 2010 MCAS exams, Roxbury Prep has closed the achievement gap: one hundred percent of 8th graders passed the Math and English Language Arts exams, scoring Advanced and Proficient at a rate of 82% and 93%, respectively. Roxbury Prep was recognized by Governor Patrick as a Commendation School, citing Roxbury Prep students' impressive student achievement gains. Roxbury Prep has been cited by the United States Department of Education and national organizations such as the Education Trust as one of the best charter schools in the country, a model for closing the persistent racial achievement gap.

School Overview

Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep will be singularly focused on preparing students to matriculate into and graduate from college. Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep students will be challenged, enriched, and supported. The first class of seventy-five 5th grade students will begin in August 2011 and a new class will be added each year until Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep each serve up to 600 students in grades 5 – 12.

Daily Schedule

Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools will place an intense focus on their core academic program. The school day will run from 7:45 AM to 4:15 PM—the significantly longer school day will allow for additional instructional time to address previous academic deficiencies and to provide for more academically

challenging opportunities. Every student will take two literacy classes and two mathematics classes each day in addition to social studies and science. Each academic class will meet for nearly one hour. Extended learning will occur before school, after school, in Saturday sessions, and through summer opportunities. Additionally, all middle school students will participate in a mandatory extended day Enrichment program from 3:15 PM to 4:15 PM. Enrichment classes will include visual and performing arts, athletics, and foreign language. High school electives will be offered throughout the school day rather than at the end of the day.

Curriculum and Instruction

The hallmark of Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools' program will be a rigorous curriculum focused on reading, writing, speaking, and mathematics. Advanced Placement exams, state guidelines, and other successful college preparatory programs will be used to establish specific, rigorous, and measurable academic standards. All courses will align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF) and MCAS exams. Teachers will meet for three weeks each summer to develop and refine the curriculum. To encourage student achievement through reflective teaching, improved practice, and collaboration, teachers will form Inquiry Groups. During summer and school-year Inquiry Group meetings, teachers share their own work and analyze student work to consider teacher efficacy, evidence of student learning, and achievement of goals.

Character

Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools' classes, Community Meetings, and school programs will encourage students to be confident, responsible, positive, determined, compassionate, and reflective leaders. Friday Advisory class will focus on deepening student understanding of concepts described in the Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools' creed such as dignity, community, and leadership. Student achievement is dependent upon a positive, safe, caring, and vibrant school community. In order to ensure high academic standards, Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep will maintain high personal standards. Each school will require a dress code and enforce a strict code of conduct in which misbehavior is not tolerated. The safe environment will allow classes to be focused and effective and enable Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep to celebrate learning and recognize each student's academic and personal talents and accomplishments.

Community

Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools will rely on a vast array of community resources and organizations to provide students with sufficient structure and support. Families—the school's most important partners—will be expected to monitor schoolwork, communicate effectively with Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep, and ensure that students arrive on time every day. Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep will keep families involved and well-informed through orientations, family nights, family/teacher conferences, family breakfasts, bi-weekly advisor/family phone calls, newsletters, monthly academic progress reports, a Homework Hotline, evening programs, and the Family Involvement

Committee. The parental demand and wide community support for Roxbury Preparatory Charter School is evidence of the support that will exist for Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep.

Founding Group Capacity

The founding group of the Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools consists of the Board of Trustees of Roxbury Preparatory Charter School led by Greg Shell, Chairperson, Will Austin, Co-Director of Roxbury Prep, Debby Saintil Previna, Principal of Grove Hall Prep, and Oliver Truog, Director of Operations of Grove Hall Square Prep. This Board and leadership of Roxbury Prep have worked together to create conditions for the outstanding results of Roxbury Preparatory Charter School. First and foremost, this group has the capacity to make Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep successful by utilizing the model of and lessons learned from Roxbury Preparatory Charter School. In addition, the Roxbury Preparatory Charter School Board of Trustees has engaged Uncommon Schools, a non-profit charter management organization with a tremendous track record, as a partner in building and managing Dorchester, Dudley Square, and Grove Hall Preparatory Charter Schools. Uncommon Schools manages twenty-three schools in New York and New Jersey serving students in kindergarten through 12th grade that have consistently closed the achievement gap and are among the highest-performing public schools in the Northeast. Evan Rudall, the CEO of Uncommon Schools, is a founding Co-Director of Roxbury Prep and Josh Phillips, the COO of Uncommon Schools, is a former Co-Director of Roxbury Prep. In exchange for a management fee, the Board of Trustees will receive programmatic and operational services from Uncommon Schools.

Uncommon Schools will provide curriculum and instruction support to the leaders of Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep through Managing Director Dana Lehman. Ms. Lehman taught at Roxbury Prep from 2001-2004 and served as Co-Director for Curriculum and Instruction from 2004-2010. Ms. Lehman will be able to provide hands-on coaching and support to the leaders of Roxbury Prep Charter School, Dorchester Prep Charter School, Dudley Square Prep Charter School, Grove Hall Prep Charter School, and any other future schools that are part of the network. In addition, Roxbury Prep teachers and leaders will have access to a full range of quality professional development opportunities through Uncommon Schools. Uncommon Schools will provide significant operational support to Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep. These services include teacher and staff recruitment, fundraising, financial management and payroll, real estate, human resources, marketing, and technology. The founding group's experience with a successful school model and the partnership between the Board of Trustees and Uncommon Schools ensures that this founding group has the capacity to allow Dorchester Prep, Dudley Square Prep, and Grove Hall Prep to effectively serve students and families by preparing its students to enter, succeed in, and graduate from college.