

**FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2010-2011**

<b>Proposed School Name:</b>	UP Academy Charter School of Boston ( <b>Horace Mann</b> )
<b>Grades Served At Full Capacity:</b>	6-8
<b>Number of Students At Full Capacity:</b>	486-500
<b>Proposed School Location:</b>	Boston (South Boston: Gavin Middle School)
<b>Proposed Opening Year:</b>	FY2012

**Public Statement:**

UP Academy Charter School of Boston is proposed as a new Horace Mann Charter School opening in fall 2011, serving students in grades 6-8. In addition to enrolling 162 incoming 6th grade students, UP Academy aims to, that first year, serve all rising 7th and 8th grade students previously enrolled in the Patrick F. Gavin Middle School, an underperforming district school that BPS intends to close after the 2010-11 academic year. UP Academy will ensure that its students acquire the knowledge, skills, and strength of character necessary to succeed on the path to college and to achieve their full potential.

**Mission Statement:**

UP Academy will ensure that its students acquire the knowledge, skills, and strength of character necessary to succeed on the path to college and to achieve their full potential.

**Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:**

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year (2011-12)	6, 7, 8	486
Second Year (2012-13)	6, 7, 8	486
Third Year (2013-14)	6, 7, 8	486
Fourth Year (2014-15)	6, 7, 8	486
Fifth Year (2015-16)	6, 7, 8	486

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

**Primary Strengths**

- The mission Statement simply defines the purpose and values of the school and it is succinct. (Section I.A.)
- The vision Statement aligns and expands on the mission. It gives a short-term, mid-term, and long-term vision of the proposed school. It is both practical and inspirational and illustrates a compelling image of the school which serves as an organizing principle for the application. (Section I.B.)
- The application speaks to the value of the proposed school to provide a rigorous

**Primary Weaknesses**

- While the application clearly has support from the district, it provides limited information about support from parents, teachers, and other staff members within Boston. The application itself contained a number of support letters from Boston Public Schools parents, non-profit organizations and colleagues at Boston area charter schools. (Section I.C.)

program with high expectations that has been specifically designed to serve students who are struggling academically. It explains how this school will enhance and expand the educational options in Boston. (Section I.C.)

- In describing the student population that the proposed school would serve, the application provides general academic and demographic data indicating that a high percentage of students at Gavin have not mastered basic skills and that the school serves a racially diverse student population with a high percentage of low-income students. (Section I.C.)

### **Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The educational philosophy describes the founding group’s core beliefs and values with the fundamental belief that “people matter most.” The application asserts the vital importance of success in college and emphasizes that their approach includes six attributes: relentlessly high, consistent academic and behavioral expectations; seamless and detailed operating procedures, rigorous standard-based curriculum, wide-reaching network of supports, an obsession with regularly and effectively using data, and an atmosphere of enthusiasm and joy. They go on to explain that these attributes are driven by an urgency in all they do, and that stakeholders cannot accept or make excuses for anything less than excellence. These beliefs and values build and expand on the school’s mission and are integrated into the implementation of a comprehensive educational program. (Section II.A.)
- The application explains the process the proposed school will use to develop the curricula. The applicant group intends to build upon the base curricula and use processes that have been implemented at high performing urban public middle

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- While some research is cited about the educational philosophy and the curriculum serving the diverse needs of individual students, it is not explicit. (Section II.A.)

schools to eliminate the achievement gap in a short period of time. (Section II.B.)

- While the outline of the curriculum is generalized, the section is very explicit in terms of dosage and structure. (Section II.B.)
- The application offers a clear plan to evaluate curriculum effectiveness and has curricular components that will facilitate ongoing development, improvement, and refinement of the curriculum. (Section II.B.)
- The application included a description of the instructional methods and classroom procedures that will be used to deliver the curriculum and support high standards of achievement for students with diverse needs. (Section II.B.)

#### **Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards**

##### **Primary Strengths**

- The performance, promotion, and graduation standards are cohesive and fairly easy to understand for all stakeholders. (Section II.C.)
- The assessment system describes high academic and non-academic standards, features multiple measures of student outcomes using standardized tests and internally developed instruments that are consistent with the school's mission. (Section II.D.)
- The Assessment System as a whole is thorough, clear, credible, and sound. The system is linked to curriculum and instruction and facilitates decision-making about adjustments to the educational program. The school is passionate about continually improving the academic program with consistent and transparent communication of results to all stakeholders. (Section II.D.)

##### **Primary Weaknesses**

- No primary weaknesses.

## **School Characteristics**

### **Primary Strengths**

- The application provides a clear plan for the educational program for students and faculty. It offers explicit information about the daily schedule, operating procedures, and articulates a broad range of services to support students with a wide range of needs. The applicant group was able to clarify some of the particulars about tutoring, enrichment, Homework Club, and other programming components. (Section II.E.)
- The application describes the culture of the school as driven by a sense of urgency and a rejection of excuses, where there is enthusiasm for learning, academic achievement, and college preparation. Although the applicant group is aware of the difficulty in building this kind of culture, they offer a plan to establish the norms and facilitate the culture. (Section II.E.)
- The application and applicant group discussed some of the challenges they may encounter turning around the culture of an existing school. They have designed a number of thoughtful strategies to address some of these inherent challenges. (Section II.E.)

### **Primary Weaknesses**

- While the PREP expectations are described in the application, very little detail is given about the student behavioral philosophy in this section. (Section II.E.)

## **Special Student Populations and Student Services**

### **Primary Strengths**

- The application describes the processes and procedures that the proposed school will employ to identify, assess, and serve student who are English language learners. (Section II.F.)
- The application describes the processes and procedures that the proposed school will employ to identify, assess, and serve students in need of special education services along with appropriate staffing levels for the Gavin Middle School's current population of students in need of special education services. (Section II.F.)

### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The application did not explain that Boston Public Schools (BPS) places students at the Gavin Middle School for specialized services; there is a Vietnamese sheltered immersion program and a program to provide services for severe multi-handicapped students. To the applicant's credit, the staffing and service plans includes these student populations. When asked in the interview, the applicant group reports that the district is creating a satellite location in the building to serve multiple handicapped students. It will be a separate

- The application shows evidence that the founding group has knowledge regarding program requirements and effective means of implementation regarding special education, English language learners, and school nutrition programs. (Section II.F.)

program. UP Academy will step up to work with those students in their after school programming. Current multiple handicapped students at the Gavin will have a choice to enroll either in UP Academy or in the district-run program located in the Gavin building. While the option may be the best way to service these students, the application provides an inaccurate image of the expected student population. (Section I.C. and II.F.)

### **Enrollment and Recruitment**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The recruitment plan is aggressive and describes targeted strategies for the current population of students enrolled in the Gavin and all other students residing in Boston. (Section III.A.)
- The draft enrollment policy is clear and the process includes a plan for a public lottery which is open, fair, and in accordance with charter school statute and regulations. (Sections III.A.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- No primary weaknesses.

### **Capacity and School Governance**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The application describes how the founding group, proposed board of trustees and Unlocking Potential, a non-profit School Management Organization (SMO) came together to form the proposed school. (Section III.B.)
- The founders and proposed board of trustees have a range of experiences and a diverse set of skills related to educational leadership, charter school development, teacher training, business, and finance. A number of the proposed board members have demonstrated the capacity to found and sustain excellent charter schools: Scott McCue at Boston Preparatory Charter School, and Yutaka Tamura, at Excel Academy Charter School. (Section III.B)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- While the Unlocking Potential, Inc.'s founder and CEO, Scott Given served as Principal at Excel Academy Charter school from 2005-2008, helping to convert a struggling new charter school into an extraordinary school, the SMO does not have a track record of school turnaround. The proposed board of trustees, BPS, and the Department see the potential of this untried SMO which mitigates the intrinsic risk. (Section III.C)

- The governance model presents a clear workable structure and encourages an appropriate relationship between the board of trustees, principal, and administration regarding the governance and management of the school. It is clear that the proposed board understands that if chartered, they would be responsible for governing the school and they alone would hold the charter. (Section III.C.)
- The application and the applicant group explained why they wish to contract with Unlocking Potential as an SMO to provide substantially all educational services including curriculum development, as well as budget preparation, recruiting and training of teachers and administrators, and fundraising. (Section III.C.)
- The application included a draft contract which delineates the roles and responsibilities of Unlocking Potential, and a description of how the board will monitor the academic performance and fiscal activity of the school. If chartered, the contract would need further refinement and then review and approval by the Department. (Section III.C.)
- The application described a viable process for policy making, and ongoing board recruitment, development, and self evaluation. (Section III.C)
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the board of trustees and the district is clear. The application also contains the draft MOU between the proposed school and potential school employees. (Section III.C.)

### **Management**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- The roles and responsibilities for the administrative staff are well articulated. The staffing chart is comprehensive and narrative is clear. (Section III.D.)
- The application specifically explains the operational systems for the development,

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- The interview provided clarifying information about the management structure and staffing at the school. As a Horace Mann charter school, staff members are officially employees of BPS and their employment will be handled through BPS. However, questions remain

supervision, coordination, and continued assessment of the educational content and pedagogical approach. (Section III.D.)

- Unlocking Potential, Inc. can enhance the capacity of the school by providing a collection of instructional and operational services to the school leadership and the board of trustees, including but not limited to staff recruitment and training, developing core curriculum, initial teacher training, resources development, in addition to managing start-up and turn-around. (Section III.D.)

about the role and authority of the principal, and the influence and responsibility of Unlocking Potential to recruit, supervise, and evaluate the principal of Up Academy. (Section III.D.)

- Similarly, while the principal is the individual charged with the primary responsibility of ensuring student achievement, effective recruitment, development, and retention of personnel, the proposed board intends to hire two employees from Unlocking Potential as part of the leadership team (DCIs). Here again, allegiances, lines of reporting and responsibility could be challenging. (Section III.D).
- The application does not specify a solid plan for making key school-level decisions on student achievement, fiscal planning, and/or operations. (Section III.D)

### **Facilities, Transportation, and Finances**

#### **Primary Strengths**

- While reviewers had questions about the facility renovation funding coming from Unlocking Potential, Inc., the need to make cosmetic changes to the existing facility in order to influence students and families when they return to the school seems to make sense. The applicant group hopes that those changes will add to the impression that they are entering a new and excellent school. (Section III.E.)
- The application describes fiscal controls and financial management policies the board will employ to remain informed of the school financial position. (Section III.F.)

#### **Primary Weaknesses**

- Perhaps it is unavoidable, but there are a complicated set of financial arrangements in this application: a potential new Horace Mann charter school opening at full enrollment, the MOU with BPS, and a draft SMO contract that needs clarification and refinement. While the interview clarified some of the concerns about the budget, more clarification is needed. (Section III.F.)