

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2011-2012

Proposed School Name:	Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School (Horace Mann)
Grades Served At Full Capacity:	K1-5
Number of Students At Full Capacity:	325
Proposed School Location:	Boston
Proposed Opening Year:	2012-2013

Public Statement:

“The Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School is proposed as a new Horace Mann Public Charter School in Boston. Opening in Fall 2012, the school will initially serve 132 students in Grades K1-1, and then add a grade each year through Grade 5, when it will serve 308 students. DSNCS aspires to realize the democratic promise of our nation: that a high quality, world-class education be a guaranteed, basic human right for every child. Open for enrollment to all students in the district, DSNCS is committed to providing access to an excellent education for every one of its students.”

Mission Statement:

“The three-fold mission of DSNCS is:

- to provide a world class education for all students, preparing them for long-term academic success and responsible civic engagement;
- to serve as driver of human and social capital development, preparing outstanding new teachers to drive excellent student outcomes throughout Boston;
- to serve as a partner in catalyzing improvement of all schools in the Dudley area.”

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	K1 – 1	132
Second Year	K1 – 2	176
Third Year	K1 – 3	220
Fourth Year	K1 – 4	266
Fifth Year	K1 – 5	308

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

Primary Strengths

- The proposed mission is meaningful and succinct with a focus on shifting the educational paradigm for students, teachers and the communities of Boston. (Section I.A.)
- The vision is meaningful and evokes a compelling image of the proposed school

Primary Weaknesses

- The proposed mission and vision are ambitious with many challenging components to implement which were not fully reflected in all sections of the application. (Section I.A.)

for its students and teachers. (Section I.B.)

- While the application provided limited information on the role of the school as a ‘catalyst’ for change in the Dudley area, during the interview, the proposed board was able to describe in additional detail how the proposed school would interact with other local BPS schools, such as the Orchard Gardens K-8 School. The composition of the proposed board also supports the intention to take an active role in the local community with members affiliated with the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, City Year Boston, as well as the principal of Orchard Gardens. (Section I.B.)
- During the interview, the applicant group expressed a strong commitment to change the experiences of students, teachers, families and community members through the proposed school by implementing a learning and teaching environment that is responsive and continually improving. The application states that a high quality early education program, wrap –around services, and an emphasis on literacy are key priorities to serving the targeted student populations. (Section I.C.)
- This charter application received letters or written testimony in support during the public hearing and public comment process, primarily materials were from local non-profit leaders, residents, and teachers. See public comment. (Section I.C.)

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- The educational philosophy describes a strong framework that aligns the applicant group’s values and beliefs about education with specific policies and practices that may improve the academic performance of the anticipated student population. (Section II.A.)
- The curriculum and instruction, though generalized and underdeveloped in some

Primary Weaknesses

- While the affiliation with BPE-BTR provides tangible benefits to the school in implementing a comprehensive educational program, reviewers voiced concern over the transition from a limited plug-in program in individual BPS schools to launching a Horace Mann charter school. (Section II.A.)
- In both the application and the interview,

<p>areas, is consistent with the mission, vision, and educational philosophy of the proposed school. (Section II.A.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the interview, the applicant group emphasized the goal of high student engagement and high academic rigor in all classrooms achieved by using the proposed assessment system to identify students' needs and challenging each student to move from where they are to academic mastery through effective teaching. (Section II.B.) • In both the application and the interview, the applicant group indicated that the revision of curriculum and instructional practice to address students' needs is a collaborative process involving school leadership, administrators, lead teachers, and BPE-BTR staff. (Section II.B.) 	<p>the applicant group indicated that it was still in the design phase of developing, improving, and refining curriculum as well as core practices and social routines for the proposed school. Even with the additional capacity provided by the partnership with BPE-BTR, the limited progress on essential school structures will pose challenges for a school proposed to open in FY2013 with 132 students in K1, K2 and 1st grades. (Section II.B.)</p>
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Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment system is linked to curriculum and instruction and will facilitate decision-making about adjustments to the educational program and inform a staff development plan that will support the goal of improved student learning. (Section II.D.) • The assessment system provides a measurable and externally credible design for measuring and reporting the performance and progress of the proposed charter school and the academic and social development of each student to all relevant stakeholders. (Section II.D.) • The performance and promotion standards provided are based on high expectations, and are aligned with the proposed school's mission and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (MCF). (Section II.C.) 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment system is dependent on the partnership with BPE-BTR to provide a data analyst and teacher professional development. This dependency could limit the autonomies of the school and its ability to be nimble. (Section II.D.) • The proposed school will determine promotion standards for math, science, social studies, arts, technology, and wellness during the planning period. (Section II.C.)
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School Characteristics

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed school will provide students and their families with an extended day 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even with a sample student schedule and a description of the school day provided
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and school year as well as out-of-school programming. These opportunities could supply students and teachers with additional time to dedicate to effective learning and teaching. During the interview, the applicant group indicated that both before and after school programming would be free to families. (Section II.E.)

- The proposed school will implement a discipline policy based on Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) which is consistent with the school’s mission and educational philosophy. PBIS should be reflected more explicitly in practices to establish culture and behavioral norms. (Section II.E.)
- The proposed school’s relationship with BPE-BTR and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) could place the school in a good position as they move forward to develop other key external community partnerships (Section II. E.)

during the interview, the typical student and teacher day were unclear. It is especially unclear how teachers will operate under staggered schedules or blocks of time (4.5 hours) dedicated to professional development during the school day. During the interview, the applicant group was able to provide some clarification and stated that it was still determining how they will build in flexibility for the teacher’s 200 day schedules through the placement of teacher residents and external partner organizations, such as Playworks. (Section II.E.)

- The vision statement emphasizes social and emotional supports for children which are underdeveloped and tentative in the school characteristics section. Though a number of potential partnerships are mentioned, the methods and strategies that would be used to support students with a wide range of needs are not articulated. (Section II.E.)
- While the application aspires for strong family, school, and community partnerships, it provides limited information on how the school plans to involve families as partners in the education of their children and build and maintain family-school partnerships that focus on strengthening support for the proposed school’s goals. (Section II.E.)

Special Student Populations and Student Services

Primary Strengths

- In the application, the applicant group indicates the use of the Response to Intervention (RTI) to provide a responsive general education classroom for all learners. (Section II.F.)
- The applicant group states that staffing levels will be responsive to the needs of the student population. During the interview and in the application, the applicant group indicated that each Division teacher team would have one ESL (English as a Second Language) licensed teacher and/or special education

Primary Weaknesses

- Though the applicant group stated that the proposed school will appropriately identify and serve students learning English and students with special needs, reviewers had a few concerns with the description of services provided. The description of the processes and procedures used to identify, assess, and serve English language learners had some missing pieces or inaccurate components, the purpose of LAS and MEPA and MELA-O assessments and lack of information regarding the English

<p>teacher. The applicant group also indicated that they intend to hire a Special Populations Coordinator dually licensed in special education and ESL/ELL. (Section II.F.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application indicates a commitment to partner with City Connects and City Year to support students' needs. The ability of these organizations to connect students with appropriate services and interventions was described in greater detail during the interview and supported the wrap-around component of the proposed school's vision. (Section II.F.) 	<p>Language Development (ELD) program. (Section II.F.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The special education programming described in the application does not address requirements of the initial Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process, development, and implementation nor the reevaluation process. (Section II.F.)
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Enrollment and Recruitment

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed school's relationship with BPE-BTR and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) could enhance the school's ability to conduct effective outreach to a broad cross-section of prospective students and their families, including families that may be less informed about options. (Section II. A.) 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the application narrative and draft enrollment policy, it is unclear if the applicant group has considered the requirements of backfilling and the possible complications of student enrollment for a school organized into multi-grade level divisions and serving all students in Boston, not specifically from the Dudley neighborhood. (Section III.A.)
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Capacity and School Governance

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant team and proposed board of trustees are comprised of individuals with extensive experience and qualifications which demonstrate the potential to found and sustain an excellent charter school. During the interview, proposed board members reiterated their commitment to governing the proposed school effectively and gaining renewal at the end of each charter term. (Section III.B.) The governance model presents a clear workable structure and encourages an appropriate relationship between the board of trustees, school, and administration regarding the governance and management of the school. In both the application and the interview, the 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The final application states the applicant group's desire to include two representatives of the BPE-BTR board of trustees and two employees of BPE-BTR on the proposed board of trustees. The applicant group must submit a written State Ethics Commission opinion to answer if conflict of interest laws would prohibit this practice. (Section III.B.)
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applicant group stressed the close partnership between the board and the school leader (weekly coaching meetings) to ensure alignment of vision and action during the beginning of the school. The proposed board acknowledged the potential challenges and tensions between holding the school leader accountable and providing support. (Section III.C.)

- The proposed Horace Mann Charter School’s relationship with BPE-BTR could enhance the capacity of the school to work effectively with Boston Public Schools. (Section III.C.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- During the interview, the applicant group described the strong commitment by BPE-BTR, both its staff and board of directors, to support the school with services that will be delineated in a memorandum of understanding between the proposed school and BPE-BTR. The support could include staff recruitment and training, induction, and professional growth, developing core curriculum, resources development, and supporting start-up. (Section III.D.)
- The proposed memorandum of understanding between the proposed school and teacher’s union describes a clear evaluation system. (Section III.D.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While the applicant group proposes to open the proposed school in FY2013, it has not fully developed many of the proposed school’s structures and systems and has not identified a candidate for the school leader position. This highlights the challenge and the concentrated efforts required for the proposed school to successfully open in FY2013. (Section III.D.)
- Based on the description of the assessment system, it is unclear if a part-time BPE-BTR data analyst will be sufficient to support teachers to effectively implement the proposed school’s data-driven programming. (Section III.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- During the interview, the applicant group stated the ability to renovate the selected facility, the former Emerson School, to accommodate the full maximum enrollment. They acknowledged that the building has challenges and in the long term may not be the ideal space, but they have been in talks with the district about an expansion of the facility in the future. (Section III.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None.

- The application contains a clear budget that provides basic alignment with the application and budget narrative. The budget also provides evidence that the applicant group has knowledge of the practical matters relevant to the operation of a school. BPE-BTR provides substantial resources during the planning year and indicates continued support for fundraising in the future. (Section III.F.)